

# CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## PARENT'S HANDBOOK

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Who is this Book for? .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Who has Special Needs? .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mentally Challenged.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Autistic Children.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Mild Learning Difficulties.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Visual Difficulties.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Hearing Difficulties.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Multiple Disability .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Emotional Behavioural Difficulties .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Learning Disability (Dyslexia) .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Communication Difficulties .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Physical Disabilities. ....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Gifted and Talented .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Where are Children with Special Needs Educated .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Provision for Special Needs in Ordinary Schools .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Four Stage Approach to Helping Pupils with Special Needs .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Support Services for Special Needs .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>How to Get Help for Your Child with Special Needs .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Provision for Special Needs in Special School or Units... ..</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Useful Contacts.....</b>	<b>24</b>

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## WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

This handbook has been written for parents of children with special needs. It is intended for parents of children in nursery, primary and secondary schools or in special schools or units. It will also be useful for parents of pre-school children who suspect their children may have special needs.

### **The handbook aims to:**

- . outline the different types of special needs
- . help parents to identify which type of special needs their child may have
- . suggest sources of support and advice for parents
- . explain how parents can get help for their child with special needs
- . explain what parents can do help their children develop
- . explain how special needs are catered for in ordinary schools
- . explain how special needs are catered for in special schools and units

## WHO HAS SPECIAL NEEDS?

The term "special needs" is used to refer to all children who experience difficulties at school. This includes children who are:

- *Mentally challenged* - children whose development is considerably delayed and who have difficulties with all aspects of learning
- *autistic* - children whose development is delayed but who also have specific difficulties in communicating and relating to people
- *mild learning difficulties* - children often referred to as slow learners who have delayed development as well as difficulties with school work
- *learning disabled* - children with specific learning difficulties with reading, spelling or mathematics, often referred to as dyslexic or remedial
- *communication difficulties* - children who have speech difficulties such as articulation or voice problems or stuttering or language impairment
- *physically challenged* - children with movement problems including cerebral palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, polio, limb deformities
- *hearing impaired* - children who are deaf or hard of hearing
- *visually impaired* - children who are blind or who have poor vision
- *multiple disability* - children who have a combination of impairments such as: physically disabled and mentally challenged; or deaf and blind
- *emotional psychologically disadvantaged* - children who exhibit emotional or behavioural difficulties
- *academically gifted and talented* - children whose intellectual abilities or artistic talents are well above average but who may be underachieving.

In the following section more information is provided for each of these types of special needs. Common signs for identifying them are presented followed by a list of sources of advice. Then, suggestions for how parents can help these children develop their skills and knowledge are outlined.

## **MENTALLY CHALLENGED**

These children have learning difficulties in most aspects of life and are typically educated in special schools or units.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- they are slow to begin to walk and talk
- their speech is not clear and their vocabulary is limited
- they have poor fine and gross co-ordination skills
- they have great difficulties learning reading, writing and number skills
- their behaviour is immature: they prefer to be with adults or younger children

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- school's special needs teachers
- Ministry of Education: psychologists
- Ministry of Education: Education Officer for Special Education
- special school or special unit teachers
- Children's Development Centre
- parent support groups

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- help develop child's strength as well as work on weaknesses
- talk to your child a lot and get him/ her to talk to you
- start from what your child knows and go at the pace of the child
- break tasks down into small steps, teaching one step at a time
- work on daily living skills such as bathing, toileting, dressing and making snacks
- work on social skills such as making friends or asking for directions
- ensure tasks are within child's capacity in order to ensure success
- use practical activities such as counting money
- include lots of repetition, praise and encouragement
- work closely with teachers and other specialists
- participate in Individualised Educational Planning meetings at school
- decide priorities for what you want your child to learn
- work on child's happiness, confidence and self-esteem

## **AUTISTIC CHILDREN**

These children have learning difficulties in most aspects of life but there are certain features which distinguish them from mentally challenged children. Most of them are educated in special schools or units.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- very delayed speech and language development; echoes words or phrases
- lack of interest in relating to others, including their parents
- repetitive or stereotyped behaviour such as rocking or head banging
- insistence on routines; angry outbursts when these are disrupted
- obsessive interest in certain objects; spins small objects or self
- either no response or oversensitivity to sound

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- school's special needs teachers
- Ministry of Education: psychologists
- Ministry of Education: Education Officer for Special Education
- special school or special unit teachers
- Children's Development Centre
- parent support groups

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- reward desirable behaviour; withdraw privileges for misbehaviour
- start from what your child knows and go at the pace of the child
- break tasks down into small steps, teaching one step at a time
- use simple direct instructions e.g. 'Turn the light on'
- work on daily living skills such as bathing, dressing and making- snacks
- work on social skills such as making eye-contact and asking for what he/she wants
- include lots of repetition, praise and encouragement
- ignore annoying behaviour; use 'time-out' for disruptive behaviour
- work closely with teachers and other specialists
- participate in Individualised Educational Planning meetings at school
- decide priorities for what your child needs to learn
- avoid fad treatments: either drugs or unproven therapies

## MILD LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

These children have below average ability but because of the mild nature of their special needs they are typically not identified until the early years of primary schooling. Most of them are educated in ordinary schools.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- they have a short attention span
- they have difficulty understanding instructions
- they are slow to learn reading, writing and number skills
- they tend to be immature and have behavioural difficulties
- they tend to have delayed speech and language skills

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- school's special needs teachers
- Ministry of Education: psychologists
- Ministry of Education: Education Officer for Special Education

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- be aware of child's strengths as well as weaknesses
- start from what your child knows and go at the pace of the child
- break tasks down into small steps, teaching one step at a time
- ensure tasks are within child's capacity in order to ensure success
- work on daily living skills such as dressing and cooking
- work on social skills such as making friends or asking for directions
- teach through practical activities such as counting up money
- include lots of repetition, praise and encouragement
- work closely with teachers and other specialists
- attend meetings at your child's school
- decide priorities for what you want your child to learn
- work on child's happiness, confidence and self-esteem

## **VISUAL DIFFICULTIES**

The majority of visually impaired children has some vision and can cope in ordinary schools. Those with severe impairment or additional disabilities may attend the School for the Deaf and Blind.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . clumsiness or poor fine, gross or eye-hand co-ordination
- . handwriting large and untidy and not on the line
- . holding face very near to book
- . frowning, squinting, making faces, shutting one eye, rubbing eyes
- . frequent headaches, dizziness, sore eyes, tiring quickly
- . difficulty reading at a distance/loses place when reading from book

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . family doctor/polyclinic
- . optometrist/ophthalmologist/optician/ orthoptist
- . The Irving Wilson School
- . Association for the Blind and Deaf

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . find out from specialists exactly what child's difficulties are
- . encourage child to use visual aids prescribed e.g. .glasses, magnifiers
- . make sure lighting is suitable and avoid glare
- . when child has difficulty seeing provide running commentary
- . give child as many hands-on experiences of the world as possible
- . allow child more time to complete tasks and breaks to combat fatigue
- . arrange for other children to act as buddies or helpers
- . don't expect less of your child because he/she has visual impairment

## **HEARING DIFFICULTIES**

The vast majority of hearing impaired children are mildly or moderately deaf and can cope in ordinary schools. Those who have severe or profound hearing losses may need to attend the School for the Deaf and Blind.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . speaks too loudly or too quietly or has unclear speech
- . focuses intensely on speaker's mouth when listening
- . has limited vocabulary; tends not to talk in sentences
- . has difficulty understanding instructions: gets easily confused
- . has short attention span, has difficulty listening for any period
- . is withdrawn, isolated, doesn't play well with other children

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . family doctor/polyclinic/Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon
- . The Irving Wilson School
- . Children's Development Centre

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . find out from specialists exactly what child's difficulties are
- . check child is using hearing aids properly
- . encourage your child to communicate as much as possible
- . make sure child can see your face
- . speak clearly and directly
- . if necessary, learn and use sign language at home
- . give child as many hands-on experiences of the world as possible
- . allow child more time to complete tasks and breaks to combat fatigue
- . arrange for other children to act as buddies or helpers
- . don't expect less of your child because he/she has a hearing loss

## **MULTIPLE DISABILITY**

Some children have a combination of impairments such as being physically disabled and mentally challenged or deaf and blind. They are usually educated in special schools or units.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . their development is slow in several areas
- . their speech is not clear or their vocabulary is limited
- . they have poor fine and gross co-ordination skills
- . their behaviour is immature or unusual
- . they have suffered brain damage due to injury or disease e.g. meningitis

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . Ministry of Education: psychologists
- . Ministry of Education: Education Officer for Special Education
- . special school or special unit teachers
- . Children's Development Centre
- . parent support groups

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . help develop child's strengths as well as work on weaknesses
- . talk to your child a lot and get him/her to talk to you
- . start from what your child knows and go at the pace of the child
- . break tasks down into small steps, teaching one step at a time
- . work on daily living skills such as bathing, dressing and making snacks
- . work on social skills such as making mends or asking for directions
- . ensure tasks are within child's capacity in order to ensure success
- . use practical activities such as counting money and visits to shops
- . include lots of repetition, praise and encouragement
- . work closely with teachers and other specialists
- . participate in Individualised Educational Planning meetings at school
- . decide priorities for what you want your child to learn

## **EMOTIONAL/ BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

Some children exhibit emotional or behavioural difficulties at school and at home. A few children may be diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) which is a form of behavioural difficulty.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . child is defiant or repeatedly doesn't do what he/she is told
- . child is continually naughty and ignore the rights of others
- . child is withdrawn or behaves in strange ways
- . child is distractible, impulsive, or hyperactive, or all three
- . child is persistently depressed or doesn't get on with other children

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . form teachers/senior teachers/guidance counsellors
- . Ministry of Education: Student Services
- . child psychologists
- . child guidance clinic

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . reward appropriate behaviour consistently using praise, stars, points etc
- . implement effective punishments e.g. time out, withdrawal of privileges
- . decide priorities for behaviour you want to change and set goals
- . break goals down into small steps, working on one step at a time
- . work on social skills such as making mends or coping with anger
- . work closely with teachers to promote consistent discipline
- . focus on child's strengths as well as weaknesses
- . encourage child to develop activities he/she is good at
- . work on child's happiness, confidence and self-esteem

## **LEARNING DISABILITY (DYSLEXIA)**

Learning disabled children have specific learning difficulties in the areas of spelling, reading, writing and/or mathematics but can function well in other areas.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . discrepancy between child's oral language skills and written work
- . child has good general knowledge but poor reading or spelling skills
- . difficulties with auditory or visual skills
- . difficulties with short term memory e.g. phone numbers mixed up
- . sequencing problems e.g. with times tables or remembering days of the week
- . problems with concentration and organisation e.g. can't find equipment
- . left-right orientation difficulty e.g. following maps

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . Ministry of Education: Education Officer for Special Education
- . educational psychologists
- . occupational therapists; rehabilitation therapists
- . Caribbean Dyslexia Centre

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . find out child's strengths, such as sport or art, and encourage these
- . work with teachers to reinforce child's reading programme at home
- . search out reading material to match child's reading level and interest
- . teach awareness of sounds in words through rhymes, 'I-spy' games, etc
- . read to child or listen to him/ her read for 10 minutes every day
- . tell child words not known to maintain flow and keep focus on enjoyment of reading
- . emphasize understanding of what is read by asking lots of questions about it
- . allow child to use computer with spell-checker as much as possible
- . give lots of praise and encouragement and maintain high expectations
- . work on child's happiness, confidence and self-esteem

## COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

Many children of pre-school or primary school age have speech or language difficulties.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . child cannot say some speech sounds e.g. says 'wed' instead of 'red'
- . child has a hoarse or high-pitched voice
- . child stammers or stutters on certain words
- . child's language is delayed e.g. has limited vocabulary for age
- . child's language is disordered e.g. difficulty expressing what he/she understands

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . speech/ language therapists
- . educational psychologists
- . Ministry of Education: Student Services

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . listen to child carefully to determine speech or language difficulties
- . talk to your child a lot and get him/ her to talk to you
- . be a good model of appropriate speech and language
- . use non-verbal clues e.g. gestures, to reinforce communication
- . use rhyming songs and games to encourage clear speech
- . encourage symbolic play such as with puppets to develop language skills
- . allow child to tape record and play back his/ her own voice
- . help develop child's strengths as well as work on weaknesses
- . work closely with teachers to ensure consistent treatment
- . be patient with stutterers, give them time to express themselves
- . use self-esteem/confidence building exercises

## **PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

Types of physical disabilities experienced by children include: cerebral palsy; muscular dystrophy; spina bifida; polio; and limb deformities. Also some medical conditions may have physically disabling consequences for children. These include: arthritis; epilepsy; heart defects; asthma; diabetes; cystic fibrosis; AIDS; cancer; sickle cell anaemia.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . bone or joint deformities; painful, stiff or swollen joints
- . early milestones delayed e.g. slow to sit up; walked late
- . poor sitting or standing posture/poor eye-hand, or foot, co-ordination
- . unusual walk or difficulty with hopping, skipping, running or jumping
- . clumsiness/jerky movements/tremors/seizures/ black-outs
- . child tires easily, has difficulty breathing

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . family doctor/orthopaedic surgeon/other specialists
- . physiotherapist/occupational therapist
- . Education Officer for Special Education
- . Children's Development Centre

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . find out from specialists exactly what child's difficulties are
- . ensure child has all the physical aids he/she needs and uses them
- . make sure class teachers have all necessary medical information
- . have contingency plans in place for emergencies at school and at home
- . check physical access e.g. ramps in buildings/ handles in toilets
- . check child is able to sit comfortably in classroom, in good position to see
- . adapt activities so child can participate in everything other children do
- . allow more time to complete tasks and rest periods to prevent tiredness
- . get work from teachers when child is off school or in hospital
- . don't lower expectations or pamper children because of the disability

## **GIFTED AND TALENTED**

Talented students are those with outstanding artistic, musical or sporting ability. The notes below focus on gifted students who are well above average intelligence and who may be underachieving at school.

### **Signs to help in identifying this type of special need**

- . finds work easy and finishes it quickly
- . demonstrates surprising knowledge or insight
- . can think abstractly
- . is observant and curious
- . shows high level of argument and problem-solving skills

### **Advice about this type of special need available from:**

- . school's special needs teachers
- . educational psychologists
- . associations for gifted children

### **Ideas for helping these children develop**

- . focus on strengths and weaknesses to encourage all-round development
- . work closely with teachers to ensure pace of work at school is suitable
- . ask school to extend child's knowledge rather than rush through syllabus
- . encourage child's involvement in extra-curricular activities and clubs
- . use visits to libraries, museums etc. to extend child's learning.
- . organise other activities, such as day trips, to enrich child's experiences,
- . encourage your child to develop study skills and self-directed learning

## **WHERE ARE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATED?**

Government policy on special needs, as outlined in the White Paper (1995), 'Each One Matters' in 1995, is one of providing for as many children with special needs as possible in ordinary schools, while maintaining special schools and units for those with the most severe disabilities. Therefore, the majority of children with special needs are in ordinary schools. Only children with the most severe disabilities are in special education facilities such as special schools or units attached to ordinary schools. It is estimated that children in special schools and units make up around one percent (one in a hundred) of the overall school population whereas the proportion of students with special needs in mainstream schools is around twenty percent (one in five).

## **PROVISION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS IN ORDINARY SCHOOLS**

The key components of special needs help in ordinary schools are special needs teachers, teacher training, parental involvement and a four stage approach for helping pupils with special needs.

### **Special needs teachers**

All primary and secondary schools in Barbados are to have trained special needs teachers in order to co-ordinate the school's procedures for helping pupils with special needs. In large schools, there may be a team of two or more teachers, whereas, in a small school, the special needs teacher may be a class teacher with some time away from the classroom in order to help pupils with special needs.

### **Teacher training**

The training of teachers for their involvement with children with special needs is vital to effective special needs help within ordinary schools. All teachers receive training on the identification of special needs and on alternative teaching strategies to use with these children. The school's special needs teachers receive more extensive training. Training is provided in the form of schoolbased workshops as well as longer courses at Erdiston College and the University of the West Indies. The Ministry of Education, in conjunction with Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada, has also sponsored training up to the Bachelor of Education and Masters levels.

## Parent involvement

Maximum involvement of parents of pupils with special needs is also an essential aspect of effective special needs provision. The school's special needs teachers have a key role to play in liaising with parents. However, all teachers and parents need to collaborate closely in order to ensure the best possible education for children with special needs.

## Four stage approach to helping with special needs

Help for pupils with special needs in ordinary schools is to be organised by means of a four stage approach with different levels of help at each of the stages. This is illustrated in the following diagram and discussed in more detail below.

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT</u>	<u>INTERVENTION</u>	<u>REVIEW</u>
Stage one	by class teacher	adapted teaching	each term
Stage two	by special needs teachers	guidance, special teaching	each term
Stage three	by outside specialist	refer to student services	term/year
Stage four	case conference by comprehensive assessment	Special Education placement	each year

## Summary of four stage approach to meeting special needs

**Stage one** - Most pupils with special needs will be catered for at stage one by classroom teachers, through liaison with special needs teachers, and by using various strategies for adapting their teaching methods. Teachers will communicate their concerns about children's special needs to parents and keep parents informed about their children's progress.

However, some pupils will not make satisfactory progress. They will need to receive help at stage two.

**Stage Two** - Many pupils with special needs demand greater specialist knowledge and skills than can be reasonably expected of class teachers alone. So at stage two the school's special needs teachers work closely with class teachers in assessing children and helping them adapt teaching methods to suit their needs. Special needs teachers may also work with children individually or in a small group either within the classroom or elsewhere. Special needs teachers will also liaise with parents in order to facilitate the children's progress.

However, some children with special needs will need even more help than can be provided at stage two, so they need to receive help at stage three.

**Stage three** - At this stage, a referral is made by the school to the Ministry of Education for outside specialists to be called in to assist in assessing children's special needs and planning programmes to meet these needs. The special needs teacher draws up an Individualised Educational Plan (IEP) in consultation with class teachers, specialists, parents and, whenever possible, the child. The IEP sets out the child's strengths and weaknesses and specific objectives to be worked on in the short and long terms. The IEP is reviewed at least once a year, and where possible once a term, by everyone involved, including parents.

However, a few children will have special needs which are so severe that they have difficulty making progress even with all the help provided at stage three, so they will move on to stage four.

**Stage four** - Those students who have arrived at Stage 4 will participate in a meeting to determine eligibility or ineligibility for Special Education provision. Such a meeting shall be referred to as a Stage 4 Eligibility Committee. Participants of this meeting shall include members of the multidisciplinary assessment team, officials of the Ministry of Education and a representative from a Special Education Unit.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS**

An essential element of effective provision for pupils with special needs is close liaison with various support services available to help teachers and parents by providing specialist assessments and advice. The major support services are outlined below:

### **Education Officer for Special Education**

The Education Officer for Special Education is based in the Student Services Section of the Ministry of Education and has oversight of all government special education schools and units as well as provision for children with special needs in ordinary schools. The Education Officer for Special Education considers children for placement in special schools and units.

### **Psychologists**

Educational and clinical psychologists are based in the Student Services Section of the Ministry of Education. They conduct assessments of individual children's learning and/or behavioural difficulties and advise teachers and parents on how their special needs can best be met. . They also assist with training for teachers and others who work with children with special needs.

### **Children's Development Centre**

The Children's Development Centre is part of the Ministry of Health. It is staffed by teachers, therapists, psychologists and paediatricians who can provide a comprehensive assessment of children with special needs. There is an education unit for children with physical and multiple disabilities. There is also a workshop for young mentally challenged adults. Physiotherapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy are also available. Speech therapists - help children with speech difficulties such as articulation problems and those with delayed or disordered language development as well as those who stammer or who have voice problems such as hoarseness. They also work with children with physical or multiple disabilities who have feeding difficulties. Occupational therapists - work with children with a wide variety of problems such as visual perceptual difficulties or eye-hand co-ordination difficulties. They also work with children with physical and multiple disabilities who need assistance in learning daily living skills such as dressing or toileting.

Physiotherapists - work with children with physical and multiple disabilities, starting from when they are babies. They work directly with children, assessing their difficulties and then providing treatment. They also help parents and teachers with such things as working out the best positions for children to adopt when they are sitting.

## HOW TO GET HELP FOR YOUR CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

### 1. **Class Teacher**

If you are concerned about your child's behaviour or progress at school, first of all talk to your child's class teacher or form teacher. It is usually best to write or phone to make an appointment at a time when teachers can give you their complete attention. Be ready to explain exactly what your concerns are and to ask for the teacher's views on your child's behaviour and progress. It is useful to take along with you examples of work which your child finds difficult. If the teacher agrees that your child has special needs then you should ask how these will be catered for in the classroom. You should also ask what you can do at home to help your child to make progress. Finally, you should agree with the teacher when you will meet again to review your child's progress. This should usually be done each term.

### 2. **Special Needs Teacher(s)**

If after meeting with your class teacher for the first time or after reviewing progress after one or two terms you are still concerned about your child then you should ask to speak with the school's special needs teacher. You should ask the special needs teacher what additional help your child needs and whether this can be provided by the school. If the school cannot provide all the additional help needed you should ask about the alternatives. You should also ask what you as parent(s) can do to help your child outside school. Finally, you should agree with the special needs teacher when you will meet again to review your child's progress. This should usually be done each term.

### 3. **Specialists**

If after reviewing progress with the special needs teacher after one or two terms you are still concerned about your child then you should discuss whether an assessment by a specialist, such as an educational psychologist, would be useful. If this is considered necessary then specialist teachers and parents should work together to produce an Individualised Educational Plan (IEP) for your child. The IEP will set out specific objectives for your child's education towards which the school will work. You should ask what you as parent(s) can do to help. The IEP will need to be reviewed annually but you will probably want to informally review your child's progress with the special needs teacher each term.

4. **Comprehensive assessment**

If after reviewing your child's progress on IEP objectives with the special needs teacher after one or two terms, or at the annual review, you are still concerned about your child then you should consider whether to request a comprehensive assessment of your child's needs. The principal can forward this request to the Student Services Section of the Ministry of Education.

Following the assessment you will be advised whether additional help is to be provided to meet your child's needs in the ordinary school or whether he or she should attend a special school or unit.

## PROVISION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS OR UNITS

### Special Schools and Units

There are several different types of special needs facilities in Barbados. These are described below:

**Special units** - There are four special units attached to government primary schools. These are at: Charles F Brome Primary, Eagle Hall Primary, Ellerton Primary in St George and All Saints Primary in St Peter. There is also the Erdiston Special School in St. Michael. These facilities cater for mentally challenged children and autistic children who are aged 5 to 13 years.

Special classes within private schools - Several private schools have special classes. These are at: St Gabriel's, St Ursula's and the Rock Christian School.

**Special schools** - There are four special schools. The Ann Hill School - This caters for mentally challenged and autistic children aged 11 to 18 years, most of whom have come from the special units. The Irving Wilson School is a government school which educates children with severe hearing or visual difficulties. The Learning Centre is a private school which caters to children who are mentally challenged or autistic or who have mild learning difficulties. The Challenor Creative Arts and Training Centre is a private school which educates children who are mentally challenged or autistic or children with multiple disabilities. It also has several skill training workshops, Food Preparation, Agriculture and Landscape, Wood Work and Sewing and Craft, in which young adults with disabilities make a variety of products to sell to the public. Additionally, there is an independent living centre where six young adults with disabilities live and look after themselves. The Challenor Creative Arts and Training Centre runs a respite care facility which provides for parents to leave their children with special needs for short periods, such as over the weekend, so that they can get a break. This facility is also available to parents of children who do not attend the Challenor Creative Arts and Training Centre.

**Alma Parris Memorial Secondary School** – This school provides an alternative education for secondary age pupils with mild learning difficulties who are not able to cope with the normal secondary school curriculum.

The key components of special needs help in special schools and units are reduced teacher-pupil ratio, teachers trained in special education, IEPs for all pupils, special adapted curricula, additional resources and high levels of parental involvement.

### **Teacher-pupil ratio**

Classes in special schools or units have less pupils per teacher than those in mainstream schools. Usually there is one teacher to every 8 to 12 pupils. This enables teachers to give more individual attention to pupils with special needs.

### **Trained teachers**

Most teachers in special schools or units have undergone training in special education. In the past some trained teachers overseas but there are now suitable courses at Erdiston College and the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus.

### **Individualised Education Plans (IEPs)**

All pupils in special schools and units have Individualised Educational Plans (IEPs) which are drawn up by teachers in consultation with specialists and parents. IEPs set out each child's strengths and weaknesses and specific objectives to be tackled in the short and long terms. IEPs are reviewed at least once a year by everyone involved, including parents.

### **Special curricula**

Special schools and units use broader curricula than ordinary schools. These include the teaching of the life and social skills necessary for survival in society. Emphasis is also placed on oral communication and self-help skills. With secondary school age pupil, additional emphasis is placed on the development of vocational skills.

**Resources**

Special schools and units have additional resources which are not generally available in mainstream schools. These include specialised equipment for teaching children with special needs, and in some classes, additional adults acting as teacher-aides.

**Parent involvement**

Because of the smaller number of pupils per teacher and the need for closer liaison when working with pupils with severe special needs there is generally a higher level of parental involvement in special schools and units than in other schools.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

- . **All Saints Special Unit: St. Peter**  
Ph: 422-6508  
An integrated special education Primary School.
- . **Alma Parris Memorial Secondary School: St. Peter**  
Ph: 422-4685  
A Secondary School offering an alternative curriculum
- . **Ann Hill School, The Pine, St. Michael**  
Ph: 426-2358  
A secondary type school for children with mental challenges who follow a prevocational curriculum.
- . **Barbados Association For Children With Intellectual Challenges**  
Ph: 438-6862  
The Challenor Complex comprises of a school for mentally challenged children, an adult skill training facility and a respite unit
- . **Barbados Association for the Blind & Deaf:**  
Ph: 426-3438  
A registered charitable organization for persons who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hearing impaired. They run the workshop for the blind.
- . **Barbados Council for the Disabled**  
Ph: 427-8136  
A coordinating body for fifteen organisations representing persons with various disabilities.

- **Caribbean Dyslexia Centre: Haggatt Hall**  
**Ph: 435-0387**  
A private institution that offers assessment and tutoring facilities for children and adults with dyslexia.
  
- **Challenor Creative Arts and Training Centre: Canefield House, St. Thomas**  
**Ph: 438-6862**  
A Private Assisted Government School for mentally challenged children.
  
- **Charles F. Broome Primary Special Unit: Government Hill, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 435-0786**  
A special unit within a primary school catering to primary school children with special educational needs.
  
- **Children's Development Centre: Jemmotts Lane, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 427-9514**  
A team approach to children with developmental difficulties. Offering speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, services of a developmental pediatrician and psychological therapy.
  
- **Eagle Hall Primary Special Unit: Eagle Hall, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 421-7517**  
A special unit within a primary school catering to primary school children with special educational needs.
  
- **Education Officer for Special Education: Ministry of Education**  
**Ph: 430-2700**  
Officer responsible for children, schools and issues pertaining to Special Education.
  
- **Ellerton Primary Special Unit: Ellerton, St. George**  
**Ph: 435-1342**  
A special unit within a primary school catering to primary school children with special educational needs.
  
- **Erdiston Special School: Pine Hill, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 436-6148**  
A special school catering to primary school children with special educational needs.

- **The Irving Wilson School, The Pine, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 429-2631**  
A special school for children who are hearing impaired and who are visually impaired.  
A Primary and Secondary School.
  
- **Learning Centre: Orange Hill, St. James**  
**Ph: 432-9676**  
A private assisted school offering provision to children with learning disabilities  
and moderate mental challenges.
  
- **Rock Christian School: Strathclyde Drive, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 429-5847**  
A Private Primary school with provisions for children with special needs.
  
- **St. Gabriel's School Special Unit: Henry's Lane, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 436-6078**  
A special unit within a Private Primary School for children with special educational needs.
  
- **Student Services: Ministry of Education**  
**Ph: 430-2700**  
The Department in the Ministry providing Psychological services, Special Education  
services, Guidance and Counselling services and School Attendance Officers.
  
- **St. Ursula's Special Class: Collymore Rock, St. Michael**  
**Ph: 426-5571**  
A class for children with special educational needs within a Secondary Private School.