



Final Summary Report

Evaluation of inclusive practice for students with Down's Syndrome in Devon Secondary schools Academic year 2008-2009

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- All the teachers, SENCOs, Teaching Assistants and parents who were interviewed.
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- All the staff who gave up time to fill in the questionnaires and Inclusion Checklists.
- All the Educational Psychologists and EPs in training who were also involved in the project.
- The UK DS Education Consortium who over the years have developed training and publications for staff supporting children with DS - their work has shaped the training model for our service in Devon (Jane Beadman, Sandy Alton, Bob Black, Cecilie MacKinnon, Stephanie Lorenz and Christina Singh).
- The Down Syndrome Association and Down's Ed for all their support and ongoing information

CONTENTS

Summary	4
Background and outline of project	12
Results	17
Appendices	42
References	47

Final summary report: Evaluation of inclusive practice for students with DS in Devon secondary schools September 2008 - July 2009:

Abbreviations: DS = Down's syndrome; ASD = Autistic Spectrum Disorder, EP = Educational Psychologist; SENCO = Special Needs Co-ordinator; TA = Teaching Assistant; SEN = Special Educational Needs; SRE = Sex and Relationship Education; CC = Community College; CSET = County Special Education Team; LA = Local Authority; DSA = Down's syndrome Association; UK = United Kingdom, HOY = Head of Year

SUMMARY

Background:

The number of pupils with DS aged 4 to 18 in Devon schools during the academic year 2008-2009 was 97 in a school population of around 92,000. The incidence of children being born with DS nationally is about 1 in 1000 births – this represents a low incidence group of children within the spectrum of SEN. Currently there are 63 children in mainstream schools - 39 attend Primary schools and 23 attend secondary schools. 62% of all Devon Secondary schools have supported or are supporting student(s) with DS. 40% are currently supporting a student with DS. 38% have not yet had the opportunity to support a student with DS.

The Project:

Fourteen schools were involved supporting 23 students. There is a spread of students across all year groups with 15 students in Key Stage 3, 6 students in Key Stage 4, and 2 students in sixth form (see Table 1). Of the 23 students 7 are working a year behind their chronological age groups (30%). The range of ability follows the predicted national pattern - the range at transfer is from students working at P levels to those working at NC level 2. This is reflected throughout the year groups with KS4 students working with a range of abilities from P levels to NC level 4.

46 teaching assistants, 13 SENCOs, 2 teachers, 2 HOY, and 1 principal were interviewed. Parents of 23 children were interviewed. 12 teachers completed a postal questionnaire (1 school). 28 lessons were observed.

Procedure:

The survey was carried out during the academic year 2008 to 2009. It was undertaken by the four Educational Psychologists (EPs) who have specialist time allocated to support students with DS in Devon schools. This represents 2.5 days a week for the whole county of Devon. School EPs were often also involved in the project for their secondary school.

The main part of the survey involved EP visits to secondary schools where interviews with key staff occurred - usually the SENCO and teaching assistants who support students with DS but also included teaching staff in some schools. Lesson observations also took place. Parents were also interviewed mainly in school but some telephone interviews and one e-mail interview also occurred.

Letters were sent out to school Principals/Head Teachers and SENCOs at the start of the project explaining the purpose and process (see Appendix 1). A postal questionnaire was also included (see Appendix 2). This was generally completed by the SENCO or otherwise the lead TA. An Inclusion checklist covering the nature of support for the child and wider

inclusion areas for the school was also sent to the school with this letter, prior to the visit and staff were asked to complete anonymously. (See Appendix 3)

All parents and school staff were asked the same questions (see Appendix 4- Parents' questions and school staff questions). The project was outlined to each parent and member of school staff interviewed and it was also made clear that answers would be confidential. It was explained that the data gathered from these interviews would be written up in a general format with no individual identification.

A confidential report was then sent to the school for the Principal, SENCO and Chair of Governors to summarize current practice and to suggest development areas for the school with a covering letter (see Appendix 5). A copy of the report was also sent to the schools' EP for information.

This summary report uses data gathered from all the individual school reports, and examines the main factors supporting good practice and the main development areas for schools.

Results:

Schools in this survey were at differing points in their knowledge and skills of how to support a student with DS. The schools that had had considerable experience of supporting students with DS were generally more advanced in their overall skills at including students with DS. The schools currently supporting groups of students with DS had definitely developed support and services ahead of the other schools with one school showing outstanding practice with many innovative developments. Parents' concerns/celebrations were reflected in the perceived 'journey point of each school'.

Successful Areas:

- Analysis of the **Inclusion checklist** completed by 44 staff (13 SENCOs and 31 TAs) showed that the students with DS were felt to be generally very well included and very much part of the school community. 77% of responses to the 14 statements were ticked as 'Agree/Agree to some extent'
- Schools commented on the gains of having a student with DS by creating a greater awareness of individual needs. It was reflected that the students with DS enrich the school and it was also noted that it was important that other students are aware of individual needs.

'We as a school community learned so much about disability through S; we learned how to be more inclusive and caring. He taught us much more than we taught him. It also made staff realise how important differentiation is'.

- **The role of the SEN department** – Inclusive schools showed a strong link with, and high respect for their SENCO and SEN department. For the majority of schools, the school was seen as promoting a positive ethos and attitude to SEN from staff and pupils. This promoted good practice and staff were keen to learn and acquire skills for supporting pupils with DS.
- Parents were generally very pleased with the access, information and support from the SEN staff in school.

- Parent support was highly valued by staff in schools, and schools used the parent's knowledge about DS and their child.

'S's mother has been our biggest resource'.

'Good relationship with mum and everyone in learning support is willing to work hard to progress things for H'.

- **Allocation of TA support** -65% of students have 4 – 6 TAs supporting them. This is in line with national recommendations with the recommended level being 5-6 TAs. This number of TAs allows each TA to share curriculum workload and knowledge, and can provide 'cover' for absences of staff due to illness/attending courses.
- All students whatever the number of TAs supporting them have the equivalent of full-time TA support of which generally 0.8 TA time is paid for by CSET and 0.2 TA time is paid for by the school.
- **Planning time for TAs/ lead TAs** – 8 schools (57%) provide one or two hours per week planning time for each TA. Most schools have a Lead TA/Key worker who usually is allocated more planning time which is good recommended practice. The lead TA has the responsibility to attend training and to cascade down information both to TAs and to teaching staff. The key worker also supports TAs in all areas to do with the student with DS alongside the SENCO.
- **Timetable** - Each of the 23 students timetables were analysed to see what percentage of their time was spent in mixed ability classes; lower set classes; small groups and 1:1 withdrawal lessons. For the latter two definite planning and purpose was shown by all schools. The school supporting 6 students with DS showed the most significant development for matching timetable to individual needs and the greatest flexibility to meet students' needs with a rich mix of small group and individual work outside supporting the traditional timetable much to the benefit of the students' with DS.
- In all year groups except year 11 (where Alternative Curriculum involves a lot of small group work) it is pleasing to see that by far the majority of time for students is spent in mixed ability classes, followed by Lower set classes for core subjects, and with small group work and one to one work showing the least percentage. It is very encouraging to see how well included students are in the mixed ability classes which also provide good role models for both learning and behaviour. This all reflects national advice. 2 schools that support the most number of students' with DS have now developed sixth form provision with an Alternative curriculum route.
- **Differentiation and use of TA support-** All staff interviewed had a clear understanding of what differentiation is. SENCOs and TAs have a good understanding of differentiation and curriculum mapping down to P levels. In the mainstream lessons observed there were some examples of good differentiation by some mainstream teachers.
- Generally lower sets provided better differentiation for the group as a whole and students with DS could access work often without the need for further differentiation and this enabled them to work more independently and to need less access to TA support.

- In many schools good progress has been made in teachers understanding of how to differentiate and in several schools more than 50% of teaching staff were reported to be differentiating lessons, sharing plans with TAs and working as a team together.
- Parents were very appreciative of the teaching staff that did differentiate well.
- **Use of TA support** There were a lot of excellent examples of schools working collaboratively with teachers, SENCOs and TAs around differentiation and how support was used. The most successful models were where TAs and teaching staff were valued as an equal team and TAs inputted about levels of assessment abilities of their students for teachers; TAs were very skilled at making resources to meet the curricular and learning needs of their student(s).

'Learning support and Science have worked really hard together to differentiate the curriculum for J'.

- **Lesson observations:** There were many examples of good inclusion for the students with DS, teacher and peer interaction, and good differentiation in mainstream lessons, lower set groups, Nurture groups, small groups and 1:1 support. There tended to be better opportunities for students to work unsupported in lower set and small group lessons.
- **Role of TAs in lessons:** TAs were consistently across all types of lessons seen to provide excellent facilitation using open and closed questions, verbal and physical prompts as required, simplifying language, scribing key points on white boards, redirecting students when tired towards the end of lessons; reminding students of class rules, rewards and sanctions and were excellent at keeping students focused and on task.
- TAs as a group are highly skilled in knowing how to break teaching tasks down into smaller steps; to simplify their language to enable their student to access the class task; how and when to use support – all lesson observations backed up these skills.
- TA support is provided as required and TAs work hard to develop independent working for as much time as possible during each lesson.
- **Developing independence in students** -In the inclusive schools great success was found in developing independence both in lessons, finding the way around school and at break and lunch times. Many students in these schools chose to be out with their mainstream peers and many students also chose to be some of the time with mainstream peers and some of the time with their SEN peers either out on school site or in the SEN room or both. There were some great examples where students were working in lessons as much as possible independent of support and strategies were in place to enable this happen.
- **Use of peer support** -some schools used peer support very successfully for all SEN and vulnerable students. Some schools gave examples of successful peer support happening 'naturally' with certain students volunteering to support students with DS without being directly asked. Where flexibility and student choice were used by schools far more opportunities for independence for the student(s) occurred.

- **Individual Education Plans (IEPs):** All schools provided IEPs for their student(s) which were clear and informative and showed a good knowledge of the individual pupil and their needs. Many included expected outcomes as well as who would be involved and when targets should be achieved. Many schools also provided very informative pen portraits of the student, often including a photo, which gave specific strengths, needs and strategies for teachers and TAs to be informed about.
- **Homework-** where teachers did differentiate homework the differentiation was reported as good. There were many examples of schools adapting the homework to suit the individual needs of students and this was reflected in why some students had none or hardly any homework. The successful partnership was where parents were satisfied that the homework set (or not set) met the needs of their child within the framework of the schools' policy on homework.
- As a general rule homework was better differentiated in lower set or nurture groups with tasks set at the right level of ability that also took a reasonable amount of time to complete. Some schools operated homework clubs for all students to access and many students with DS completed their homework in school.
- **Alternative Accreditation** -12 schools (86%) offer this including Life Skills, Entry levels and GCSE. 10 schools (71%) offer ASDAN and Entry levels and more schools are looking towards using ASDAN Stepping Stones which can be taught in Key Stage 3. This shows a positive approach to alternative curriculum from year 7 onwards and is welcomed by schools and our service.
- **Extra curricular activities** - Eleven schools (79%) surveyed provided full access to all clubs for their students with DS- both lunchtime and after school- although some students chose not to access activities. Some students were not interested in accessing lunch time clubs preferring to be with their friends relaxing. Some students preferred to be in the SEN department. 12 schools (86%) provided access to day and residential trips alongside typically developing peers.
- There were many positive reports of residential trips and day trips – often the student with DS was described as the best behaved student on the trip! This represents significant progress in accessibility, equal opportunities and good inclusive practice for these students and is a very positive development.
- As there were barriers to students' with DS accessing after school clubs (see below) many schools had limited after schools clubs and concentrated on lunchtime clubs. Where the student with DS was independent of TA support access to all clubs was available.
- As sports clubs were felt to be difficult to access at an ability level, many schools had provided sports clubs for SEN students and had also encouraged students with DS to coach the younger students.
- **Behaviour, Social Skills and SRE** - these areas are no longer seen as a problem by schools, but as part of the student with DS's development. By far the overall view of staff across all schools involved was that any issues in this area were 'Just like any teenager'. Inclusive and positive attitudes to behaviour were shown by the majority of schools.

- Of the 23 students only two (9%) presented with challenging behaviour and this was being handled positively by staff even in one case in extreme circumstances. The willingness of staff to understand and help students having difficulties was immense. By far the majority of students with DS were described as well behaved in school and setting good examples for others. The students with DS were often good role models in behaviour for other students in school.
- Excellent strategies for these areas had been devised throughout schools using a visual approach, simple language, social stories and plenty of praise for success. Most students with DS were perceived as having good to excellent social skills. Most schools had developed good SRE courses.
- **Developing friendships** – generally this was not seen as an issue by the students who could name friends both in and out of school. However it was viewed as an issue by both staff and parents.
- Many parents were proactive in enabling contact with peers using clubs and sports to promote friendships. Some families started to use Special Needs Clubs after school for the first time. Some students had friends out of school but these friends were often younger reflecting a comparable developmental level to the student with DS.
- There were some reports of students with DS in all year groups having friends both from tutor group/typically developing students as well as friends from SEN group.
- **Access to outside support** -All schools used the services of the specialist EP team to a greater or lesser extent. All but 2 schools attended the secondary support day and secondary schools were also represented at all the support group meetings held twice yearly in each area of Devon. Again all but 3 schools had accessed training in school for staff from the service. 2 of these schools were including the student with DS well so did not feel the need to access school training.

Areas for development

- 2 key statements on the **Inclusion checklist** were highly significant in being perceived by staff completing the checklist as not yet achieved throughout the 14 schools: Teachers share planning and schemes of work for lessons and homework **75% disagreed** ; Learning support assistants are involved in curriculum planning and review **52% disagreed. This is reflected nationally**
- Time availability for teachers and TAs to meet and plan was a huge barrier. The amount of planning time for TAs was unrealistic in some schools and there were many examples quoted of TAs making resources in their own time or having to differentiate 'on the hoof' as they did not have access to teacher's curricula plans. Many schools had, despite these barriers, developed effective strategies to enable this to happen, for example TAs knowing which folder the plans were in and being invited by teachers to look in them.
- **Role of the SEN department** The 4 less inclusive schools were reported not to promote an inclusive attitude towards SEN students and in some cases actively questioned the placement of students' with DS.

- Some parents did not have access to teaching staff at parents evening instead meeting with SEN staff. This left them feeling that the subject teachers did not know their child or understand their needs.
- **Lesson observation:** In some mixed ability lessons there was often little teacher engagement for the student with DS and the seating was often arranged so that the TA was seated next to the student in such a way that there was no access to peers either for support or for social interactions. In some of these lessons the student with DS was doing 'fill in' activities not related to the subject topic.
- **Working towards student independence** -Some TAs in some schools were restricted in this important area of development due to teacher insistence that full one to one support be provided by the TAs at all times. This was a pattern also seen in all schools, to an extent, where individual teachers differed in their willingness to support independent working for students and the development of peer support. This made the work of the TAs with their students inflexible and was a cause of frustration for some TAs.
- In less inclusive schools an over protective attitude pervades and staff are not encouraged to take responsible/ planned risks for students with DS to enable independence both in lessons and around the school site to develop, to the extent of students not being able to find their way from lesson to lesson even with peer support as this was considered 'too much of a responsibility' for peers.
- **Planning time for TAs** - Planning time generally does not include time to meet with teaching staff. Time is not protected and often TAs have to cover for staff absences etc. Many reports were received of TAs planning and preparing resources in own time. 6 schools do not provide any planning/ non contact time for their TAs (43%)
- **Differentiation** - A major and regularly reported block to progress was that subject teachers were not meeting the student's learning needs and did not understand how to map back to lower NC levels and P levels. There were many examples of TAs doing all the differentiation and often 'on the hoof' in some subject mainstream lessons especially in the four schools (29%) that were still struggling to have teachers involved with differentiation. This was also found in some subjects in schools where the majority of teaching staff were differentiating well.
- Many parents were concerned about the lack of differentiation of lessons in mixed ability lessons at the same time being sympathetic as to the difficulties for all staff to do this in a large secondary school.
- **Use of peer support** -Within schools this was often teacher specific with some teachers encouraging peer support and other teachers discouraging this on the grounds that it might impede the completion of course work by the supportive peer.
- Generally TAs felt that it was something that they could be more proactive about and would take this on board, often saying that when certain students had offered help how successful this had been. They also wanted to develop promoting this not only in lessons but also during free time.
- Several schools commented that where peer support had been offered both in lessons and at break times this had been rejected by the student with DS and it had

been difficult to progress it. Some schools recognised that this then highlighted to them that work needed to be done on social skills with the student with DS and some very successful outcomes had ensued particularly with the use of Social Stories.

- A recurring issue was around SEN support for the student being used for all breaks/lunchtime thus prohibiting independence for the students and greatly impeding the development of friendships.
- The development of independent learning and the use of peer support remains a challenge in many schools although many positive strides have been made by some of the schools.
- **Homework** - Parents raised many issues re homework: frequency – there seemed to be either too little or too much or none at all! Parents often complained about lack of differentiation of homework, and parents' inability to understand the task by the recording methods sent home.
- Homework was usually set in SEN group lessons and it was reported that homework (in all subjects) is nearly always differentiated by TAs. Generally homework given by mainstream teachers is often not differentiated.
- Homework that was set was often taking the student (and the parent!) too long. There was also an issue of tiredness of the children after a day at school so that it was very difficult to complete homework.
- **Extra curricular activities** -After school clubs were often difficult to access realistically. All schools provided 'mainstream' and SEN clubs but two schools only offered clubs to students with DS organised by the SEN department and one school felt no access to school clubs was possible. 21% of the schools involved were not inclusive in this area. 2 schools only allowed students with DS to access day and residential trips that had been organised by the SEN department – this is viewed as discriminatory practice.
- There was often an over reliance of the student on TA support which was seen as a barrier. There were also funding issues for providing support for after school clubs. Some staff and parents interviewed felt that access to clubs had not been properly thought through and that some students chose not to join in clubs as there were no adaptations made to enable access at the students' level of ability.
- There were barriers to accessing after school clubs due to transport difficulties as students needed to catch school buses or taxis where parents were not available to fulfil this role.
- The main barrier to accessing after school clubs was that parents reported that their children were too tired after a full school day to attend and needed to chill out and relax at home after school. Parents also didn't always get the information from school about clubs and school outings especially if their child was not in tutor group (rare) or had left the letter about the trip in school!
- Sports clubs were felt to be not so easy to access as students with DS were generally not able to compete on the same level as typically developing students for school teams.

- There is a need for positive discrimination in this so area so that all parents are aware of opportunities for their children with DS.
- **Developing friendships** - there was definitely less contact out of school with friends generally compared to Primary school. Contact became less from year 9 onwards and was more difficult in KS4. This reflects research findings in this area (Buckley et al 2002).
- It is hard for many students with DS to mix socially out of school with their peers who may be going to clubs, shopping in town etc when the student with DS does not have the skills to do this and parents are understandably worried about vulnerability. Parents generally see contact with friends out of school as a real issue.
- **Access to outside support** – generally schools were not able to access speech and Language therapy and all would welcome this. There is a lack of support in this area due to lack of availability of SALT and budgets locally being directed to Early years and Primary provision. This lack of SALT input at secondary schools is reflected nationally (Ref DSA survey Access to Education 2004).
- There was sometimes a breakdown in communication in school where schools had access to reports from outside agencies. It is important that information from outside support is accessed by staff working with the student with DS.
- Few parents mentioned support from Social Care or Joint Agency Teams. This was surprising given the pivotal role that these services provide for support, respite, funding etc, and given the over arching need for interagency support for transitions from 14 to 25 years for the students involved.

Parent: *'Communication is vitally important between all TAs and teachers especially in helping them to understand the level of communication needed for S.'*

BACKGROUND:

Devon is an inclusive LA which has been offering the opportunity for pupils' with DS to be included into their local mainstream schools since the mid 1980's. During this time support services have been developed and currently 4 EPs with specialist time are employed to support this group of pupils. There is one EP in each of the geographical areas of Devon - North, Central and South and a team leader. There is a total of 2.5 days of EP time across the County for each week of term time.

Services provided include school visits to advise on practice. Training is provided both to individual schools and as 1 or 3 day courses for all schools to attend covering Early Years, Primary and Secondary schools. A leaflet describing the work of the team is sent to all schools as well as a most Frequently Asked Questions booklet produced by the team. A newsletter is sent twice yearly to all schools and support groups in the 3 locations (2 in secondary schools and 1 in a Primary school) are held twice yearly for an afternoon. Each of these schools manages a resource library where staff supporting students with DS can borrow resources to use with their student. A support day for secondary schools is also held

annually. Outreach advice and support is also available from the local Special Schools for children with significant learning disability.

In 1997 the team leader reviewed practice for Primary children with DS in South Devon. Since then more and more parents have chosen to send their children with DS to their local mainstream school and over the years more families have continued the inclusive route to secondary school. The picture for 2009 is that it is highly unusual for a child with DS not to attend their local mainstream Primary school, and it is highly likely that these children will complete their entire education in mainstream – some parents do opt for Special school at either KS3 or KS4 and these tend to be the more complex cases e.g. dual diagnosis – often DS/ASD. Although this reflects the national picture (Ref DSA survey 2004) Devon has more families whose children attend mainstream secondary school than many LAs.

Currently there are 23 students with DS attending mainstream secondary schools and the specialist EP team felt that this was a reasonable cohort of students to evaluate current practice for this group of students. The team undertook a survey of inclusive practice for secondary schools supporting students' with DS during the school academic year 2008 – 2009.

RATIONALE:

The team leader is also part of an Education training group preparing training and writing materials for staff in schools for the DSA (DS UK Education Consortium) and Devon training for staff has been based on this model. We wanted to explore the impact of this training and our work with secondary schools using a series of interviews with staff and parents, plus observations of the students in lessons, that would reflect progress in areas concerned with inclusion and students' with DS.

We based our survey on the following premises:

What do we know about successful inclusion? (Lorenz 1999)

A survey of staff working in Primary schools showed that the most successful inclusive placements for the child and family was dependent on the following factors being in place (in order of importance): Positive attitude of the school from the Head teacher and management teams, and all staff in school; Commitment of parents; Positive attitude of the LA; Availability of support and training for school from informed professionals; Behaviour of the child; Ability of the child. The level of ability of the child and the child's behaviour were least significant to the former factors- so in other words where the school and/ or the LA did not have an inclusive attitude then the child's ability to learn and to behave became a factor in whether the placement continued at the school.

Successful inclusion for Pupils with Down's Syndrome – within school factors. (Lorenz 2002): The report also found that the following in school factors were the most important in promoting a successful inclusive placement for pupils' with DS: Positive attitude of the whole school; Flexible use of support staff; Ownership by the subject teacher of the child's learning programme; Good communication with parents; Support from LA services.

We wanted to find out how the above findings are reflected in practice in our Devon Secondary schools.

We also wanted to look at the four main aims for inclusive education for students with DS, as taught in our training and in the training provided by DSA, and see how these aims were reflected in the practice in our secondary schools. Questions were chosen to reflect how these aims are being met by Devon secondary schools:

Aims:

- **Acquiring new skills** – differentiation, Alternative Accreditation, planning time, teacher –TA meetings, curriculum access including extra-curricular activities
- **Developing age appropriate behaviour** – social skills, sex and relationship education (SRE), promoting positive behaviour and dealing with inappropriate behaviour
- **Becoming independent** – in lessons and break/lunchtimes, use of TA support including planning time
- **Developing friendships** – in and out of schools
- **Parents** – their perceptions of how school is achieving their hopes for their children; homework, and any home issues

We also wanted to look at use of TA time as students with DS generally have full-time TA support in Devon secondary schools. Again we looked at Lorenz's recommendations that teaching assistants should, as the child gets older do less:

- One to one teaching;
- Individual in-class support;
- Small group work.

But should do more:

- Liaison and planning with teaching staff;
- Preparation of teaching materials;
- Assessment and record keeping.

For secondary schools this is a major challenge and often a contentious issue, particularly with senior management teams. We hoped to explore these ideas through our interviews and by using an Inclusion checklist for staff to complete anonymously.

CURRENT DEVON STATISTICS FOR STUDENTS WITH DS:

Incidence:

The number of pupils with DS aged 4 to 18 in Devon schools during the academic year 2008-2009 was 97 (rising to 100+ during the academic year as families moved into Devon from other areas) in a school population of around 92,000. The incidence of children being born with DS nationally is about 1 in 1000 births – this represents a low incidence group of children within the spectrum of SEN. However DS is the highest incidence of pupils' with a learning disability caused by a chromosome abnormality (an extra chromosome on chromosome 21 – also known as Trisomy 21)

In September 2008 the total number of pupils with DS attending mainstream schools was 63; 39 attended Primary schools, and 24 attended secondary school (one pupil subsequently moved to another area during the time span of the project and another pupil was home educated awaiting special school placement). The distribution of pupils' with DS in mainstream schools was as follows: North 16; Central 25; South 22, of which there are 14 pupils in KS1, 25 pupils in KS2, 12 students in KS3, and 12 students in KS4.

32 pupils with DS are educated in Special Schools, of which 10 are in the Primary age range, and 22 are in the secondary and 16 plus. The majority of the pupils attending Special schools have spent some or most of their education in mainstream schools before transferring to Special school – often at Key Stage 3 or 4 as reflected by the numbers. This reflects the national pattern – see DSA survey May 2004 'Access to Education.' And May 2004 Access to Education – from school to FE.

Distribution of Secondary Schools who support students' with DS

There are 37 secondary Schools in Devon, of which 23 either are currently supporting a student with DS or have previously supported a student with DS. 14 secondary schools are currently supporting student(s) with DS - 8 of these schools have also previously supported student(s) with DS who have now left.

62% of all Devon Secondary schools have supported or are supporting student(s) with DS. 40% are currently supporting a student with DS. 38% have not yet had the opportunity to support a student with DS

THE PROJECT:

PROCEDURE:

The survey evaluating inclusive practice in secondary schools in Devon for students with DS was carried out during the academic year 2008 to 2009. It was undertaken by the four Educational Psychologists (EPs) who have specialist time allocated to support students with DS in Devon schools. School EPs were often also involved in the project for their secondary school.

The main part of the survey involved EP visits to 14 secondary schools where interviews with key staff – usually the SENCO and teaching assistants who support students with DS but also included in some schools teaching staff. Lesson observations also took place. Parents were also interviewed mainly in school but some telephone interviews and one e-mail interview also occurred.

Ethical Issues:

Ethical considerations focused on informed consent from parents and staff. As students were not interviewed we did not seek consent from students to observe them in a lesson as this is common practice for EPs working in schools. We did however get the parents' permission to observe their children in a lesson for the purposes of our evaluation.

Letters were sent out to school Principals/Head Teachers and SENCOs at the start of the project explaining the purpose and process (see Appendix 1). We felt that it was important that Principals/Head Teachers knew that the evaluation was being carried out in school as most schools were only supporting one pupil with DS and we wanted to raise the profile of practice for the student and celebrate good practice within each school and also raise issues to be developed. The nature of this project also meant that the overall inclusive issues examined would be likely to reflect on inclusion issues within school for other, if not all, groups of students with SEN. (An inclusive school is by definition inclusive for all students.)

A postal questionnaire was also included (see Appendix 2). This was generally completed by the SENCO or otherwise the lead TA. An Inclusion checklist covering the nature of support for the child and wider inclusion areas for the school was also sent to the school with this letter, prior to the visit and staff were asked to complete anonymously. (See Appendix 3)

All parents and school staff were asked the same questions (see Appendix 4- Parents' questions and school staff questions). The project was outlined to each parent and member of school staff interviewed and it was also made clear that answers would be confidential. It was explained that the data gathered from these interviews would be written up in a general

format with no individual identification. We felt that this was important so that staff felt able to voice concerns as well as celebrate practice. As many TAs as possible were interviewed as they usually have the opportunity to work within many subjects and with many teachers and so have a practical perspective of practice in school which individual teaching staff do not have.

We also interviewed the SENCOs/ and or Inclusion Managers as these are key staff members involved in the overall management for SEN students and staff. They have an overview of practice and aims, and generally provide key support both to TAs and teaching staff with respect to the needs of SEN students. It was not possible within the remit of this project to interview all teaching staff involved although we did interview some teaching staff who asked to be interviewed as they were particularly interested in the project and taught the student with DS.

A confidential report was then sent to the school to summarize current practice and to suggest development areas for the school. With the report a letter was sent to the Principal/ Headteacher of the school and the SENCO (see Appendix 5). A copy of the report was also included for the Chair of Governors and a copy was also sent to the schools' EP for information.

This summary report uses data gathered from all the individual school reports, and examines the main factors supporting good practice and the main development areas for schools. This will be used to help develop services in secondary schools for this group of students and will help our service to promote as best practice as possible for this low incidence group of students.

All schools involved received this final report as well as their own individual report. This final report will be used more widely to help with planning and to inform interested parties on good practice models which could include a publication in a related SEN publication as we know that Devon is ahead of many authorities in this field and therefore there will be national interest in our findings.

The individual school reports followed this format: Procedure; Provision and support for schools; Inclusion checklist; Summary of results: Successful areas for the school; Development areas for the school; Summary of responses from questionnaires and interview questions; Summary of parent responses; Summary of lesson observations.

Interview and observation schedule – data was collected from 14 schools

- 46 teaching assistants were interviewed
- 13 SENCOs were interviewed
- 2 teachers, 2 HOY, and 1 principal were interviewed (all from 1 school)
- Parents of 23 children were interviewed
- 12 teachers completed a postal questionnaire (1 school)
- 28 lessons were observed

RESULTS:

There is a spread of students across all year groups with 15 students in Key Stage 3, 6 students in Key Stage 4, and 2 students in sixth form (see Table 1). This reflects the Devon trend for students to choose to carry on their education in their local mainstream school

where this is an option. Nationally it has been reported by DSA and Down's Ed that there are an increasing number of parents opting to send their children to Special Schools at secondary transfer. The reasons for this are many and complex but often are the result of a lack of encouragement by their LA and/or secondary schools to continue with mainstream education. This is not the case for Devon schools and LA support services.

Table 1: Distribution and ability of students with DS across year groups

* Represents number of students working one year out of chronological age group

Year Group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12
Number	6(3*)	6 (2*)	3 (1*)	3 (1*)	3	2
NC ability levels	4= P levels /NC1 2 = NC 2	3 = NC1-2 1 = NC2-3 2=P8/NC1	1=P levels 1=NC 1-2 1= NC 1.5-3.2	3= P levels/NC1-2	Entry level 2 KS4 Level 1(average)	1=level 2-4 1= 4.2-4.8 (Numeracy 1.5)

Of the 23 students 7 students are working a year behind their chronological age group. The trend is for students to work within their chronological age group whereas 20 years ago when children with DS were first being admitted to mainstream schools in Devon, the trend was for them to work a year behind their C.A.. This was for a variety of reasons but often to insure maximum time in what was then reception. This often meant children repeating a year or part of a year (where intake was spread over the year) whilst their peers and friends moved up into year 1. Devon has many small village schools with only 2 or 3 classes where 3 or 4 year groups are taught in the same class . Therefore children attending these schools were able to remain with their friends even if they were out of their chronological age group. However for children in larger schools, the loss of their peers and friends was an issue.

Today where students are working out of C.A there are usually clear reasons for these e.g. medical conditions such as heart surgery around school entry age. Sometimes children with a late summer birthday have delayed entry to enable them to have extra time in Early years provision. Generally within Devon it is not practice for pupils to be educated out of their chronological age group.

When children with DS first had the opportunity to attend their local mainstream schools in the mid eighties, SENDA (Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002) was not in place. Many parents at this time were encouraged by schools and support services to transfer to Special School at Key Stage 2 or 3. As inclusion has progressed and the legislation to support this has been in place then the pattern which is reflected in Devon schools today has developed. Some parents still make the choice for Special school at secondary transfer despite the support available and our commitment to inclusion in mainstream schools from primary through to secondary and tertiary education. The reasons for this parental choice are complex and individual to each family – all families will have been offered a mainstream secondary school from Devon LA .

The trend for students to stay in mainstream school is following a national pattern. However, data from DSA and Down's Ed as well as information from other authorities leads us to maintain that Devon provides more opportunities for progression to secondary school than many other LAs. Similarly data from DSA and Down's Ed would also suggest that increasing

numbers of parents are currently choosing special school at secondary transfer – again the reasons are complex and individual to families and LAs. Devon families are much less likely to opt for special school at KS3 or 4 than many other LAs (Beadman 2004)

In order to support this process the specialist team of EPs works with schools and school EPs to ensure that a good transition is in place from year 5 and then provide ongoing training for secondary schools at their request. Training initially focuses on the specific learning profile and inclusion issues to be considered at KS3 and KS4 including differentiation. Ongoing training is available throughout the students' time in secondary school.

'Good transition from Primary school and S is described as very happy in secondary school .S is accepted by everyone – the school provides a caring ethos.'

'School has successfully managed a difficult transition of a pupil from Year 5 in a primary school (Year 6 age) to Year 7 in a secondary school.'

The range of ability for our secondary students' with DS follows the predicted national pattern (DSA and Down's Ed) in as much as the range at transfer is from students working at P levels to those working at NC level 2. This is reflected throughout the year groups with KS4 students working with a range of abilities from P levels to NC level 4. As an inclusive authority Devon does not discriminate against students with a disability and this has been the case since long before SENDA. Thus the learning level and the behaviour level of each student with DS are irrelevant in terms of their placement in local mainstream school.

Instead Devon LA has tried to provide support and provision which meets the needs of individual students with SEN including students with DS in order to address the question: 'What do we as an LA and the individual school need to adapt/change in order to make every aspect of school life achievable for our SEN students?' This is an ongoing development area and as a support service we have seen the changes developing – each school is on their own journey and has different starting points and this has been reflected in this project.

HOW INCLUSIVE WERE THE SCHOOLS INVOLVED?

Inclusion Checklist (see Appendix 6) -How inclusive are the 14 Devon secondary schools perceived by staff completing the checklist?

Staff were asked to tick one box per statement of 15 statements with four choices- Agree/ Agree to some extent/ Disagree to some extent/Disagree. The final summary % from 14 schools was made from the 44 replies for the combined disagree/ Disagree to some extent columns. Please see Appendix 6 for the checklist statements and summary percentages. The range of number of replies per school was from 1-5 checklists per school received; 50% of schools gave 5 replies.

Results from 14 schools generated 44 replies- 13 SENCOs and 31 TAs completed the checklist. The overall average score for all the boxes ticked was 23% of boxes ticked as disagree/disagree to some extent.77% of boxes ticked on average for Agree/ Agree to some

extent. This strongly indicates that over three quarters of the inclusive statements were perceived as being achieved in the 14 schools by the 44 staff who completed the checklist. Just under a quarter of inclusive statements were seen to be not yet achieved. The range of statement ticked in these categories was from 0% to 75%.

This indicates that for these 14 Devon secondary schools a strong inclusive education environment is being provided for the students with DS.

2 key statements on the Inclusive checklist were highly significant in being perceived by staff completing the checklist as **not yet achieved** throughout the 14 schools:

- Teachers share planning schemes of work for lessons and homework **75% Disagree/disagree to some extent with this statement**
- Learning support assistants are involved in curriculum planning and review **52% Disagrees/disagree to some extent with this statement**
- **This is reflected nationally**

One school informed us that a change of role of TAs meant that TAs are **not** involved in curriculum planning and review **nor do they** differentiate (teachers should do this) **nor** make resources (resource staff attached to each curricular department would be expected to do this). Within the schools surveyed this is not a model used by the other schools and represents a difference of status and responsibility for TAs in this one school.

The following feedback around possible strategies to develop these two areas were gained from group work at the Secondary Support day for staff supporting students' with DS held on Thursday July 9th 2009. 25 staff contributed to the task – 3 specialist EP's/ DS, 1 SENCO, and 20 TAs all supporting students with DS and already involved with the secondary project in their own schools.

Teachers share planning schemes of work for lessons and homework: How can we progress this?

- Have a working party developed by TAs and teachers around planning time and how to work effectively together. All staff to attend – if not possible then staff could write a report for the meeting.
- TAs could approach teachers – see their side of the story
- Try and get advance notice of plans
- Subject based TAs are able to get more involved with departments and planning
- Need to keep and share resources made across year groups
- Need to celebrate success, use effort awards, improvement awards etc.

Learning support assistants are involved in curriculum planning and review: How can we progress this?

- Ask teachers if TAs can be involved in planning and assessment
- Ask if TAs can plan with the student beforehand
- Protected planning time for TAs written into timetable
- Time needs to be allocated so that TAs and teachers can review and record where the student is.
- Clearer role descriptions from Senior Management Group – what counts as teaching and what is assisting a student
- Teachers need to take more responsibility for these students- have ownership of them in their classes.
- Need a change of ethos- whole school approach with teachers taking responsibility

- Teachers could prepare one differentiated worksheet for a lesson- TAs not asking teachers to prepare lots of different sheets for the class. This would provide the TA with direction of where to take the lesson.
- Teachers who will be teaching the student with DS should be made to attend the training days from outside agency including specialist EP team- not just send TAs.
- Share with teachers tools like B squared, PIVATS.
- INSET for whole school and support staff by specialist EP team
- Inform SENCO about 3 day 'Person Centred Transition' run annually at Ellen Tinkham School.
- Highlight – colour code against student's name on the register to remind teacher about SEN.

The following statements were perceived by 25% or more of staff completing the checklist as **not yet achieved** (indicated by selecting disagree/disagree to some extent with the statement):

- Assessment encourage the achievement of students with DS **36%**
- Learning aims of activities are clear **29%**
- Students learn collaboratively **27%**
- Student's are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning **25%**

School and Parents' views:

The following quotes from schools and parents indicate positive inclusive experiences for students' with DS:

'Parents chose the school because it was local, had a good academic reputation and suited both their daughter's needs. School welcomed their daughter with DS.'

'School has gained by having a student with DS by having a greater awareness of individual needs. S enriches the school and it is important that students are aware of individual needs.'

'School seen as promoting a positive ethos and positive attitude to SEN – not just from TAs but also staff and pupils.'

'Positive attitude in school and in particular within the inclusion department. Staff keen to learn and acquire skills for supporting pupils with DS.'

'Having a student with DS has changed the attitudes of students and staff in a positive way. Staff are very aware that S is an individual first but also know what his needs are.'

'S is very well included in the school she is not isolated and always part of the group; she is accepted by students and has confidence and stamina (school musical production!).'

'Pupil is included and very much part of the school community.'

'School has an excellent reputation for meeting the needs of SEN in general and Pupils with Down Syndrome in particular.'

'School is seen as benefiting from good experience of SEN pupil.'

Inclusive schools showed a strong link with and high respect for their SEN department as the following quotes show:

'SEN department seen as a real strength for the school and SEN staff are very aware of S's needs and can help by informing teaching staff of her needs.'

'SENCO is seen as a key point of support, advice, resources by TAs; TAs also provide strong support for each other and the lead TA supports and updates on any issues re S.'

'School seen as experienced and welcoming pupils with Down Syndrome.'

'SEN department working together with teaching staff, pupils and parents; raising awareness and highlighting best practice in meeting needs.'

'TAs working within the SEN department provide excellent support for each other across all areas of SEN'.

'SENCO and SEN staff are valued members of whole school team'.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS – FUNDING, PLANNING TIME AND HOW SUPPORT IS USED:

How is support funded and how much time per student is allocated?

Analysis for 23 students

- The 23 students receive full-time TA support of which generally 0.2 funded by school and 0.8 funded by CSET; In one case 0.1 was funded by school and 0.9 by CSET. It was unclear from replies but some students appear to be fully funded by CSET
- Only 1 MTA and break time support employed – the rest of the students are supported via SEN TA support or are independent during lunchtimes/ break times
- There are questions to be asked:
 - Is support matched to need? e.g. 1 student spends up to 80% of his time in Nurture group already staffed by TA(s) and was still allocated full time TA support. How is independence for student achievable in this context? The context of each individual student's needs should also be respected even in the context of the nurture group.
- Some of the ASDAN groups observed seemed to have more TAs than needed for the size of the group – flexibility in the use of TA support, even though it is allocated to individual students would enable TA staffing to match the need of differing settings. Certainly in some mainstream lessons some students were independent of TA support which is something to be celebrated and allowed the TA concerned time to prepare resources for other lessons.
- Full time support allocation to a student should also allow for time to be used for planning/making resources etc

Table 2 :Number of TAs supporting each student (23 students in total)

No. of TAs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No. of students	0	1	2	3	8	4	3	2
%	0%	4%	9%	13%	35%	17%	9%	4%

- 52% of students have 5 or 6 TAs supporting them usually with a key worker/lead TA; 13% have 7 or 8 TAs; 13% have 2 or 3 TAs; 13% have 4 TAs
- 65% of students have 4 – 6 TAs supporting them

This is in line with recommendations from DSA and Down's Ed for secondary school practice who recommend that students with DS at secondary school should have more TAs supporting them than at primary school with the recommended level being 5-6 TAs.

This number of TAs allows each TA to share curriculum workload and knowledge. It also reflects secondary school life- where students are involved with lots of teachers and there is a wide range of subjects taught. It also increases staff knowledge about students with DS, and can provide 'cover' for absences of staff due to illness/attending courses.

'System working well involving a number of TAs in supporting the student with DS – Seen as a better way of supporting pupils and meeting their social and inclusion needs.'

Table 3 :Planning time for TAs

Data from 14 schools (23 students)

Lessons per week allocated to planning time	0	1-2	3-4	'On request'
Number of schools	3	8	2	1

Most schools had within the group of TAs supporting the student with DS, a Lead TA/Key worker who usually is allocated more planning time (including in schools where other TAs receive no planning time). The lead TA has the responsibility to attend training and to cascade down information re DS and the student both to TAs and to teaching staff. The key worker also supports TAs in all areas to do with the student with DS alongside the SENCO. This model of schools having a lead TA for students with DS is to be recommended and is seen as good practice.

Planning time generally does not include time to meet with teaching staff. Time is not protected and often TAs have to cover for staff absences etc. Sometimes one or more TAs are overlooked re not given planning time in a school where planning time is allocated! Many reports were received of TAs planning and preparing resources in own time.

'TAs have very little time in school for planning or preparing resources – this is often done in their own time. They have no allocated time to talk and plan with teachers, although there is some planning/preparation time in PE.'

Most schools provide a flexible package on top of 'core' planning time to enable school visits to occur, courses to be attended, and qualifications for TA to be completed. There is a need for TAs to have more time 'off timetable' so that TAs can plan and make resources after consultation with teachers. More teachers should be helped to provide the differentiation for the students with DS.

'School provides time for TA's to plan and prepare resources.'

ORGANISING THE TIMETABLE AND USE OF TA AND PEER SUPPORT

Summary of timetables

Each of the 23 students timetables were analysed to see what percentage of their time was spent in mixed ability classes; lower set classes; small groups and 1:1 withdrawal lessons. For the latter two definite planning and purpose was shown by all schools. The analysis for each student can be seen in Appendix 7.

The 2 schools with 6 and 4 Devon students respectively account for 43% of the students and this may bias the results. Suffice it to say that the school with 9 students with DS(6 from Devon and 3 from another LA (not included in the evaluation)) show the most significant development for matching timetable to individual needs and show the greatest

flexibility to meet students' needs and to develop a rich mix of small group and individual work outside of the traditional timetable much to the benefit of the students' with DS.

Table 4 Analysis and trends of timetable per year group

(A=Average; M=Median; R= Range)

Year Group (Number of students in brackets)	% Mixed Ability classes	% Lower set	%Small/Nurture group	% One to one withdrawal
Year 7 (6)	A 63 M 72 R 20-87	7 0 0-30	22 20 0-80	6 8 0-20
Year 8 (6)	A 44.5 M 40 R 12-58	36 44 12-58	17 12 12-58	2 0 0-10
Year 9 (3)	A 51 M 52 R 32-70	26 26 20-32	7 6 0-16	15 20 4-22
Year 10 (3)	A 71 M 66 R 56-92	26 34 0-44	0 0 0	3 0 0-8
Year 11 (3)	A 28 M 0 R 0-83	9 10 0-17	60 90 0-90	3 0 0-10
Year 12 (2)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Years 7 and 8 (representing 12 students) give a clearer indication of progress of matching timetable to individual needs than other year groups where only 2 or 3 students are currently in each of year groups 9 – 12. It will be interesting to track the progress of the year 7-8 cohort to see whether the current pattern for years 9- 12 continues.

Three schools operate a Nurture group in year 7 for vulnerable students both in terms of behaviour and learning. Two of these schools currently support a student in year 7. One school operates the group as 50% access to mainstream classes and 50% nurture group with the aim of having the students fully included into mainstream classes by the Summer term. This was seen to be a good model to encourage inclusive practice. One school operated a Nurture group for any year 7 student working below NC level 2- this disadvantaged the student with DS who had been fully included in her Primary school and was working at the most able level of ability for students with DS. Pupils were gradually introduced to main school curricular lesson over a period of several years. The third school had the year 7 students in the nurture group for 80% of lessons all year and then expected all students to be fully included in main school lessons in year 8 – this seemed to be providing problems for both the students and the teachers when transfer to year 8 occurred ..

In all schools there are developments for small group work reflecting a range of work additional to the curriculum e.g. language and communication, additional work in teaching reading and writing, social skills and SRE groups . The schools with a group of students with DS were able to develop this to encompass work specifically to meet the needs of students with DS within their specific learning profile. One school has developed this group and 1:1 work to an outstanding level and the school also invites students with DS from neighbouring schools to take part in their groups with good success. It is difficult for schools supporting

only one or two students with DS to develop this level of skill and there is an argument for schools in each area clustering to develop such excellent practice.

'There is flexibility for each student to have their own individual timetable based on their needs – this involves years 7-9 attending mixed ability classes in most subjects – some lower set placements in Maths ; the opportunity for small group work to develop language and social skills and time for 1:1 work on specific language work and/or writing and/or reading practice.'

'Each student's individual timetable is available on line and also descriptors of the small group and individual work available covering a range of areas :Success Maker, Art workshop, IT skills, Crackit, riding, inreach to local Special School, Endeavor Communication group, key board skills ,handwriting , hydro pool, communication speech and language, swimming, one to one support , Numeracy support, additional PE, use of student support base .Access to this by staff benefits overall communication within the school.'

In all year groups except year 11 it is pleasing to see that by far the majority of time for students is spent in mixed ability classes. The percentage of lower set in year 7 is not necessarily representative of all the schools as the school supporting 6 students with DS runs a different teaching approach where all the students stay together for core subjects and do not move to curricular based teachers for these subjects – this is reflected in the range scores. (2 year 7 students at this school) and there are no lower sets in this year group.

'School is flexible in its approach – for example including pupil in with a higher ability set (seen as providing good role models).'

'Good awareness in school of trying to achieve a balance between support in whole class sessions and withdrawal for specific teaching / learning of skills.'

Years 8,9 and 10 show a pattern reflecting guidelines from DSA and Down's Ed with the majority of time in mixed ability classes , followed by lower set classes for core subjects, and with small group work and one to one work showing the least percentage. It is very encouraging to see how well included in the mixed ability classes students are and this reflects advice from DSA and Down's Ed that placing students with DS with students of all abilities provides good role models for both learning and behaviour. The work is then differentiated to the ability levels of the individual learning level of each student following the syllabus being taught to the whole class.

'Each student's timetable reflects the access to these groups according to individual need. Students spend the majority of timetable in mainstream classes .Extraction groups are targeted and specific.'

The year 11 percentages reflect a much higher percentage of small group work as this reflects following the alternative curriculum which is usually a combination of ASDAN and Entry Levels. One to one lessons where used are for specific topics like communication or study skills. Work placements are included as small group work

and part-time FE College placements are included as lower sets for years 10 and 11. This pattern would be similar to many of the Key Stage 4 pupils with SEN in all the schools and follows government guidelines for a more flexible approach to KS4 timetabling. It is entirely appropriate for students with DS and the percentage reflect the needs of each student – where students are also studying for GCSE subjects this is reflected in the percentages for mixed ability class.

The year 12 students were not able to be logged into the above format of the data collection as they were following alternative curriculum pathways within a group of students full time. This is an exciting new development for the schools involved providing opportunities for the students with DS and other students to follow an enriching curriculum with a range of National qualifications and awards matching the learning needs of the group, and maintaining a school journey through mainstream schools at sixth form levels.

The two schools involved that have developed an alternative curricula route to the traditional sixth form curriculum are the two schools that support the most number of students with DS (9 and 4 respectively). The schools told us that their students' with DS were the trigger for developing good mainstream sixth form provision for students' with a learning disability in their school.

Other schools in our survey are similarly planning to develop these sorts of study pathways for their student with DS and others where there is a sixth form in place. This represents exciting new developments and opportunities at this tertiary level of education.

ACCESSING THE CURRICULUM

Acquiring new skills: Differentiation

All staff interviewed had a clear understanding of what differentiation is. A major and regularly reported block to progress was that subject teachers were not meeting the student's learning needs and did not understand how to map back to lower NC levels and P levels. There were some outstanding examples from some schools where the SENCO and TAs had been involved in working closely with staff to help them to differentiate appropriately for their student with DS.

'SENCO has worked hard this year at helping teaching staff to understand what differentiation is and how to apply this using curriculum maps back to P levels. The SENCO has also been on hand to help individual teachers to progress.' This is an outstanding model and has produced excellent results over a comparatively short length of time.

'SENCO and TAs have a good understanding of what differentiation means for S working at P levels.'

'S has made staff think about how they teach and what they teach and this has had benefits for all students. Teaching has improved overall. School is a caring and accepting place for S- everyone is very friendly to her.'

'School has made great progress in differentiating at 'p' levels – has been a steep learning curve.'

In some schools, resources from DSA support disc giving examples of curriculum maps, P levels and examples of differentiated materials across subjects had been made available to all staff on the school portal thus enabling teachers to have access to information to help them to map back to earlier key stages including P levels.

'Resources from the DSA giving information about students' with DS, examples of differentiated materials, B squared and curriculum mapping are on the school portal so all staff can access.'

Generally lower sets provided better differentiation for the group as a whole and students could access work often without the need for further differentiation and this enabled them to work more independently and to need less access to TA support. This was despite some of

the lower set lessons observed containing students with challenging behaviour. The students with DS who were observed in these lessons showed really good skills in being able to concentrate and stay on task and provided excellent role models for behaviour and learning despite the behaviour of some of their peers! There were some lower set lessons showing exemplary behaviour from all students and excellent classroom management and teaching in small achievable steps by the teachers. Lesson observations of both mixed ability and lower set classes backed up this finding.

'Teachers of small group lower ability sets differentiate lessons well and TAs support individual students as required. Emphasis is on students working independently of adult support and working collaboratively with peers.'

Interestingly when students with DS were asked about which lesson they preferred it was often the lower set lesson – asked why – it was because they could do the work by themselves. (NB Please note this was not a question that was asked of all students in the survey and there were many mainstream lesson also quoted as favourites – this often included PE and games although both these subjects were also quoted by other students as their least favourite! It would be interesting to follow this up more formally at a later date.)

In the mainstream lessons observed there were some examples of good differentiation by some mainstream teachers. Sadly there were many examples of TAs doing all the differentiation and often 'on the hoof'. Information gained from interviews with TAs substantiated this as well as some of the lesson observations.

'In observed lessons, good examples of teamwork and planning.'
'PE and Art teachers plan for student and support him independent of TA support.'

In 50% of schools good progress has been made over the years in teachers understanding how to differentiate and in some schools more than 50% of teaching staff were reported to be differentiating well, sharing plans with TAs and working as a team together. In these schools the willingness to learn was strong from those staff not yet on board with differentiation but time factors were usually given as the main obstacle. This represents a great development.

'Some good examples of differentiation in the school; some examples of teachers working hard to differentiate and liaise with TAs. Parents are particularly pleased with the differentiation and support in French, Maths, Science and P.E.'

Teacher – foreign language: *'I apply the same principles as I do with all students- I try to plan lessons that will engage all students. All learning is broken down into steps that are more accessible which to me is differentiation. I pick the core elements that everyone needs to learn and I use a visual and kinaesthetic learning style. For example, introducing vocabulary I will present students with pictures of animals that they can then label in French- typically I will have prepared the differentiated materials of words to match to the pictures.'*

Teacher: *'I wish that I had more time to liaise with T's TAs. The reality is that I am very busy as are they. I will try to provide TAs with an outline lesson plan and any resource'*

Four schools were still struggling to have teachers involved with differentiation – in these schools both TAs and SENCOs when interviewed said that TAs were responsible for all the differentiation and often had to differentiate 'on the hoof'. These were schools where it was reported that Senior Management did not always promote an inclusive attitude towards SEN students and in some cases actively questioned the placement of students' with DS in mainstream schools. In these schools, in spite of this attitude, students were receiving good

input on an individual level as the SEN department provided the appropriate work but parents interviewed reported feeling that they had had to fight for the rights of their child to remain in mainstream school and had difficulty in getting differentiated work both in lessons and homework except via the TAs/SENCO..

TAs did most of the differentiation- some teachers did speak to TAs and share planning.'
'Teaching staff don't have the training to differentiate for a child to lower levels than is expected for secondary pupils nor to P levels- they don't have time to prepare work. Some staff are very 'old school' in their views of SEN and make their views very explicit- they have been very unaccepting of the student with DS'.
'Only staff within the SEN department are interested in S- we would like support from Senior Management and for the Head of Year to include in S in assembly'.
'School paid lip service to pupils' with SEN in the early days- school would see the problem before they would consider the outcome. I had several run ins with teachers who didn't think that he should be in mainstream. Staff were over protective of him at times. Things have improved over time'. Parent

These findings support Lorenz's findings in her survey of Primary schools, in that schools with a negative attitude to inclusion of students' with DS provided often unsuccessful placements; whereas where there was an inclusive attitude from the Principal and Senior Management through to all staff, placements were highly likely to not only be very successful but also staff welcomed students into their schools.

Parents' comments: *'I think it's a brilliant school- it's a good school for pupils with SEN'*
'School does inclusion really well D has been part of the school all the way through- there has not been any segregated provision'.
'School was very welcoming and had good ability to include my child. It embraced changes and had previous experience of supporting a pupil with DS. J has always felt happy in school – she is accepted and included.'

Encouragingly seven (50%) of the schools surveyed were found to have a very inclusive attitude to including students with DS; three schools (21%) were making progress in becoming good inclusive schools, and four schools (29%) were felt to be non-inclusive as a result of the data gathered from our survey (again opinion shared by school EPs).

Teacher: *' Personally I have gained by having a student with DS- my skills of differentiating work is ever improving. From a College perspective S has been able to embody the true spirit of inclusion- he has produced some very good work and has demonstrated that having DS is not a reason to fail in an academic context'.*

Individual Education Plans (IEP)

All schools provided IEPs for their student(s) which were clear and informative and showed a good knowledge of the individual pupil and their needs. Many included expected outcomes as well as whom would be involved and when targets should be achieved. Many schools also provided very informative pen portraits of the student, often including a photo, which gave specific strengths, needs and strategies for teachers and TAs to be informed about. They also included a pen picture of the student and their interests, like and dislikes. Again an area of good to outstanding practice.

- *'Clear IEPs with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed) targets set and outcomes recorded.'*

- *'IEPs are also online and reflect the detail and understanding of each student's holistic as well as learning needs. This reflects a very high standard of IEP, individual timetabling and provision maintained through out the school for this group of students.'*

Lesson observations:

Of the twenty eight lessons observed across thirteen schools (one year 11 student was on exam leave when the evaluation was completed and no longer attending lessons) fourteen were mixed ability lessons, seven were lower sets of about fourteen students usually supported by two TAs including the TA for the student with DS, six small group lessons including two Nurture groups and two ASDAN lessons and one 1:1 (communication session).

There were some excellent examples across all categories. The lower set lessons tended to be better differentiated but also (not always) often supported a significant number of students with challenging behaviour – some teachers were excellent at managing these behaviours others were quite challenged by it. Again the students with DS in these lessons were good role models for behaviour and were not distracted or upset by the behaviour of the other students. The work for the small groups and Nurture groups were very well differentiated as was the 1:1 lesson, and had a high ratio of TAs to students – generally 2 TAs to 5 students and an HLTA taking the lesson (in those lessons observed).

There were some interesting trends in the mixed ability lessons where there was often little teacher engagement for the student with DS and the seating was often arranged so that the TA was seated next to the student in between other students so that the student with DS did not have access to peers either for support or for social interactions. In some of these lessons the student with DS was doing 'fill in' activities e.g. colouring in during the teacher input to the whole class so was not engaged in the topic. However, equally there were many examples of good inclusion for the students, teacher and peer interaction, and good differentiation. There tended to be better opportunities for students to work unsupported in lower set and small group lessons.

TAs were consistently across all types of lessons seen to provide excellent facilitation using open and closed questions, verbal and physical prompts as required, simplifying language, scribing key points on white boards, redirecting students when tired towards the end of lessons; reminding students of class rules, rewards and sanctions and were excellent at keeping students focused and on task.

Mixed ability lessons:

'S well included with good interactions with other students; teacher gave good explanations but didn't have much to do with S'. Technology

'Good teacher interaction with teacher and pupil and TA; teacher sets task for all and then monitors all class including P. P has no interaction with other students.'

'G involved in the same way as everyone else- good relationship with TA ,other pupils and teacher who encouraged all class to learn by exploring (investigating Publisher)'.(ICT)

'RA provided good scaffolding for K, asked open ended questions; encouraged K to be independent; TA also worked with other pupils'. French

' P supported well by peers in pairs P contributed to discussion both in group and class; TA supported as needed and also left P space to be part of the group. 'PE

' H supported by TA at side but opportunities for T relate to peers who supported him with praise and interest. Teacher included H in questioning and consistently praised him and the whole class. Excellent facilitation by TA, very well organised lesson with excellent differentiation preprepared by TA after joint planning with teacher'. Geography

Lower sets:

'Pupils chose where they sat – good opportunities for inclusion; TA sat row behind L and supported as required as well as supporting other students. L engaged with task and contributing well to the lesson. Teacher's role is excellent-, lesson already differentiated and taught in small achievable steps with good use of white board and Power Point referenced back to textbook. Few minutes teacher talk followed by student activities; teacher includes all class in answering questions, moves around class as short written task completed- positive comments to all .L able to work mostly independent of TA support and with her peers. Excellent class and pupil behaviour management – Teacher reminded group of class routine and rules and dealt with individuals – with a positive approach ' I know that you can behave very well think about Regular praise to group for contributions to activities and tasks'. History

Training for staff:

Training was also undertaken both by SENCO s and the EP /DS team to reinforce work carried out in schools. Training is offered by the specialist EP team to any secondary school receiving a student with DS at secondary transition. Schools usually opt to receive this (for whole staff awareness training) at the beginning of the Autumn term when the student starts secondary school. Some schools choose the preceding Summer term or earlier.

Accessing support and training from specialist EP service took the following formats: Most schools accessed training from the specialist EP service and 4 schools request ongoing annual or more training for staff recognising that with each year group change there will be teaching staff new to teaching students with DS who will require training. Training centres around the specific learning profile, inclusion issues, differentiation and sometimes behaviour. This is a model of excellent practice which should be encouraged in all schools supporting students with DS.

3 schools surveyed have never asked for the EP service to provide training in schools for staff supporting students with DS. One school feels that they provide a very inclusive setting meeting the needs of all categories of SEN. This was backed up by our evaluation but TAs in particular would welcome some specific training around their student with DS specifically to do with the specific learning and language profile. This will be followed up by our team. Staff at this school also didn't attend support group or training provided by EP/DS team as 1 or 3 day training. One school has a SENCO who is poorly supported at Senior management level (SMT) and TAs have never been allowed to access either the training offered by our team as 1 or 3 day training nor have they been released to attend support groups despite TAs requesting attendance. SMT feel that TAs are needed full-time in school to support the student. This is also a school which is resistant to teaching staff differentiating work. The third school accesses all training and support group provided outside of school by EP/DS team but has not received whole school training to staff although they have supported 4 other students with DS in the past and their current student is in year 10.

'There is a continued need (as in any secondary school) for ongoing annual training to staff teaching the pupil with DS and this is reflected in the school practice led by the SENCO – training by the specialist team of EPs has been given at the beginning of the Autumn term of each year change and this is planned to continue'.

'Workshops have been used and training in differentiation to staff by specialist EPs supporting students with DS during the course of this year.'

'School regularly access the specialist EPs for training both for TAs and teaching staff especially around the area of differentiation; also outside support for Sex & Relationship Education.'

'Good use of skills learnt on courses and putting ideas into practice – for example Social Stories, Image in Action.'

Use of TA support:

TAs interviewed had good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of how there support was used within the school in which they were working. There were a lot of excellent examples of schools working collaboratively with teachers, SENCOs and TAs around differentiation and how support was used. The most successful models were where TAs and teaching staff were valued as an equal team and TAs inputted about levels of assessment abilities of their students for teachers,; where TAs took ideas from discussions with teaching staff about how their student would be able to access the curriculum and these TAs were very skilled at then making resources to meet the curricular and learning needs of their student(s).

Time availability for teachers and TAs to meet and plan was a huge barrier. The amount of planning time for TAs was unrealistic in some schools and there were many examples quoted of TAs making resources in their own time or having to differentiate 'on the hoof' as they did not have access to teacher's curricula plans. Many schools had, despite these barriers, developed effective strategies to enable this to happen, for example TAs knowing which folder the plans were in and being invited by teachers to look in them.

'Some teaching staff are not aware of the level at which the students are working and expect the TAs to differentiate.'

TAs need to have access to schemes of work and teachers medium term plans so that they can prepare resources beforehand.

TAs as a group are highly skilled in knowing how to break teaching tasks down into smaller steps; to simplify their language to enable their student to access the class task; how and when to use support – all lesson observations backed up these skills and gave many examples of excellent practice including TAs knowing when and how to support their students and when to allow independent working.

'TAs understand how to support both students well, enabling them to access lessons through their use of simplifying language, breaking tasks down into small steps and differentiating the task taught using visual and concrete materials.'

'TAs have good and clear understanding of differentiation and are also involved in planning 'Skills for life' lessons. Some TAs work very closely with certain teachers to plan.'

'Teachers will give work to lead TA to differentiate which enables S to access the lesson at her level e.g. in a recent class French assessment this occurred where S could put symbols as answers on test – S scored 35/50 on the same test that the whole class were doing.'

'Teaching assistants differentiating to KS1 levels; flexible and adapting at short notice.'

TA, peer support and working towards independence

Becoming independent: Lessons and break/lunchtimes:

TA support is provided as required and TAs work hard to develop independent working for as much time as possible during each lesson. Some TAs in some schools were restricted in this important area of development due to teacher insistence that full one to one support be provided by the TAs at all times. This was a pattern also seen in all schools to an extent,

where individual teachers differed in their willingness to support independent working for students and the development of peer support. This made the work of the TAs with their students inflexible and was a cause of frustration for some TAs.

Most schools find this area the most challenging and this seems to be tied into the level of TA support and the attitude of the school. Where there was a positive attitude from the Principal down to all staff, students were much more likely to be given opportunities to be independent, including in one school in years 11 and 12 to be given a pass to leave school at lunchtime as per all the other students (with parental consent). The students with DS had key fobs with key questions to ask if they were lost and phone numbers of staff to phone etc. No problems have been reported thus far.

In other less inclusive schools an over protective attitude pervades and staff are not encouraged to take responsible/ planned risks for students with DS to enable independence both in lessons and around the school site to develop, to the extent of students not being able to find their way from lesson to lesson even with peer support as this was considered 'too much of a responsibility' for peers, even though some of the students with DS were able to use public transport and go to local shops independently. Schools where this was happening generated frustration for TAs supporting the student and for the parents. This knock on effect also impeded friendships being developed and often made other students wary of the student with DS who always appeared with a 'minder' even to the extent of the student having no choice about breaks and lunchtimes – they were spent in the SEN room. In some instances the student perpetuated the desire for TA support and staff were pulled into this 'velcroed' model unwittingly- again depending on the attitude of the school.

In two schools where there were students with DS with challenging behaviour and little sense of danger even with the best intentions it was hard to develop independence; nonetheless both schools tried hard and some independence was achieved for both students. Other schools used terms like 'risk assessment', 'Health and Safety policy' to restrict the independence of students who presented with far less challenging behaviour.

In the inclusive schools great success was found in developing independence both in lessons, finding the way around school and at break and lunch times. Many students in these schools chose to be out with their mainstream peers and many students chose to be some of the time with mainstream peers and some of the time with their SEN peers either out on school site or in the SEN room or both. There were some great examples where students were working in lessons as much as possible independent of support and strategies were in place to enable this happen.

These findings support Lorenz's findings from her survey in Primary schools. It was refreshing to see how many of the secondary schools were either very positive (8) in their attitude to inclusion for these students or were considerably more inclusive than six years ago (4). 2 schools still do not understand what inclusion means for these students and seem to have a less inclusive attitude towards SEN in general.

- *'SEN department and teaching staff promote independence from adult support for S.'*
- *'Good role of TAs in building independence skills.'*
- *'S has support available in every lesson but within a lesson he has time to do tasks with no or minimum support.'*

Overall 12 of the secondary schools surveyed showed either a good inclusive attitude or a developing inclusive attitude.

Use of peer support

This varied from school to school and also within school- some schools used peer support very successfully for all SEN and vulnerable students. Within schools it was often teacher specific with some teachers encouraging peer support and other teachers discouraging this on the grounds that it might impede the completion of course work by the supportive peer. Some schools gave examples of successful peer support happening 'naturally' with certain students volunteering to support students with DS without being directly asked. Generally TAs felt that it was something that they could be more proactive about and would take this on board, often saying that when certain students had offered help how successful this had been. They also wanted to develop promoting this not only in lessons but also during free time.

There were also comments from several schools that where peer support had been offered both in lessons and at break times this had been rejected by the student with DS and it had been difficult to progress it. Some schools recognised that this then highlighted to them that work needed to be done on social skills with the student with DS and some very successful outcomes had ensued particularly with the use of Social Stories.

A recurring issue was around SEN support for the student being used for all breaks/lunchtimes. Where flexibility and student choice were used by schools far more opportunities for independence for the student(s) occurred.

'S copes well in the dining hall and is supported by his friends. His peers also help him to get to registration and sometimes to lessons if required. Peers will also model activities for him in mainstream P.E.'

The development of independent learning and the use of peer support remains a challenge in many schools although many positive strides have been made by the schools involved compared to only 6 years ago. The best practice was seen in schools where flexibility was used and the students' timetable was based on individual needs of students and not on rigour demanded by the school.

'Mainstream timetable accessed by S with sensitive use of TA support as required. Pupil included in mixed ability groups'

Strategies were suggested for developing independence in lessons/free times from small group work during the secondary support day:

- Students should be allowed to find their way around school independently – initially with TA at a distance
- Example given where student has a PECS communication book with a sentence that she can read out to staff who ask her where she is going rather than send her back to Learning Support.
- Use peer support- encourage other students to work with student with DS in class.
- Depends on each individual student how successful this might be – there may be safety issues, depends also on motivation of the student.

Homework

This area presented strong contention especially from the parents. Parents raised many issues re homework: frequency – there seemed to be either too little or too much or none at all! Parents often complained about lack of differentiation of homework, and parents' inability to understand the task by the recording methods sent home.

Homework was usually set in SEN group lessons and it was reported that homework (in all subjects) is nearly always differentiated by TAs, although some teachers were reported to differentiate homework – where this happened the differentiation was good. Generally homework given by mainstream teachers is often not differentiated. Homework that was set was often taking the student (and the parent!) too long.

There were some good models:

'Homework differentiated by TAs in consultation with subject teachers and support from SEN department. Homework set is appropriate for S- this has improved over time'.
(parent).

'Homework differentiated generally by the TA in consultation with the subject teacher. TAs have worked with Special Ed and have Primary experience'.

Strategies suggested for differentiation of homework -from small group work Secondary support day.

- Teachers need to provide differentiated homework.
- One school has a homework system where all students get homework which is set at 3 levels - they know at which level they will be doing homework
- TAs could help teachers with differentiation of homework – make suggestions to help them understand how to do it.
- Make use of lunchtime and after school homework clubs.
- Encourage independent work by student in homework given for a limited time scale say 20 minutes. Homework needs to be appropriately differentiated!

Accessing the Curriculum: Extra- curricular activities

Eleven schools (79%) surveyed provided full access to all clubs for their students with DS- both lunchtime and after school- although some students chose not to access activities. Some students were not interested in accessing lunch time clubs preferring to be with their friends relaxing. Some students preferred to be in the SEN department. After school clubs were often difficult to access realistically. All schools provided 'mainstream' and SEN clubs but two schools only offered clubs to students with DS organised by the SEN department and one school felt no access to school club was possible. 21% of the schools involved were not inclusive in this area.

All schools provided access to day and residential trips although again in two schools this was organised within the SEN department. A week's residential skiing trip had included a student with DS in one school but needed more planning in that the student required one to one tuition and was able to link with another special school group which was at the same resort. Also because of medical problems (he was likely to black out) parents offered to accompany the trip as general help for the whole trip so that they were on hand if any medical issues arose (there were none!).

Another school offered year 7s the opportunity to learn to ski for a week using a dry ski slope as one of their end of year activities. The student with DS was very successfully included – the parents took him for several lessons before hand to prepare him and familiarise him with the place, the equipment, the routine etc, a one to one instructor was

provided for him on the slope as the TA supporting him had no experience or desire to ski- and the TA provided differentiated activities for him on his laptop as he tired before the end of the afternoon. An example of a well included and well planned trip.

This same student had experienced a very successful residential week with his peers earlier in the year – parents had paid the wages of an enabler to sleep over with him as he had never previously stayed away from home and was likely to get up and wander in the night and the school paid for the enabler's accommodation costs. TA cover was provided by the school to enable him to take part in all the sporting activities including orienteering, surfing, mountain wall climbing and canoeing. Another excellent example of meeting the needs of the individual student which was totally inclusive and not only increased the students' self esteem but also changed the attitudes of staff supporting him and his peers.

This finding was replicated over and over again with positive reports of residential trips and day trips – often the student with DS was described as the best behaved student on the trip! This represents significant progress in accessibility and equal opportunities and good inclusive practice for these students and is a positive development from when students with DS were first included into Devon secondary schools where often barriers were presented- usually on Health and Safety grounds which often prevented these students from accessing day and residential trips.

Parent: *'School trips have gone well including a five day residential trip – good planning by staff involved.'*

'Residential trip seen as having a positive impact.'

Issues:

There were some issues raised in the areas of extra-curricular activities. There was often a reported over reliance of the student on TA support which was seen as a barrier. There were also funding issues for after school clubs – some schools provided and paid for TA cover for this; some TAs provided their time voluntarily; some clubs were not accessible for the student as no support could be provided by the school when required. In some schools enablers were provided to bridge this gap – it was not clear who funded this but it was likely to be the parents. Some staff and parents interviewed felt that access to clubs had not been properly thought through and that some students chose not to join in clubs as there were no adaptations made to enable access at the students' level of ability.

There were barriers to accessing after school clubs due to transport difficulties as students needed to catch school buses or taxis. This can prohibit access for all students to after school clubs. Parents were often available to pick up their children from school so that they could attend the clubs. The main barrier to accessing after school clubs was that parents reported that their children were too tired after a full school day to attend and needed to chill out and relax at home after school. For this reason many schools had limited after schools clubs and concentrated on lunchtime clubs. Where the student with DS was independent of TA support then access to all clubs was available. Parents also didn't always get the information from school about clubs and school outings especially if their child was not in tutor group (rare) or had left the letter about the trip in school!

Sports clubs were felt to be not so easy to access as students with DS were generally not able to compete on the same level as typically developing students for school teams. Many schools had therefore provided sports clubs for SEN students and had also utilised students with DS to coach the younger students.

'There is a need for positive discrimination in this so area so that all parents are aware of opportunities for their children with DS'

'Good access to extra-curricular activities.'

'We encouraged S to join anything/ everything he wanted e.g. Ten Tors - he did the Jubilee challenge, running, music activities, scuba diving etc – school always provided whatever support was needed for him to take part.'

'S does horse riding and swimming in a small group within the school day, at lunchtime she wants to go off with her friends and not do clubs'.

Adequate support and encouragement is not always available in this area although there are some outstanding examples of access.

Alternative Accreditation and Qualifications at Key Stage 4 for Pupils With Down's Syndrome:

The following results from a mainstream secondary school in Devon in 2003 show a good range of qualifications available for Pupil A who functions at the lower end of ability for students with DS and for Pupil B who functions at the higher ability level:

- **Pupil A** – GCSE Textile Art Grade D
- Entry level Science, Maths, English, Geography
- ASDAN Bronze Maths, Silver Science
- College experience hairdressing and child care, 1 day a week at Primary school and 1 day work experience
- **Pupil B** – 5 GCSE's- French (D), Double Science (EE), Food Technology ©, Art and Design (D)
- Entry level Geography
- ASDAN Silver Maths and English
- Ten Tors Bronze medal 2002, Silver medal 2003

This range of qualifications for students' with DS was not generally reflected in practice in other secondary schools in Devon at this time – many schools only had GCSE courses available for all students. In some schools that were developing Alternative Accreditation the student with DS was being taught on a one to one basis!

We were interested in how this provision had changed over the last 6 years as more students are attending mainstream schools who are not able to access GCSE level including many students with DS.

The following Data from our secondary schools survey 2009 shows a wide range of courses being accessed by our current KS4 students with access reflecting ability of the student.

KS4 qualifications currently being taken by year 10 and 11 students' with DS

- **Yr 10** Entry levels Maths, English, GCSE Art and Design, Drama, Food, D&T, RE, Foundation Science, ASDAN Bronze level
- **Yr 10** ASDAN Bronze Level
- **Yr 11** GCSE Science, French, Entry Level English, Maths, History, ICT, ASDAN

- **Yr 11** AQA Maths, Science, Technology, GCSE PD, Art, Entry level English
- Alternative Accreditation routes for **any** students going through KS4 to years 12 and 13 covers ASDAN, NVQ, Entry levels, GCSE , Key Skills course, Eco Watch project, Arts Award, PE and Outdoor Pursuits.

Students with DS are currently taught as part of a group of students accessing the Alternative Accreditation, and courses are matched to each students individual learning needs. This is a very positive improvement on the situation 6 years ago. Only one school surveyed currently does not have any Alternative Accreditation in place – all other schools do. Data was not provided from 1 school.

Table 5: Alternative Accreditation offered at KS4 14-19 strategies
Data gathered from 13 schools

Alternative Accreditation	Youth Awards	AQA	ASDAN Stepping Stones / Key Steps Year 7 +	ASDAN	NVQ	Entry Levels	GCSE only
Number of schools	1	1	2	10	2	10	1

12 out of 13 schools provide Alternative Accreditation offering a wide syllabus including Life Skills as well as Entry levels and GCSE. ASDAN and Entry levels are the most popular form of Alternative Accreditation – 10 out of 12 schools - and more schools are looking towards ASDAN Stepping Stones which can be taught in Key Stage 3 so that small group work in life skill areas can be taught towards a qualification from year 7 for some of the timetable – the remainder being mainstream classes with some 1:1 work. This shows a positive approach to alternative curriculum from year 7 onwards and is welcomed by schools and our service.

It is of interest that the school which does not currently offer Alternative Accreditation is also a school which runs a Nurture group in year 7 where students spend 80% of their time – this provision is not viewed as inclusive and staff are not yet thinking about future needs of these students even though they will be accessing a full timetable of mainstream classes in year 8.

The following quotes are from some of the most inclusive schools:

'Alternative Accreditation and SEN curricular are available for all students with SEN throughout the key stages.'

'KS4 also allows for this same flexibility looking at each individual student's needs but the ASDAN course involves a high proportion of the timetable and reflects the government's KS4 directive for more flexible options at this key stage in line with provision for all students. KS4 students also attend different provisions and work experience tied into a clear pathway which other students within college also follow.'

'Excellent booklet information is available for parents about Learning support, ASDAN and alternative accreditation routes; and for Primary year 6 students an excellent transition package has been developed again using materials available from DSA as a starting point'.

Developing age appropriate behaviour, Social skills and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)

Behaviour:

This area is one that showed the most development in secondary schools compared to six years ago. Inclusive and positive attitudes to behaviour were shown by the majority of schools. The most significant change was not in how the students' with DS behaved- they still presented with the same behaviours- but in the attitude of the schools in supporting the students in these areas. Behaviours were rarely seen as a problem but instead were understood in relation to the specific learning and, in particular, language profile for students with DS. The behaviours no longer presented as a problem but instead schools had developed positive strategies for helping students to change their behaviours and a huge growth in staff tolerance and understanding of the reasons behind any presenting behaviours were both observed in lesson observations and found out about in interview.

Of the 23 students only two presented with challenging behaviour and this was being handled positively by staff even in one case in extreme circumstances. The willingness of staff to understand and help students having difficulties was immense. By far the majority of students with DS were described as well behaved in school and setting good examples for other students, being able to ignore the sometimes challenging behaviours of typically developing students as well as other SEN students. The students with DS were often good role models in behaviour for other students in school.

'S has settled in very well in school and there are no behaviour issues. His behaviour is described as 'very good'.'

Excellent strategies had been devised throughout schools using a visual approach, simple language, social stories and plenty of praise for success! As well as using small group work to teach appropriate language in different school and home situations and teaching students with DS what word staff might use which meant praise or discipline – good use of school made board games often used.

'Behaviour management has worked well – school have learned and built on what interventions work best.'

Most students with DS were perceived as having good to excellent social skills

Most schools had developed good SRE courses – small group work often based on Image in Action work following a course organised by the EP/DS team in 2008; schools sometimes involved their school nurse in this and one school which is currently developing an SRE small group course have sent their student to join an SRE group in the local Special School which is close by.

'S has very good social skills and is very sociable, and very polite both to staff and other pupils.'

'SRE taught within whole class and also some small group/individual work. Student is described as 'very streetwise' and 'like all 16 year old boys', and has coped well with SRE. No issues in the areas of SRE, social skills or behaviour.'

'SRE differentiated to meet needs.'

Behaviour, Social skills and SRE issues are no longer seen as a problem but as part of the student with DS's development. By far the overall view of staff across all schools involved was that any issues in this area were 'Just like any teenager'.

Developing friendships: Both in and out of schools

This area showed mixed reports – friendships were often perceived as an issue by adults (both by staff in schools and by parents) but was not seen as an issue by the students who could name friends both in and out of school (although more in school). Staff and parents wanted to analyse what a friendship was rather than accept the students' viewpoint, and needed to know whether the friendship as perceived by the student was real or imagined and whether it was reciprocated by the 'named' friend. It would seem that thinking that you have friends is a better place to be than having friends and doubting that they are (often occurs with typically developing teenagers!).

'P has a large group of friends both from her tutor group and another group at lunchtime; her friends come and collect her at lunch time – they also go around to her house for tea.'

Two students out of twenty three students with DS have imaginary friends – for one this seemed to be filling the gap where there was no contact out of school with peers; for the other it seemed to be more of a way of describing her feelings using different persona. Staff had become very adapt at asking her to leave named imaginary friends in the school transport and not to bring them into school where they were getting the student into trouble – this was working very effectively!

There was definitely less contact out of school with friends generally compared to Primary school. Contact became less from year 9 onwards and was more difficult in KS4. This reflects research findings in this area (Buckley et al 2000). Again many parents were proactive in enabling contact with peers using clubs and sports to promote friendships. Some families started to use Special Needs Clubs after school for the first time and found that this was a good outlet to develop friends. Some students had friends out of school but these friends were often younger reflecting a comparable developmental level to the student with DS.

Year 11 student: *'S is seen as 'one of us' by peers in his year group; all the students like him and his own year group were very protective of him- younger students occasionally gave unacceptable comments and his peers dealt with this. S became very sociable particularly in KS4. Three or four students made a real effort to make sure that S was always included in everything. S also set up his own garden in school and sold vegetables to the staff.'*

It is hard for many students at Key Stage 4 with DS to mix socially out of school with their peers who may be going to clubs, shopping in town etc when the student with DS does not have the skills to do this and parents are understandably worried about vulnerability. Parents generally see contact with friends out of school as a real issue.

'Peer group friendly with S and he joins in basketball on the playground with them. He has friend in a younger year group whom he spends time with after school. Also has chosen friends within SEN group of students. Unsupported by staff at break and lunchtimes.'

This rather gloomy picture is not true for all students and there were some reports of students with DS in all year groups having friends both from tutor group/typically developing students as well as friends from SEN groups. One student with DS in year 9 has been made a school prefect. There were also many examples where some of the most challenging typically developing students had developed strong friendships with the student with DS and this had helped raise their self esteem.

'Some of the more disruptive students have shown a really kind, caring side when working with or being friends with S.'

'Friendships groups seen as supporting pupil.'

' Friendships are brilliant- all the pupils like her. L will tell other students off if they are not keeping to the school rules and they will listen to her rather than staff.'

Developing friendships: strategies from small group work secondary support day:

- Use a 'Buddy' system in tutor group.
- One school uses a vertical tutor group which includes all year groups from year 7 to year 11- this is very successful for developing friendships across age groups and older students make sure younger ones are OK. This school feeds a rural community and works very well – all students looking after each other in a close knit community. It was noted that some other schools in town areas had tried this and found that it was unsuccessful.
- Use of peer mentoring.

Parents: Perceptions of how school is achieving their hopes

All parents interviewed had very positive comments. In the majority of cases the school had been chosen because it was the local mainstream school and this was also the school where any siblings attended. In a few cases parents had chosen the school out of area through recommendation and reputation. One set of parents wished for a school that was 'somewhere between a mainstream school and a Special school'. One set of parents wanted Special school even though the student was well placed and supported in mainstream school.

'We chose the school because peers were transferring from Primary school; we wanted a school with good behaviour as M mimics other students; we had a good feeling for the school and M was comfortable with it.'

'We picked the school that most embraced change and was the most welcoming and positive – the staff at school said that they would love to have our daughter as a pupil.'

Schools in this survey were at differing points in their knowledge and skills of how to support a student with DS. The schools that had had considerable experience of supporting students with DS were generally more advanced in their overall skills at including students with DS. The schools currently supporting groups of students with DS had definitely developed support and services ahead of the other schools with one school showing outstanding practice with many innovative developments. Parents' concerns/celebrations were reflected in the perceived 'journey point of each school'.

There was generally good communication between parents and school particularly where a 'key worker' was in place. This was usually a TA and most parents with this model had a mobile phone number for contact. They were reassured with this system and could contact the key worker over immediate practical concerns e.g. P.E equipment left behind or forgotten dinner money, but also for more serious concerns e.g. their child being upset over friendships or unhappy in a particular lesson etc. There was a good use of home-school books generally for sharing information and celebrating success.

'Good communication between home and school; reviews are becoming more 'person centred planning' oriented.'

'The school has in place a key worker to link with home, to co-ordinate activities and subjects and help manage the timetable; this has had quite a positive impact.'

'Home-school communication links have worked well.'

There were some issues with information sent out from schools e.g. not getting general letters home about events, trips etc. This was sometimes because the student was not in tutor group when the letters were given out, or the letter had got lost between leaving school and arriving home. Positive discrimination in this area was recommended both by parents and staff. Some parents felt that lack of communication about their child's needs both within school and to parents was poor.

'Parents like the way problems can be resolved; communication seen as good with school; pupils seen to benefit socially from being included; parents feel that pupils are being looked after well; Student support seen in a very positive light; also SRE and Social skills; School trips seen positively.'

Many parents expressed concern about homework across many areas – some parents felt that their child was not given enough, others that they were given too much and some children were given no homework at all. The homework given was often unclear and parents could not help their children as they did not understand the task. There was also an issue of tiredness of the children after a day at school so that it was very difficult to complete homework; also that homework set took the student too long to complete.

There were many examples of schools adapting the homework to suit the individual needs of students and this was reflected in why some students had none or hardly any homework. The successful partnership was where parents were satisfied that the homework set (or not set) met the needs of their child within the framework of the schools' policy on homework.

Most parents interviewed felt that the homework was insufficiently differentiated and there were instances of the homework not being differentiated at all by the subject teacher/TA. As a general rule homework was better differentiated in lower set or nurture groups. There were some outstanding examples of homework being well differentiated in mainstream and lower set/ nurture group lessons with tasks set not only at the right level of ability but that also took up a reasonable amount of time for the student to complete. Some schools operated homework clubs for all students to access and many students with DS completed their homework in school.

Many parents were concerned about the lack of differentiation of lessons in mixed ability lessons at the same time being sympathetic as to the difficulties for all staff to do this in a large secondary school. They were very appreciative of the staff that did differentiate well. Parents of children just starting school in year 7 found this particularly hard as their children had moved on from Primary schools where, on the whole, the work had been well differentiated and staff understood the specific learning profile for children with DS and how this related to their child. Training for secondary staff is an ongoing issue and has already been highlighted in this report. One set of parents offered to be a parent rep within school and had previously had a very successful role doing this in their primary school, including being part of the interview panel for TAs to work with their child.

Parents were generally very pleased with the access, information and support from the SEN staff in school. Some parents did not have access to teaching staff at parents evening instead meeting with SEN staff. This left them feeling that the subject teachers did not know their child or understand their needs.

Generally parent support was highly valued by staff in schools, and schools used the parent's knowledge about DS and their child: *'S's mother has been our biggest resource'*.

Access to outside support:

All schools used the services of the specialist EP team to a greater or lesser extent. All but 2 schools attended the secondary support day and secondary schools were also represented at all the support group meetings held twice yearly in each area of Devon. Again all but 3 schools had accessed training in school for staff from the service. 2 of these schools were including the student with DS well so did not feel the need to access school training.

Our most inclusive secondary schools ask for at least annual training from our team and some in depth understanding of differentiation, behaviour, social skills, SRE etc has developed as a result of this. This has been reflected in our findings from this evaluation and has improved practice not only for the students' with DS but also for other students with a learning disability and indeed for all students as teaching staff have had to be much clearer about their learning targets and their classroom management in order to facilitate the students' with DS understanding of 'how do we learn' and 'how do we behave'.

Secondary schools generally were not able to access speech and language therapy and all would welcome this. Some schools were receiving visits from a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and one school had organised for advice and support for language and social skills groups in their school via a private arrangement. There is a lack of support in this area due to lack of availability of SALT and budgets locally being directed to Early years and Primary provision. This lack of SALT input at secondary schools is reflected nationally (Ref DSA survey Access to Education 2004). Where schools had access it is important that information from outside support is accessed by staff working with the student with DS.

Parents: *'We want help with his speech – we don't have ongoing support; we would like a greater awareness in school about his difficulties with language'*.

'School need to consider effective systems to ensure that information provided by outside agencies, e.g. EP service, Speech and Language Therapy Service etc is shared with all teaching and support staff working with the students.'

Some parents accessed outside support e.g. Occupational Therapy, physiotherapy, learning disabilities nurse, support from GP but no support from social worker or JAT. Few parents mentioned support from Social services or JAT. Many parents felt that they did not need support from outside agencies. Many examples from parents of activities accessed by their child e.g. riding, swimming, ballroom dancing , Youth clubs , guides, special needs clubs including gym and youth clubs, social networking and outings to cinema, bowling etc.

**Jane Beadman, Educational Psychologist
Team Leader EP's supporting pupils' with DS/SLD in mainstream schools,
Educational Psychology Service
Devon Learning and Development Partnership
October 2009**

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Initial letter sent out to each school involved in the project:

Dear Principal

Evaluation of inclusive practice for students with Down Syndrome in secondary schools

In order to promote good practice and evaluate ongoing work in your schools our specialist team of EPs would like to spend a morning in your school observing students with DS and having short interviews with key staff.

We would like to visit your school this term and meet with key teaching assistants, SENCo/Inclusion manager, parents/carers and the student(s). This is additional work from our service and there will be no additional charge to the school.

Areas that we are planning to look at include: access to the curriculum, homework, differentiation, alternative accreditation, use of TA support, SRE, social skills and behaviour, peer groups and extra-curricular activities.

A questionnaire and inclusion checklist will be sent to key staff prior to our visit which will form the basis of our discussions in school (please see attached).

A general report will be provided to parents and all schools involved. This document will also be used by the CYPPS to plan services. Schools and pupils will not be identified in this general report. Individual schools will also be provided with feedback following our visits.

..... (Educational Psychologist(s) with specialist time for supporting pupils with Down Syndrome) would like to visit your school on A copy of this letter has also been sent to your SENCO to clarify arrangements for this visit.

If you have any questions regarding this project please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in anticipation for your co-operation

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Educational Psychologist

Appendix 2: Postal Questionnaire usually filled in by SENCO; (sometimes by HLTA/TA)

The information gained from this questionnaire will be confidential; however general issues/themes will be included in a general report. No schools, individual members of staff, or pupils will be identified in this final report.

Completed by:

Role in school:

Name of student:

Age:

D.O.B

Year group:

(Please indicate if this pupil is working out of their chronological age group e.g. Y8 in Y7)

- What NC level is this pupil working at?
- Hours of support provided through statement:
- Hours of support provided by school:
- Number of TAs working with student:
- Are TAs curriculum based? If so who supports what?
- Which subjects is the pupil unsupported by a TA
- Does the pupil have MTA support? If so is the pupil supported at breaktimes and/or lunchtimes and by whom?
- Please provide students current IEPs.
- Which subjects does the students access whole class/small group/individual? (Please include timetable and colour code for whole class/small group/individual)
- Indicate which subjects are mixed ability groups or set? (Please indicate which set the child is in).
- Is the pupil given homework? In which subjects? How is this differentiated?
- What form of alternative accreditation is available in your school? What schemes are used? What are the group sizes
- What extra-curricular activities are available? Which of these are accessed by the pupil with DS? If yes – are they supported in these?

Appendix 3:Data from Inclusion checklist (CSIE 2000)

Secondary School Young Adults' with Down's Syndrome

Final summary % from 14 schools – 44 replies .for combined disagree columns Range of number of replies per school = 1-5; 50% of schools gave 5 replies	Agree/ Agree to some extent	Disagree/ Disagree to some extent
Lessons extend the pupil's learning	77%	23%
Lesson's reflect differences in student's knowledge	86%	14%
Lessons reflect for differences in learning styles	89%	11%
Learning aims of activities are clear	71%	29%
Student's have opportunities to record their working a variety of ways	86%	14%
Student's are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning	75%	25%

Classroom organisation encourages independent learning	77%	23%
Support is sufficient to help students to move on in their learning while allowing them to draw on the knowledge they already possess	99%	1%
Students learn collaboratively	73%	27%
Assessment encourages the achievement of students with DS	64%	36%
Teachers share planning schemes of work for lessons and homework	25%	75%
Learning support assistants are involved in curriculum planning and review	48%	52%
Learning support assistants aim to maximise independence of pupils with DS	100%	0%
Learning support assistants encourage peer support	100%	0%
Students take part in activities outside the classroom	80%	20%

Appendix 4: Questions to be asked:

For staff in schools – usually TAs supporting student with DS and SENCO

- How do teaching staff meet the learning needs of pupils with DS
- What does differentiation mean to you and who does the differentiation?
- What time is allocated to prepare resources/plan with staff?
- Are there any barriers to accessing extra-curricular activities?
- How does the pupil access SRE?
- How does the pupil access social skills?
- Have you had any issues around either of these areas with your pupil?
- Describe the students friendship groups
- Do you use peer support? Please describe
- Are there any issues re. behaviour?
- Tell us about the most successful areas for your school
- Tell us about ongoing issues/concerns
- What support do you already access
- What support would you like in class/in school/from outside agencies

Parents Questions:

- Why did you choose this school?
- What do you think the school does well?
- What areas need improvement?
- Are there any issues that you would like to raise?
- Who is the regular point of contact in school?
- Is the work in lessons appropriate for your child?
- How much homework does your child get?

- Does he/she/ you understand it?
- What extra-curricular activities does your child do?
- Tell me about any school trips that your child has been on.
- What contact does your child have with friends outside school?
- Do you have any issues regarding SRE/social skills?
- Are there any issues with behaviour at home and/or at school?
- What strategies have been successful?
- Have you had any support from outside agencies?

Appendix 5: Final letter sent out to Principal with their school's individual report:

Dear Principal

Re Evaluation of Inclusive Practice for students with Down syndrome (DS) in Secondary schools in Devon:College

I am pleased to enclose the confidential report for your school which I hope that you will find interesting and useful and will inform you about possible future planning developments for this low incidence group of students. I have also copied the report to , SENCO and enclose a copy for your chair of governors - I would be grateful if you would pass this on.

I have also provided, as your school Educational Psychologist, with a copy, our Principal Educational Psychologist as I feel that it is important to raise the profile of what our secondary schools' are providing for students' with Down syndrome, and in particular the areas of good practice that your school has developed.

Please share this report with Senior Management teams, teaching staff, any staff involved with supporting the students' with DS, Governors and parents of students involved as you see fit.

We are hoping to get the general report, covering findings from all the schools visited, to you by Autumn Term. No schools will be identified in this report but general themes will be covered looking at current practice, strengths, weaknesses and development points.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you, staff, parents involved, and in particular your SENCO and SEN team who have really put themselves out both in the giving of their time and in the organisation of our visits, and in the development of practice. We are very grateful to them and this is yet another reflection of the work that your SEN team provides.

Yours sincerely
Educational Psychologist CYPPS
Team Leader- supporting pupils' with DS/SLD

Appendix 6: Observation schedule used for lessons observed:

DS Secondary School Survey Observation Schedule:

Pupil: NameYear group.....

Details of Observation: Date; School; Description of lesson – mixed ability/small group/lower set etc Class teacher – supported byTA

Topic	Please Comment
Relationships within the classroom for the pupil & degree of Inclusion	
Role of teacher in facilitating learning	
Role of TA in facilitating learning	
Organisation	
Pupil management	
Differentiation	

Appendix 7: Timetables- Distribution of Mixed ability classes; lower set; small groups; 1:1 work per student

Data received from 14 schools and 23 students

Year Group	Mixed ability %	Lower set %	Nurture/small Group %	One to One withdrawal %
Y7	20	-	80	-
Y7	87	-	13	-
Y7	50	30	-	20
Y7	72	28	-	
Y7	72	-	20	8
Y7	76	-	16	8
Y8	32	12	56	
Y8	36	48	12	4
Y8	50	-	40	10
Y8	85	15	-	
Y8	32	58	10	-
Y8	32	44	24	-
Y9	32	32	16	20
Y9	52	26	-	22

Y9	70	20	6	4
Y10	56	44	-	
Y10	66	34	-	
Y10	92	-	-	8
Y11	-	-	90 Entry level groups	10
Y11	83	17	-	-
Y11	-	10	90 Entry level	
Y12		100	-	
Y12	40	Free study periods 10	30	Work experience 20

References:

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- DSA Education Support Pack for schools – 2002
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- DSA 'Experiences of Inclusion for children with Down's syndrome in the UK' Stephanie Lorenz 1999
- Devon EPS 'An evaluation of Educational placement for children with DS in the South Devon area – Jane Beadman 1997
- 'Index for Inclusion' Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) 2000
- 'Down's syndrome – the facts.' Mark Selokowitz second edition 2004