Offering support

The Inclusion website and other sources of help

The Inclusion website and other sources of advice and information on inclusive practice

Becta

ICT Advice

Background and introduction

The publication *Removing barriers to achievement* outlines the Government's vision for enabling children with special educational needs (SEN) to realise their potential. It divides its strategy into four key areas: early intervention, removing barriers to learning, raising expectations and achievement, and delivering improvements in partnership.

The strategy requires new ways of thinking and working for LEAs, health and social services, schools – and for teachers. It recognises, however, that teachers need reliable information on resources and practices that can help them meet the needs of pupils with special educational or individual learning needs. It also recognises that ICT has a key role to play:

> 'We will…develop comprehensive advice, guidance and training for teachers and teaching assistants on how ICT can be used effectively in the classroom to support children with different types of SEN. This will complement the Inclusion website on the National Grid for Learning which has an SEN advice forum for teachers.'

ICT offers many benefits:

- It supports and enhances learning for all pupils.
- For many pupils with disabilities and learning difficulties, it has an important role in enabling access to learning.
- It is – particularly through the internet – an essential source of information for teachers and pupils.
- Increasingly it facilitates peer support and expert multidisciplinary networks.

There is a vast amount of information on SEN available on the web. For a busy teacher, the difficulty comes in identifying the material required.

About this booklet

This booklet is one in a series of publications called 'Include ICT' that examine the ways in which schools and other organisations are developing inclusive learning and teaching practices. It focuses particularly on the Inclusion website, which was designed to identify content and information relating to the needs of pupils with SEN within the UK educational system, and on other websites that can support teachers in meeting the needs of all pupils within an inclusive education system.

The material can be used by teachers, including student teachers and those engaged in continuing professional development, and anyone with an interest in Inclusive practice.

http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk

The Inclusion website

The Inclusion website [http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk] was developed for the DfES by Becta to help teachers access information on the wide range of resources available quickly and effectively. Initially providing a searchable catalogue detailing a wide range of resources that can be used to meet SEN or individual needs, the site now includes sources of advice in several forms. Site users can post questions to peers and experts, link to online communities specialising in specific aspects of inclusive education, and view websites in a growing thematic list.

The 'Advice' area on the site has been developed particularly, but not exclusively, with the student teacher in mind. A significant number of questions posted are from teachers seeking advice to help in either initial teaching training or continuing professional development studies.
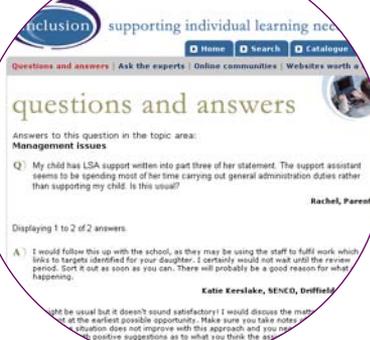
What does the Inclusion site offer?

Example

A pupil with autism has just joined a class and the teacher wants details of books and software, brief sources of advice, and ideas from other teachers on how they have created appropriate personalised learning materials.

A search for the keyword 'autism' finds:

- resource catalogue: a list of books on the subject, information sheets, case studies of practice and software, with links to publishers or the documents themselves

- Questions and answers, and Ask the Experts: questions and answers relating to the teaching and learning of children with autism, with advice from parents, practitioners and experts in the field

- websites: a list of sites recommended by teachers and education professionals

- news items: these might include, for example, details of forthcoming conferences or past conferences with links to the papers presented.

The list of online communities includes SENIT, which focuses on the use of ICT with pupils with special needs. SENIT has a searchable archive of messages and message digests (which may be printed); joining details are given.


http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk

Example

A teacher is undertaking research into the use of assistive technology to support the inclusion of pupils with complex learning difficulties in mainstream settings. The Inclusion site offers useful information and pointers to other sources of advice.

An exploration of different areas of the site reveals:

- the Communication Aids Project (CAP) website, which details case studies

- a wide range of software

- training materials on using assistive technology, available for free download

- online communities: joining instructions, message digests (which may be printed out) and searchable archives for communities including the Severe learning difficulties forum (sld-forum) for teachers working with pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties

- Ask the experts: experts respond to queries on specific topics which change each term

- a list of recommended websites.

The teacher decides to ask for information from other people, posts a question to the 'Questions and answers' area of the site, and three responses are published on the site within two weeks. The teacher also joins sld-forum and posts a question that receives half a dozen personal responses within the week, plus a number of public postings. While browsing the 'Online communities' area, the teacher notes that there are summaries of messages (digests) from several of the communities and downloads them to print some out to read later.

Key principles

Further help
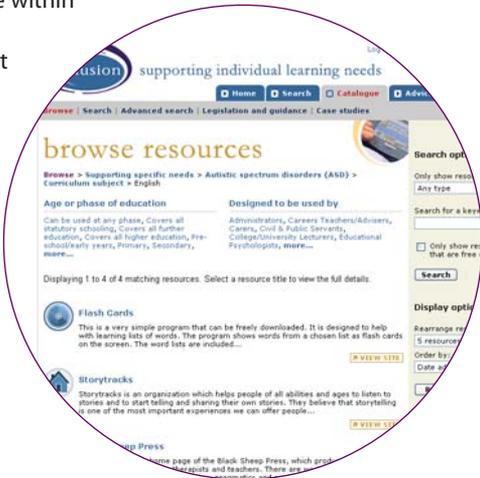
○ **Online communities offer information and support**

Research on the impact of one forum found that it was perceived as being very valuable in enhancing professional knowledge, exchanging ideas and providing personal support. Its immediacy, open ethos and democratic stance were welcomed.

○ **You can ask questions anonymously in a public forum**

Users of the Inclusion site have commented how they value the opportunity to seek views of colleagues around the country on sensitive issues and also provide answers anonymously. Individuals are able to ask questions to which they feel they may be expected to know the answer. The area of inclusive education is so wide that the opportunity to access people with different experiences and expertise is invaluable.

○ **Information has been validated by experienced practitioners**

All resources within the catalogue and content in the advice areas of the Inclusion site are checked by a team of moderators and editors to ensure accuracy and quality of information. The site therefore provides a valuable starting point and saves busy teachers' time.

Inclusion website – news, resources catalogue, and advice and information on inclusive practice.
http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk

Becta – information, advice and free publications
http://www.becta.org.uk

Communication Aids Project – details of the project and sources of funding, along with a catalogue of communication aids, case studies, and an area for communication aids users called CAP Club
http://cap.becta.org.uk

Curriculum Online – multimedia resources to support teaching and learning
http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk

ICT Advice site – advice, services and tools, with information on the use of ICT to support pupils with special educational or additional needs
http://www.ictadvice.org.uk

Removing barriers to achievement
http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ wholeschool/sen/senstrategy

Senco-forum research – various reports
http://www.becta.org.uk/teachers/ teachers.cfm?section=2&id=2578

teacher
training agency

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