

The Educational Psychology Service – Supporting School Improvement And Progress

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) contributes to school improvement and pupil progress through the following activities:

- Providing consultation and information to schools, parents and others about individual children's learning, behaviour, development and social-emotional needs where these are of concern, thus supporting the school in setting appropriate teaching and learning targets and in adopting appropriate teaching strategies and use of resources;
- Consultation and training with school staff in order to promote the development of a range of whole school policies and strategies in the areas of inclusive practice, special educational needs and pastoral issues;
- Promoting the professional development, understanding and skills of teaching and other staff in areas such as inclusive practice, special educational needs, behaviour management and social relationships;
- In areas related to the knowledge and skills of the EPS, to contribute to the LEA's strategies and programmes of support to schools identified as being in need of support to improve;
- Contributing to the LEA inset programme to support the EDP;
- Contributing to projects, multi-agency developments and LEA initiatives that enable schools to meet a wider range of children's needs and so to continue to promote a more inclusive education service;
- Through contributions to research and development projects in areas such as the incidence of SEN, the effectiveness of current resources, effective teaching and learning and the trialing of new resources and intervention strategies, the service helps to inform LEA policy and resource development.

When to involve the Service

- Consultative involvement when there are concerns about an individual child and the school has already taken substantial action through the Code of Practice procedures (Early Years Action and School Action). A combination of teaching staff, the child and the child's main carers will be likely to be involved in this aspect of the Educational Psychologist's work;
- Consultative involvement about a range of problems including organisational factors affecting a group of children, as well as issues related to individual problems;
- Consultative involvement at an organisational level where a psychological perspective can assist a school aiming to develop its systems and approaches;

Issues and Concerns

The issues and concerns that can be addressed through these forms of involvement include:

Learning:

- Difficulties with attainment in one or more subject areas as well as general learning delay;
- Perceptual and co-ordination difficulties;
- Poor concentration and study habits;
- Problems accessing the curriculum as a result of delayed or communication difficulties.

Social or emotional adjustment and behaviour:

- Unsettled or disruptive classroom behaviour;
- Aggressive behaviour and antagonistic relationships with other children;
- Shy, withdrawn and socially isolated children;

- School refusal and issues related to attendance;
- Social and communication difficulties.

Developmental Delay:

- Young children who are showing delays in specific areas such as speech and language or motor skills;
- Delayed cognitive development;
- Young children whose pattern of development is atypical.

In these areas of developmental delay the psychologist will usually be involved with other specialists working with young children.

Educational Psychologists also advise on the psychological and schooling needs of children with physical disabilities, sensory impairment and relationship, social and communication difficulties.

Whole School issues:

- Assessment methods;
- Special needs policies and planning;
- Staff training and development;
- Social, emotional and behaviour management systems;
- Anti-bullying policies and playground behaviour;
- Listening to the voice of the child;
- Effective teaching and learning strategies.

How to involve the Service

The EPS welcomes contacts from schools and other agencies to discuss learning, behaviour, and developmental or social and emotional difficulties of individual children or groups of children. It also welcomes contacts about whole school issues. These contacts can be made by telephone or letter. However, the principal way schools gain access to EPS time is through the system of regular planning meetings that also involves a member of the Special Education Needs Support Service.

The Planning Meeting

The EPS operates a time allocation system to ensure a fair distribution of service time across all the schools in the district. Part of the time allocation allows for two planning meetings (Autumn and Spring terms). The meetings consider new concerns about pupils, ongoing involvement with pupils already known to the

service or with a statement of SEN and other involvement that the service might have with the school. The meeting enables the EP to use the time allocated to the school in a way which is planned with the school to ensure that priorities are met within an agreed framework.

Information from Schools for the Planning Meeting

At the planning meeting the schools should provide recent information about individual children about whom they wish to consult with the EP. At the present time, the information is brought to the meeting using the Information Form (EPS/SENS) which details the concerns resulting in the consultation as well as the Code of Practice interventions that the school has already undertaken. In the majority of cases the pupils discussed will already be at Early Years Action or School Action and there will be IEP evidence of the schools' ongoing strategies of support and any existing use of devolved funding to compliment the support.

Main Parent/Carer Involvement

In most cases, parents/carers will be aware that there are concerns about their child as they will have been involved as soon as concerns were raised and the school started taking some action to address needs. In particular the IEP review meetings will have provided the forum for the levels of school concerns to have been raised. The school should ensure that all parents of children raised for consultation with the EP at a planning meeting have been discussed with the main carers prior to the planning meeting. When the EP has agreed to some action regarding the schools concerns about an individual child, the parents/carers will be informed about this via a letter from the EPS. However, it is good practice for the schools to also inform the parents/carers of the outcome off the planning meeting, especially if expectations of EP action have been raised.

If the parents/carers were anxious about the potential involvement of the EPS, then the EP would be prepared to meet the parents informally to explain the likely consequences of the involvement with their child.

Referrals from other Agencies

The service welcomes other agencies making contact if there are educational concerns about children with whom other agencies are involved. However, if another service requests involvement of an EP, the EP for the school

which the pupil attends will be consulted to determine the level of concern which the school has about the pupil, as well as any action under the Code of Practice which the school is already taking. This consultation with the school will then determine the priority within existing commitments to the school which can be given to a referral from an outside agency. The service will keep other agencies informed of the decision by letter, following a potential referral being made by them.

Urgent Action

There will be rare occasions when serious concerns about individual children arise unexpectedly such as a new child arriving in school with severe learning or emotional adjustment difficulties, or a sudden deterioration in a child's functioning. In these circumstances, the school should contact the EP to discuss what action can be taken.

Support for Families

At times, parents/carers have concerns about their child at home or at school and approach the school for advice or help. In some cases it is appropriate for the headteacher to channel these requests to the EPS. Even though the service would be unlikely to become involved unless there were significant school based issues, the EP can often advise the parents/carers on an appropriate course of action to pursue.

Ways the service can help

As already stated, the aim of the service is to help schools, families and other agencies meet the needs of children and young people experiencing difficulties. This can involve consultation work concerning individual children, direct work with children, or contributing to the development of systems and organisations working for children.

In order to carry out this range of work and other activities in which the service is involved, EP's undertake visits to schools, and homes to arrange meetings at the Service's offices and become involved in other relevant meetings. These consultations should involve teachers, children, parents and others involved with the particular issues under consideration. Involvement may be for a few weeks or it may be ongoing for a significantly longer period.

Intervention

After consultation to clarify the problem and the nature of the subsequent involvement, intervention can take the one of the following forms:

- Clarifying situations and promoting change by providing new information, alternative insights and offering guidance;
- Helping to plan the management and the implementation of programmes for individual children to promote learning or to help modify behaviour and relationships;
- Involvement of the Primary Behaviour Service, which will result in Primary Behaviour Support Teacher input and possible subsequent referral to one of the Primary Behaviour Resources;
- Counselling and direct therapeutic work with individual children;
- Providing information to the school that will support them in recommending that the LEA undertake a statutory assessment of a pupil's special educational needs;
- Facilitating the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in the management and education of children;
- Contributing to multi-agency teams such as the Health Authority's Child Development Teams, special resource admissions panel meetings, Early Years and Childcare and Health and Social Care meetings;
- Advising the LEA on resources for and approaches to meeting Special Educational Needs.

Statutory Obligations

The EPS has an essential role in helping the LEA to meet its statutory obligations under the 1996 Education Act and in supporting the implementation of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2002).