

Special Needs Education

The Danish Union of Teachers' views on special needs education

In Denmark past experience has taught us that all children can benefit from teaching. And teaching is provided for all children of school age under the same legislation – i.e. the Act on the Danish Folkeskole (public primary and lower secondary school). As all children are different, we need to apply a range of different teaching methods, materials and forms of organisation.

The tuition provided by the Folkeskole ranges from ordinary classroom teaching to very specialised education, e.g. at a national or regional special institution.

The DLF firmly believes:

That co-ordination of general education and special needs education is a prerequisite for qualified special needs education. If the pupils are to benefit from the special needs education provided, the active involvement of pupils and parents in all aspects of the special needs education is essential.

Special needs education should only be resorted to where it has proved impossible to prevent or remedy difficulties within the framework of general education, e.g. by means of differentiated teaching.

In matters of special needs education referral, the local educational-psychological advisory service is in a key position. The advisory service is the guarantee that referral is based on a professionally and academically qualified analysis of the pupils' problems.

The DLF wishes to stress that school psychologists, as trained teachers, are especially well-qualified for assessing the pupils' individual educational needs.

In many places, much positive experience has been gained from entrusting the educational-psychological advisory service with important functions as regards early intervention on pre-school children. Intervention that may very well serve to prevent more extensive and costly measures at later stages of their school careers. Precisely because of this first-hand knowledge of the children, it is possible at an early stage to take measures specifically designed to prevent such subsequent and more extensive measures.

Special needs education activities should only be implemented on the basis of a comprehensive evaluation of the individual child's situation; and a plan should be prepared for such activities. Following discussions with the parents and the pupil, the plan must set out in clear terms the purpose and the scope as well as the time frame of the activities to be implemented. Evaluation of the plan must be carried out while it is in operation as well as after its completion.