

GUEST COLUMN – November/ December 2024

Enhanced Provision – a piece to the puzzle

Rob Hughes

How can we support the sector to complete one of the more challenging puzzles? The issues surrounding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are there for all to see within the education sector. It appears that this is now beginning to gain traction outside of the sector, with additional funding noted within the recent budget announcements, and the National Audit Office (NAO) producing their report '*Support for children and young people with special educational needs*'. The findings: an urgent need for reform.

As an optimist at heart, I strongly believe that the toughest challenges should always be viewed as an opportunity. Solutions are often found from within and there is brilliant practice happening within schools across the sector when it comes to inclusion.

What is an Enhanced Provision?

Some refer to this as 'internal alternative provision' but I prefer the focus on an enhanced offer that provides flexible, individualised support for children with complex additional needs, enabling them to access learning effectively in a mainstream school.

From my experience, this approach has offered our setting a more cost effective option to alternative provision, whilst also keeping our children educated locally within their community. Different from an LA resource base, schools have control over determining the primary area of need, the number of children who attend, and the freedom to adjust over time, should the needs of the school evolve.

Our provisions are built upon the foundations of five key principles for inclusion as outlined by the work of Ben Newmark and Tom Rees:

- Dignity not deficit
- Different but not apart
- Success in all its forms
- Action at all levels
- Greater complexity merits greater expertise.

These principles are interwoven throughout daily practice to ensure that the children are entitled to highly adapted access to the curriculum, in a deliberately designed space with specific interventions and/or therapy complimenting this work.

This is not a nurture provision, a space to 'cool-off' or a behaviour unit - it is an Enhanced Provision.

How do we fund/staff it?

Our provision now provides education for 10 children with social, emotional and mental needs who are at risk of repeated suspension or exclusion. All of the children have Education, Health and Care Plans and ultimately need specialist provision places that simply do not exist. By pooling high needs funding, leveraging the benefits secured by our procurement arrangements as a trust, and in the spirit of being transparent, prioritising resources to focus on 'do less, but do it really well', we are now entering our second academic year operating the model. It is staffed by a teacher and supporting practitioners, who have the relevant training and the enthusiasm and commitment to support the children that need it most.

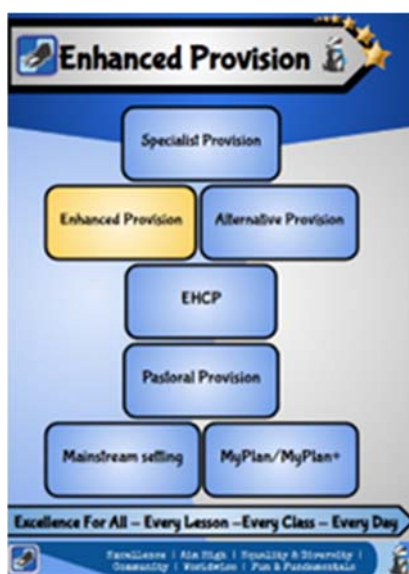
What has the impact been?

Our provision model is now arguably our most vital resource. Pre-provision days saw leaders/teachers spending hours each day responding to incidents, ultimately rooted in a child's unmet need, which not only had implications for the class of children, but staff at numerous levels.

Today these complex needs are more effectively met in the provisions. Part time timetables have reduced to one, classrooms are disruption free and there have been no suspensions or exclusions year to date. Leaders are now revelling in the work of our mission: providing an excellent education, in every classroom, every day - rather than trying to fit round pegs into square holes.

Is there momentum?

Is this the sole answer to the current SEND challenges? No - but it is certainly a piece of the puzzle. Is our example perfect? Absolutely not: there are challenging days, yet our work is rooted in optimism and a will to succeed. The fact that we have had the pleasure of working with over 100 colleagues from other schools and trusts since early 2024 when this work began, suggests that we might be able to find a way in this space.



If you are looking to implement your own Enhanced Provisions or have one or something similar in place - please reach out - system-wide collaboration is the key to codifying this work and placing this piece into the puzzle.

References

- National Audit Office (NAO) '[Support for children and young people with special educational needs](#)' - NAO report
- Discussion paper, [Five principles for inclusion](#) by Ben Newmark and Tom Rees in partnership with Ambition Institute. Confederation of Schools Trust.

Rob Hughes is Principal, Brockworth Primary - Lift Schools