

A New Approach for SEN

by [Richard Beeden](#)

The current law presumes that a pupil with SEN will be included in a mainstream school unless there are very good reasons for not doing so. The schools themselves have no incentive to include these children because they are more concerned with other issues such as results, admissions and budget. Inclusion makes everything harder.

Where schools do include, the pressure is there to press for more statements in order to secure a bigger slice of the resources cake. The result is a very large numbers of statements and a lot of tension between schools, parents and the LEA. These are the very people and organisations who should be collaborating to support the children in need. The large number of statements causes other problems. The largely demand led SEN budget has an unpredictable effect on the overall Education budget. Too much time is spent by professionals writing the assessment reports. Then the LEAs don't have the resources to supervise the provision prescribed. The funding itself is frequently delayed during months of wrangling, is not easily transportable and the administration is bureaucratic.

In Leeds the LEA has turned this problem on its head over the last 3 or 4 years. The authority uses the mass of professionally collated information which is already available on each child. Funding comes out of the overall budget and does not rely on the statementing process. Statements are only needed in certain cases where a child's needs may be particularly complicated, or to specify placement in a special school. As a result, new statements are down from over 500 per year to about 100. The professionals can spend more time supporting the children and the schools instead of being tied up in bureaucracy and in writing reports. And the perverse incentives for statementing are removed together with these barriers to inclusion.

I am sure that Leeds would not claim to have solved every problem but it seems to be one example of good practice that others might wish to consider. The handbook can be downloaded from www.educationleeds.co.uk. You can navigate there from the home page via the site map link followed by the key plans link. Fill in the little table "About Leeds Education" "Public Reports" "Inclusion" . Leave the date blank.

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