

Brennan, Patricia, 1999, *Meeting Special Educational needs in mainstream Schools within the context of a whole school approach with particular reference to an Irish Voluntary Secondary School.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A whole school approach to special educational needs is advocated in the literature as a means of encouraging class teachers/subject teachers to open up to the influence of other teachers across the curriculum so that an inclusive response to the needs of pupils can be generated. There is growing support for the view that children's interests are best served, not by distancing them from the mainstream, but rather by enabling them to belong within an educational community that values their individuality. Hence, this study is concerned with meeting special educational needs in mainstream schools within the context of a whole school approach with particular reference to an Irish voluntary secondary school.

The methodology used is an examination of literature and school-based research and investigation. A draft whole school policy on special educational needs is presented. Whole school policy-making is seen as a starting point for implementing a range of proposals aimed at facilitating the establishment of a whole school approach and of integrating special needs provision in the overall structure of the school. The writer concludes with an outline of those school conditions that are needed to facilitate the development of a whole school approach. Among the points highlighted are the importance of participative decision-making, the provision of a differentiated learning environment, support teaching, the role of the special needs team within the context of whole school responsibility and the need for a positive corporate approach to staff development.