

Enhanced Programme Fund Evaluation 2005

FINAL REPORT

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1. Introduction

The Enhanced Programme Fund (EPF) was first offered in 2002 to help eligible schools enhance, refine or further develop programmes to support the learning of students with moderate special education needs. The Fund is contestable and is awarded to schools that can demonstrate they have a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need, and have effective programmes already in place to meet those needs.

The EPF has evolved over time. A formative evaluation was commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 2002 and provided detailed feedback on the allocation processes of 2002, 2003 and 2004. The formative evaluation reports and an annual debriefing process following each allocation round resulted in refinements being made each year to try to better match the Fund to policy intent. The evolution of the EPF and the continuous efforts made by all those involved in the allocation process to ensure the funds were applied where they were most needed are important features of the context within which this evaluation report should be read.

1.1 THE EVALUATION

This evaluation had two main components and a range of other requirements. The main components were:

- formative feedback on the allocation process to:
 - critique the effectiveness and reliability of the allocation process
 - identify changes to the allocation process between rounds
 - note how schools identify students with moderate special needs and the implications for the allocation processes
 - describe the outcome of the allocation process including a comparison of successful and unsuccessful schools
 - identify issue that arose during the allocation process.
- case studies of schools granted EPF to illustrate:
 - difficulties schools experience resourcing students' access to the curriculum
 - the range of programmes funded and whether some programmes meet learning needs of students with moderate needs better than others
 - how programme success is measured by schools and whether there is evidence for educational gains from EPF programmes
 - informants' perceptions about the effectiveness of EPF.

Other requirements were for the evaluation to provide information on:

- the nature of schools applying for EPF and the proportion of moderate special needs within those schools
- a comparison of funded and unfunded schools
- a critique of the EPF Advisor role
- the relationship of EPF to other GSE initiatives within the learning support network
- magnet schools.

1.2 EVALUATION REPORTS

This report is a high level summary report of the evaluation. It is supported by seven other reports, four of them in themselves summaries of more extensive reports that have been delivered through the life of the evaluation. Three supplementary reports were completed in 2006 as the Ministry of Education asked the evaluation team to focus more closely on the concept of magnet schools. The seven reports are:

Summary Report 1: Analysis of the allocation process
Summary Report 2: Summary of case study reports
Summary Report 3: A report on data from four Special Education districts
Summary Report 4: The EPF Advisor role
Supplementary Report 1: Characteristics of EPF Funded schools that attract a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education needs
Supplementary Report 2: A literature review on international school-based funding initiatives for students with moderate special education needs
Supplementary Report 3: Questions of interest to the Ministry of Education

1.3 THIS REPORT

The structure of this report is:

Section 2: EPF policy intent and implementation
Section 3: The allocation process
Section 4: Characteristics of funded schools
Section 5: How funding was used
Section 6: Evidence linking funded programmes to achievement
Section 7: Other countries' provisions
Section 8: Discussion

2. Policy intent and implementation

2.1 POLICY INTENT

In 2000, the Government contracted Dr Cathy Wylie to review aspects of the special education policy framework. The Wylie report¹ identified, among other things, resourcing issues for school that enrol a disproportionate number of students with special education needs (magnet schools), and observed that population-based resourcing may not in some cases provide sufficient funding to meet those students' needs.

In October 2001 the Cabinet Social Equity Committee agreed in principle:

. . . that supplementary grants be provided to:

2.1 selected schools that have a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need, and as a result cannot provide a reasonable range and quality of education within their regular resourcing

2.2 develop and/or maintain special education programmes that meet quality criteria in those selected schools. (SEQ Min (01) 23/4).

and, that policy guidelines and criteria for identifying and prioritising schools eligible for such supplementary grants be developed.²

In July 2002 when the first EPF allocation round was already under way, the Ministry of Education prepared a submission for Ministers which clarified the first policy goal outlined above:

*The provision of EPF grants is to supplement the Special Education Grant to schools where that grant does not exactly match the distribution of students who have moderate special education need.*³

The submission went on to outline the criteria for deciding school eligibility for EPF. These were the criteria:

- a) A disproportionate number of students with special education needs as determined under the National Administration Guideline 1, (iii) a and c;*
- b) The board of trustees is informed about student need and is resourcing and supporting a planned process to meet student needs within the school;*
- c) The school management team leads an ongoing process for the identification and provision for the range of student needs within the school;*
- d) Curriculum implementation meets the specific learning needs of the full range of students within each class or faculty; and*
- e) The school can clearly and easily demonstrate improved student outcomes.*⁴

¹ Wylie C (2000) Picking up the pieces: Review of Special Education 2000

² SEQ Min (01) 23/4.

³ Submission No: S02/0034

⁴ Submission No: S02/0034

In January 2003, a Cabinet Business Committee Paper prepared in support of a request to increase the funding allocated to EPF in order to appoint EPF Advisors, introduced a new policy goal:

*....The intent of the policy is that these (applicant) schools are assisted to improve their capability through EPF*⁵

In summary then, a review of official documents suggests three key policy goals for EPF. These are to:

- provide extra resources to schools with a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need in recognition of the inadequacy of the SEG grant
- to develop or maintain special education programmes that meet quality criteria
- build school capability.

The tension between these three policy goals, to reward schools with disproportionate numbers, to develop programmes where they are needed, and to build school capability has been obvious throughout the life of the EPF.

2.2 IMPLEMENTATION

Meeting need or extending good practice

The first EPF Guidelines produced in May 2002 included an interesting change in emphasis from that in the policy documents. The intent expressed in the policy documents that funding should be used to:

. . .develop and/or maintain special education programmes (SEQ Min (01) 23/4)

in the Guidelines became a statement that:

EPF has been introduced to provide additional assistance to . . . maintain and/or further develop special education programmes . . . (EPF Guidelines 2002)

This reordering of the words 'develop and/or maintain' to 'maintain and/or further develop' required schools to already have a programme in place which they considered was worth extending or developing, and seemed to rule out schools which may have had high need but did not already have a quality programme in place. This quickly created a difficulty that endured through the life of the programme and emerged as an issue in every allocation round – schools with the greatest need often did not have strong programmes in place which could be enhanced and therefore either did not apply or submitted poor applications and were unsuccessful.

Students who have special needs and those who are not achieving

'Moderate special education need' has not been defined by the Ministry of Education which has taken the view that schools themselves are best placed to determine which students have such needs. In the EPF policy documents students with moderate special education need are those who fall within National Administration Guideline 1 (iii) (a) 'students who are not achieving', and NAG 1 (iii) (c) 'students who have special needs'.

The 2002 Guidelines and application form emphasised 'students who have special needs' by asking schools to provide details on numbers of ORRS funded students, unsuccessful ORRS applications, students receiving a service through the Severe Behaviour Initiative or

⁵ Cabinet Business Paper CBC 03/2 January 2003

Speech Language Initiative, as well as any other students identified under NAG 1. In 2003, the Guidelines were altered to include advice as to how schools could identify '*students who are not achieving*' using tools like PAT tests, SEA, STAR and asTTle. However, in 2004 this advice was removed and once again the Guidelines and application forms strongly implied that eligibility would be determined substantially on the basis of numbers of '*students with special needs*', defined as students who accessed other forms of support for students with special needs. This emphasis was retained in the 2005 Guidelines.

The lack of a common or consistent definition of '*students with moderate special education need*', combined with the quasi-scientific formula by which to determine the proportion of such students in a school, made it very difficult to have confidence that the schools which received EPF were indeed the schools that had a '*disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need*', as signified in the policy intent.

Magnet schools

The intent of EPF policy was clearly to provide additional resourcing to schools that had a welcoming environment and/or provided a quality education to students with moderate special education need. These schools are commonly known as 'magnet schools', although this term does not survive the early EPF policy papers. The 2001 paper from the Office of the Minister of Education proposing EPF says this:

*Some schools are known as 'magnets' because they enrol a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need. . . . Magnet schools may struggle to meet the needs of all of their students because of the high proportion of students with moderate needs.*⁶

The concept of a magnet is that it draws things to it from beyond a usual range of influence. In the case of schools, there is a clear implication that magnet schools will enrol students who pass other, closer schools because of what the magnet school offers them. However, in none of the allocation rounds was there any exploration of whether applicant schools drew students from beyond their natural catchment and hence were true magnet schools.

The evaluation detected strong support for magnet schools from those involved in the allocation process, but difficulties with measuring disproportion, and a fundamental uncertainty about whether the Fund was designed to meet need or reward good practice means that that such schools were not necessarily well represented among those funded.

The programmes

The policy papers are silent on what constitutes '*a special education programme*'. The Cabinet paper of October 2001 directed the Ministry of Education to report by Feb 2002 on '*quality criteria for special education programmes*', however this report was not made, and there appears to be no further mention in policy papers of establishing quality criteria for programmes.

The 2002 Guidelines give little indication of what constitutes a special education programme other than six half-page fictitious scenarios of 'funded' programmes. However, the application form allowed only three lines for the school to describe the 'plan/programme/ professional development' it wanted to maintain, refine or develop further. This 2002 funding round drew such a volume and range of applications that the 2003 Guidelines included a list of what would not be funded and some case studies of successful applications.

⁶ Office of the Minister of Education (2001). Proposals for students with moderate special needs.

Once again, the range of applications was so broad that further refinement was deemed necessary, and the 2004 Guidelines included some examples of what would be regarded as appropriate 'programmes' as well as what would not be funded. Examples of appropriate programmes included parent involvement to support students, social skills programmes, transition programmes, professional development, and development and enhancement of special needs co-ordination. Reflecting the increasing emphasis on building school capability, the 2005 Guidelines promoted professional development to the top of the list of examples of programmes that would meet the criteria for EPF.

Throughout the life of the evaluation, what constituted 'a programme' was never clear. While people involved in EPF allocation supported the development of systems and processes in schools to improve the learning of students with moderate special education need, it was apparent from applications that most schools thought that 'a programme' needed to be something delivered to students.

Capability

Building school capability in meeting the needs of students with moderate special education need was always a stated policy goal from 2003, and gradually became more explicitly the focus of EPF allocation from 2004 on.

As the preference for professional development programmes became clearer, so too did the lack of alignment between how schools were asked to identify need and what programmes were considered appropriate to meet the needs. The preferred programmes were those that built capability in the school in such a way that the benefits to the students survived the life of the funding. However, schools were asked to demonstrate their need for EPF by showing that they had a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need, not by making a case that their teachers needed to be upskilled. This appears to have inclined schools to proprietary programmes that offered to address the needs of the students, rather than those which built the capacity of the school.

2.3 SUMMARY

The policy intent for EPF articulates three goals – that magnet schools be rewarded, that schools develop and enhance programmes for students with moderate special education need, and that school capability to meet the needs of this group of students be enhanced.

This evaluation found that considerable efforts were made year after year to adjust the EPF allocation criteria and process to in an attempt to better meet the policy goals. However, ultimately having one contestable fund to meet three different policy goals was unworkable and the evaluation can offer little assurance that the policy goals were met. What the evaluation can confirm, and this report goes on to describe, is that schools which were granted EPF spent it to the benefit of students with moderate special education needs.

3. The allocation process

The Enhanced Programme Fund had five allocation rounds between June 2002 and June 2006. These were conducted in:

1. June 2002
2. September/October 2002
3. September 2003
4. September 2004
5. September 2005.

Formative feedback on the allocation process was an integral component of the EPF evaluation. Reports were completed on the second, third and fourth allocation rounds. The purpose of the reports was to give feedback on the allocation process and identify ways in which the process could be improved⁷.

This evaluation was asked to provide information on:

- the effectiveness and reliability of the allocation process
- changes to allocation processes between rounds
- how schools identify students with moderate special needs and the implications for the allocation processes
- the outcome of the allocation process including a comparison of successful and unsuccessful schools
- issues that arose during the allocation process.

The data gathered to report on the allocation rounds was slightly different each year, but each year the researchers:

- reviewed the guidelines, desk file, available data and documentation associated with the allocation round and applicant schools
- attended a training day in one or more regions
- attended short listing days in one or more regions
- interviewed each of the four regional co-ordinators following the completion of the allocation process.

In addition, at different times we

- attended the national moderation exercise
- observed interviews
- attended meetings in the regions between Group Special Education (GSE) staff and National Operations staff
- surveyed interviewers
- completed post allocation interviews with GSE staff
- initiated a time and cost tracking system for the allocation round with EPF co-ordinators.

3.1 THE ALLOCATION PROCESS

The first two EPF allocation rounds in 2002 were managed at a national level, all subsequent allocation rounds were managed in each of the four GSE regions. The process altered little through the five rounds. Following the publication of EPF Guidelines, each allocation round involved:

⁷ See Summary Report 1: The allocation process

- schools' submission of expression of interest (also known as the application form)
- shortlisting days with panels made up of GSE staff, local principals, a school trustee representative, and representatives of Te Runanga Nui O Nga Kura Kaupapa Maori o Aotearoa and iwi partnerships with the Ministry.
- cross-referencing with other data held by the Ministry of Education on applicant schools (introduced in 2003)
- interview of shortlisted schools
- final selection of successful schools.

3.2 STRENGTHS OF THE ALLOCATION PROCESS

3.2.1 A formative process

Each year the allocation round was reviewed by the regional co-ordinators and the Operational Policy Advisor to see what could be learned from the process and how it could be improved. This resulted in a number of changes from year to year which most of those involved believed improved the allocation process.

3.2.2 A focus on moderate needs

The allocation process required schools to focus on their students with moderate needs and to plan for how to better meet those needs. Schools assisted by EPF Advisors were helped to review systems, processes and programmes in place for students with moderate needs and make some decisions about which were worth enhancing in an EPF application; all applicants had to describe, cost and identify outcomes for proposed programmes to support students with moderate needs; and shortlisted schools had an interview in which they were invited to talk about how the programme fitted into the school's priorities and plans and how staff capacity to work with moderate needs students would be enhanced.

3.2.3 Working towards transparent and objective allocation

The allocation process made a serious attempt to make the basis of funding allocation very specific and very transparent. Asking schools to identify the proportion of their students with moderate special needs was an attempt to bring objectivity to allocation decisions – an attempt that was ultimately unsuccessful because of the lack of a common definition of moderate special needs.

3.2.4 The involvement of GSE

The involvement of GSE staff at all stages of the allocation process was seen by GSE to foster relationships between the Group and the schools they serve. GSE staff involved in the allocation process were enthusiastic and committed to their task, saying it provided an opportunity for them to discuss with schools their provision for students with moderate needs. There was also good collaboration between GSE and local principals in the process.

3.2.5 Regional allocation

All participants were enthusiastic about the regional allocation process that was adopted from 2003 believing that the advantages of local knowledge outweighed the disadvantages of regional variation in decision making.

3.3 PROBLEMS WITH THE ALLOCATION PROCESS

3.3.1 Unclear policy intent

The lack of clarity about the policy intent of EPF led directly to many of the problems identified with the allocation process. The purpose of the Fund was not as clear as it needed to be to the schools applying, or to the people making the allocation decisions. It was fundamentally unclear whether the Fund was designed to support magnet schools, high need schools or schools making innovative responses to students with moderate

special education need.

3.3.2 Lack of definition of terms

The lack of definition around key terms such as 'moderate', 'disproportionate', and 'underachieving', combined with a quasi-scientific calculation of need, resulted in schools using a great variety of ways to determine their proportion of students with moderate special education need. However, considerable weight was given to this proportion within the allocation process. Clearer definitions or a different process could have led to stronger and more comparable applications.

3.3.3 A programme

What constituted 'a programme' was never fully clear. The term 'programme' did not obviously include the systems and processes some schools developed to support the learning of students with moderate special education need although this was in many cases a very effective response.

3.3.4 A complex process

The process was overly complex with several stages and weak links between stages. Although mechanisms (forms and meetings) were developed to convey information from one stage to the next, time pressures meant that forms often lacked crucial information, and that meetings were overwhelmed by the volume of material.

3.3.5 Timeframes

The complex process was designed to be supported by training for all of those involved. In reality, the timeframes made it very difficult for staff – particularly interviewers – to attend training days and many of those who participated in the process had not attended the training that might have clarified their role in the process.

3.3.6 Regional variation

The regional nature of the allocation process was to some extent incompatible with the development and dissemination of national guidelines. The national guidelines gave the appearance of a nationally consistent process whereas in reality each region did things somewhat differently reflecting regional priorities.

3.3.7 Changing ground rules

While changes to the guidelines and allocation process year after year solved some problems, they created others. These ranged from schools being unaware that funding criteria had changed to schools submitting outdated application forms that were missing currently required information.

3.3.8 Transparency

Efforts made to ensure that funding allocations were well informed by both Ministry information and local knowledge led to some risks to the transparency of funding decisions.

3.3.9 The role of GSE

The role of GSE as a key player in the allocation of funding put GSE staff in a new type of relationship with schools in their area. This had a range of implications for relationships between GSE staff and both funded and unsuccessful applicant schools.

3.3.10 Schools that did not apply

Some schools known to have high numbers of students with moderate special education need did not apply for EPF. This was recognised by all of those involved in the allocation process, and the EPF Adviser positions were to some extent designed to meet this need.

However, the fact that some of the schools in greatest need of EPF funding did not apply remains an issue for the allocation process.

3.4 EPF ADVISORS

Early in 2003 additional funding was granted for EPF advisors whose role was to build the capacity in schools to be able to make robust applications to the EPF. As part of the EPF evaluation the Ministry of Education asked for a review of the EPF advisor role⁸.

The roles of EPF advisors in working with schools hoping to apply for EPF included:

- providing information about requirements, processes and timelines
- discussing eligibility criteria and developing systems for identifying and 'evidencing' students with moderate special education needs
- providing advice, support and assistance with programme development
- talking schools through the EPF application.

A small number of advisors also initiated contact with schools that currently had EPF funding. They reported that their contact with these schools centred around:

- celebrating programme successes
- providing direct assistance with a programme
- giving advice on information to collect for programme accountability
- discussing programme direction
- providing professional development for staff.

The key findings of the evaluation were:

- While there was a high degree of consistency in the core tasks undertaken by advisors, the 'coverage' they achieved varied significantly even taking into account the difference in time allocated to advisors in different regions. Potential explanations include differences in the extent of need in different parts of the country, in advisors' perceptions of eligibility for EPF, or in schools' capacity to apply for funding without assistance.
- Inconsistent role definition. Advisors both responded to schools which requested assistance, and identified schools that they considered had a need and were eligible for EPF. Some advisors worked only with schools that were poised to make an application, others worked with schools with demonstrated need but insufficient capability to design a programme or prepare an application. In some areas advisors visited funded schools and attempted to assess how well the programme was operating.
- Need for professional development. Advisors voiced a need for professional development for the role. In those regions where advisors met even occasionally, the people interviewed reported enormous value both in ensuring consistency of advisor practice and in developing ideas for effective programmes that can be shared with schools.
- Lack of information about the application process leading to inconsistent information. Advisors identified the need for good communication between those developing the guidelines, advisors, interviewers and moderators to ensure they were take a consistent approach to good practice for students with moderate special education need.

Schools indicated that in general they were not aware that EPF advisor assistance was available. One advisor expressed concern that the moderators in that region appeared to be looking for somewhat different things in applications from the information advisors were

⁸ See Summary Report 4: The EPF Advisor role

encouraging schools to submit. This person made a plea for better links between advisors, interviewers and moderators to ensure they were all looking for the same things.

4. Characteristics of funded schools

This chapter reviews the characteristics of schools funded through the five EPF funding rounds. It looks in more detail at funded and unfunded schools in a sample district in each of the four GSE regions. It also explores the concept of magnet schools and the relevance of roll-based funding to the 17 schools that were case studies for the evaluation.

4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF FUNDED SCHOOLS

This section contains a brief overview of characteristics schools funded through the five EPF funding rounds.

Table 1: Funded schools

Round	Schools applied	Schools funded	Funded as % of applied	Grants given (approx)
1 (2002)	503	60	12%	\$5,506,000
2 (2002)	386	124	32%	\$12,245,000
3 (2003)	222	68	31%	\$2,500,000
4 (2004)	133	75	56%	\$6,908,000
5 (2005)	220	110	50%	\$11,519,000
Total	1464	437	30%	\$38,678,000

Table 2: Funded schools by school type

School Type	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2002)	Round 3 (2003)	Round 4 (2004)	Round 5 (2005)
Contributing	27	42	29	25	42
Full Primary	18	19	16	24	24
Intermediate	5	5	4	6	9
Secondary	9	54	14	16	32
Composite	1	4	5	3	3
Kura Teina	0	0	0	1	0

Table 3: Funded schools by decile

School Decile	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2002)	Round 3 (2003)	Round 4 (2004)	Round 5 (2005)
1	15	22	17	14	13
2	13	26	14	14	14
3	9	21	12	12	27
4	11	24	9	11	17
5	4	14	7	9	15
6	2	8	5	4	8
7	2	4	2	8	8
8	2	3	1	2	4
9	0	2	1	0	2
10	2	0	0	1	2

Table 4: Funded schools by school size

School Size	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2002)	Round 3 (2003)	Round 4 (2004)	Round 5 (2005)
100 or less	9	2	4	6	8
101-200	17	18	10	17	15
201-300	5	19	16	19	22
300-400	15	20	12	7	14
400-600	8	27	15	12	22
601-800	4	11	5	6	9

4.2 COMPARISON OF FUNDED AND UNFUNDED SCHOOLS BY SAMPLE DISTRICT

In order to determine the characteristics of funded schools the evaluation team undertook a comparison of funded and unfunded schools in four GSE districts – one in each region. The data came from Auckland Central in Northern Region, Bay of Plenty East in Central North Region, Central District in Central South Region, and Southland District in Southern Region. The districts were chosen in consultation with staff from GSE National Office to provide a manageable sample and to allow an urban-provincial/rural comparison as well as limited comparisons between the four GSE regions.

The numbers are small and the districts may not be representative of the region as a whole rendering the results only indicative. In addition, since 2003 EPF allocations have been made at the regional level. While all regions used the same EPF guidelines, selection criteria and selection processes in making decisions, it is clear there was some variation in the way processes were implemented and final selections made⁹.

4.2.1 Decile

The correlation between decile and applications for EPF was not strong, but schools in deciles 1 to 4 were consistently more likely to be granted funding than those in deciles 5 to 10. This was confirmed by national data over all five allocation rounds.

In all districts except Southland, schools in the lower four deciles were more likely to receive funding than those in higher deciles. Across all four districts, only four schools in decile 8 and above received funding.

4.2.2 School type

Within the four district sample, secondary schools received a disproportionate number of EPF grants. This was also confirmed by national data over all five allocation rounds.

In all districts, disproportionate numbers of secondary schools applied for EPF funding. Overall, similar proportions of applications from secondary and primary schools received funding. Secondary schools therefore received a disproportionate number of EPF grants.

Intermediate schools were least likely to be funded. In three districts, disproportionate numbers of intermediate schools applied for EPF funding. In all three districts, intermediate schools were less likely than other types of schools to be granted funding.

4.2.3 School size

The larger the school the more likely it was to apply for EPF funding. In all districts, smaller schools (defined here as those with fewer than 200 students), were least likely to apply for EPF funding.

In three districts mid-size schools (with rolls between 200 and 600) were more likely to receive funding than smaller or larger schools. This pattern was confirmed by national data over all five allocation rounds. A high proportion (88%) of the largest schools applying in Auckland Central District received funding.

4.2.4 Ethnic composition of school roll

In districts with higher Maori populations schools with a high Maori roll were less likely to apply for but more likely to receive EPF funding if they did apply.

⁹ For detailed data comparisons see Summary Report 3: A report on data from four Special Education Districts

The likelihood of a school applying for EPF funding was not associated with the proportion of Maori students on the roll in Auckland Central District, nor was their chance of success.

4.2.5 *Correlation with other types of support for students with special needs*

The number of students with ORRS funding, SLS funding or on schools' behaviour needs registers did not appear to be related to applications for or success in obtaining EPF funding.

4.3 **MAGNET SCHOOLS**

4.3.1 *Definitions*

One of the drivers behind the introduction of EPF was the recognition that some schools become 'magnet schools' for students with particular needs.

Some schools are known as magnets schools because they enrol a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need. Parents of children with special education needs are attracted to magnet schools because they perceive the schools are more accepting of their children, and/or provide a quality education. Other schools are the only one in an area that has a disproportionate number of students with special education needs.

The Ministry of Education recognised that, in some cases, these schools are unable to meet the additional education needs of these students through population-based funding. In 2001, the Ministry proposed that a supplementary grant be provided to magnet schools to support a special education programme that meets quality criteria.

The focus on magnet schools was never made explicit in EPF Guidelines. The Guidelines have always referred only to the Fund providing support for 'schools with disproportionate numbers of students with moderate special education need', regardless of whether they were attracted to the school because of the programme it offered or not. In establishing EPF, the Ministry provided no national definition of moderate needs, taking the view that schools were in the best position to determine which students have moderate needs¹⁰.

This approach is in line with international trends in defining students with special needs where there has been a shift away from using traditional descriptive categories derived from medical classifications which may not be useful in determining a student's educational needs. The focus now is on identifying a student's educational needs and considering a broader range of students, with needs arising from disability, learning difficulties or disadvantage. With such a focus, it is reasonable to accept that schools may be in the best position to determine who these students are or what level of need they have¹¹.

In a recent report, the OECD¹² proposed three categories for identifying students with special education needs, but made no distinction within those categories for identifying students with severe, moderate and mild education needs. The categories are:

- **Disabilities** – students with disabilities or impairments viewed in medical terms as organic disorders attributable to organic pathologies (e.g. in relation to sensory, motor or neurological defects). The educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems attributable to these difficulties.

¹⁰ Ref: Cabinet Paper SEQ (01) 106, 8 Oct 2001

¹¹ See Supplementary Report 2: A literature review on international school-based funding initiatives for students with moderate special education need

¹² OECD 2005 Students with Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Disadvantages OECD: Paris

- Difficulties – students with behavioural or emotional disorders, or specific difficulties in learning. The educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems in the interaction between the students and the educational context.
- Disadvantages - students with disadvantages arising primarily from socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors. The educational need stems from these disadvantages.

4.3.2 Case study schools

As part of this evaluation, 17 schools were chosen as case studies, 10 from the 2003 round and seven from the 2004 round. They were chosen to give a diversity of school type, size and location and to include a range of programmes. They were not specifically chosen to include schools that have attracted a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need (magnet schools). While the schools may not be representative of funded schools as a whole, there is nothing to suggest that the case study schools are other than typical.

Only one of the 17 schools applied for funding to support a programme for students with disabilities. This school has developed expertise in catering for students with autism spectrum disorders. Four secondary schools, two intermediate schools and one primary school applied for funds primarily to support students with learning difficulties. Six schools were located in areas of high need and sought assistance for programmes designed primarily to compensate for disadvantage. Three other schools also sought to compensate for disadvantage, but were not necessarily in high need areas.

Eleven out of the 17 case study schools made no direct reference to attracting additional students in their application. The application form did not make any reference to magnet schools, nor did it ask schools to provide evidence that they were attracting a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need.

Three primary schools, two intermediate schools and one secondary school did claim magnet status but only one gave evidence for this claim, citing the proportion of students from outside the school zone. During visits to case study schools, researchers discussed each school's situation in relation to its EPF application. At this point, four more schools referred to their magnet status and one primary school that had claimed magnet status in its application form, expressed ambivalence about that claim. This means that 10 out of 17 schools – four primary schools, two intermediate schools and four secondary schools – claiming magnet status in some form. The other seven schools were in areas of high need or had full rolls. They may well have attracted additional students because of the quality of their programmes but were unable to cater for them because of existing pressures.

The 10 schools that claimed some form of magnet status had few distinguishing characteristics. They appeared to be no different from other schools in terms of size, decile or use of support services. Three of the four secondary schools had had a special unit in the past; this contributed to their current status.

4.4 Roll-based funding

One of the questions this report was asked to address was whether some schools have characteristics that make roll-based funding formulae unfair¹³.

The Special Education Grant (SEG) was introduced as part of Special Education 2000. It provides schools with direct funds to support students with moderate learning or behaviour difficulties, and thus caters for a similar group of students as the EPF. The grant is paid directly to all state and integrated schools as part of their operational funding. The SEG is

¹³ See Supplementary Report 3: Questions of interest to the Ministry of Education.

made up of a base amount per school and a per student amount weighted by decile with decile 1 schools receiving twice as much per student as decile 10 schools.

While decile-based funding goes some way towards compensating low decile schools for the pressures created by being in a disadvantaged area, case study schools indicated that the SEG is often not enough to cater for the high number of students who come with emotional and behaviour problems and learning difficulties. Nor, in rural areas, is it enough to enable small schools to recruit suitably qualified staff, who may be expected to travel some distance to the school for a few hours work a week.

Middle decile schools with magnet status find their SEG grant under pressure, while some high decile secondary schools in areas with pockets of disadvantage believe they have a disproportionate number of students with high learning needs and that current funding mechanisms do not provide adequate support.

5. How funding was used

As part of the evaluation, 17 schools were chosen as case studies, 10 from the 2003 round and seven from the 2004 round. They were chosen to give a diversity of school type, size and location and to include a range of programmes¹⁴. The data for this chapter and the next chapter of this report was drawn from case studies.

The aim of the case studies was to:

- describe the components of each school's programme
- show how schools identified and reported student outcome information
- report any educational and other outcomes for students
- look at the ways in which the Fund supported capacity building within each school
- consider the involvement of parents in their children's learning
- identify any other issues for schools.

The case studies included:

- 8 contributing and primary schools
- 2 intermediate schools
- 7 secondary schools, including one year 7 to year 13 school.

Eight case study schools were decile 1-3, six schools were decile 4-7, and three were decile 8-10.

5.1 PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Five of the eight full and contributing primary schools used their funds for literacy-related programmes, supported in four cases by some SENCO time.

Four of these schools are in areas of high need, with falling or transient rolls and a high proportion of Maori students, most of whom come in with little pre-school experience. The schools used their EPF funding for:

- an experienced part-time teacher to work with selected new entrant students three mornings a week
- an SRA reading kit and training for teacher aides and staff in its use
- a .2 SENCO to assess students, slot them into programmes, manage teacher aides and work with students more intensively
- a language programme to lift the oral language skills of students and a teacher aide to deliver the Perceptual Motor Programme (PMP).

The fifth school, in a high decile area, used their grant to fund a part-time SENCO position to identify students whose literacy levels were two or more years behind their chronological age and develop a programme for them. The programme involved brief periods of withdrawal for extra tuition in small groups.

Three primary schools adopted a whole school approach to working with children with moderate special education need. One school attracts an increasing number of students with autism spectrum disorders; one is in an area with a high proportion of families in need and children with challenging behaviours; the third attracts a disproportionate number of children with behaviour and learning difficulties. This school subsequently became involved in a network review, which affected its ability to deliver its EPF programme. The schools used their EPF funding for:

¹⁴ See Summary Report 2: Summary of case study reports.

- a full-time SENCO position to promote inclusive practices and appropriate withdrawal spaces, liaise with parents, coordinate parent tutoring in literacy and numeracy and develop visual and other curriculum resources
- professional development for staff; teacher release to allow senior staff to work one to one with students, and to provide mentoring and parent liaison; support for a literacy programme
- school-wide professional development particularly in behaviour management; teacher aides to provide playground and recreation support and to run the PMP.

Example 1: Special education needs co-ordinator position

A city primary school that has developed a reputation for working well with students on the autism spectrum attracts an increasing number of these students. Managing the contact required with parents and other professionals put an extra burden on the principal.

The school used EPF money to pay for a SENCO who promotes inclusive practices in all classrooms and appropriate withdrawal spaces when required to allow special needs students to access the academic and social curriculum. The SENCO has developed and maintained strong relationships with both staff and parents.

All staff received training on working with children with autism spectrum disorders. As well as supporting staff in using techniques they have learned, the SENCO works with pre-schools and intermediate schools to improve the transition of students with special education needs as they move from one educational environment to another.

Example 2: Whole school focus on students with moderate special education need

A primary school in a rural area has taken a whole school therapeutic approach to managing students' behaviour and interpersonal relationships. The programme has an advisory committee that includes the public health nurse, the RTLB, a psychologist, GSE advisor, the school principal and the SENCO. All staff receive training in behaviour management, and teachers use every opportunity to make contacts with parents. Teacher aides with training in sports and recreation run morning break and lunchtime games in the playground, which has led to marked changes in students' behaviour. The school also operates a gardening programme and a homework centre that contributes to students' self-confidence and improved their work habits. EPF funding has contributed to all these initiatives.

5.2 INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

The two case study intermediate schools used their grants quite differently.

One has a number of new immigrant and refugee students who have high health needs and extensive other agency involvement. The school also has a high Pacific enrolment with 20% Tongan and 20% Samoan students. A significant number of students are non-readers. The school used their EPF grant for a full-time SENCO to set up a better early needs assessment procedure, including better links with feeder schools.

The other school has established a temporary withdrawal from morning classes for targeted students for extra support with maths and/or literacy (separately). Initially, a teacher aide, under the supervision of a teacher, provided this assistance in small groups; later, the school employed an experienced teacher to deliver the programme. The school also initially offered a behavioural programme in the afternoons to a different group of students under the aegis of the Deputy Principal, but abandoned this to use the resources to provide more targeted teaching time. The programme had a range of components including social skills, life skills, physical skills, presentation skills etc depending on the needs of the group.

Example 3: Temporary withdrawal, intensive teaching and supported reintegration
An intermediate school in a small town has used EPF funds to employ a teacher and a teacher aide to provide selected students with temporary withdrawal from morning classes (1.5 hours each day for a 10-week block) for extra support with maths and/or literacy.

The school had difficulty finding a space for the programme and created a space by adapting the lobby of the technology suite. The teacher in charge has placed strong emphasis on winning support from other staff who are responsible for maintaining students' learning when they return to their mainstream classes. He provides classroom teachers with information about what the programme has covered, and each student's progress. Classroom teachers are also invited to attend the programme so they can see the work being done with students and share ideas on how to support the learning of students who underachieve.

Initial tests have confirmed that students make considerable gains in the 10 weeks. Ongoing monitoring is in place to determine whether progress is sustained when the students return to mainstream classes.

5.3 SECONDARY SCHOOLS

All but one of the case study secondary schools used their grant to support Year 9 and 10 students, the other focused on students in Year 11. They adopted different approaches to supporting the learning and behavioural needs of students.

Four schools focused on improving literacy and numeracy levels for targeted students. One school did this by adapting curriculum resources. Another ran four small classes for Year 9 and 10 students in which the literacy programme followed the same curriculum as mainstream classes but was tailored for these students, with more focus on reading, developing understanding and responding. While it was originally intended that there would be regular movement of students out of the literacy programme each term, most students remained in the class for a whole year. A third school placed a tutor in English classes to work alongside students to help support the teacher in curriculum delivery. The school also attached a specialist teacher of literacy to work alongside the classroom teacher to share skills and resources and develop new strategies for working with students. All four schools developed resources to support curriculum delivery which are available to other teachers and students in the school.

Two secondary schools used their funds to provide support for students in a small group situation. One has used the Youth Award Scheme (YAS) and the Transition Challenge¹⁵ as vehicles to provide small group and individual support, mainly for students in Year 10.

The second school established a new small class for Year 9 students who cannot cope in the mainstream. The 13 students have a form teacher supported in class by one or more teacher aides. For the second year of EPF, students were mainstreamed for all classes other than English, maths, social studies and science which they had with the specialist teacher and teacher aides. None was able to return to the mainstream for these subjects. In the third year of EPF, the programme is targeting only the 10 most needy students in this way.

One secondary school appointed a half-time SENCO to establish a special education needs register, identify students and establish need. She works with teachers and parents and with the RTLB in developing appropriate resources.

In summary, schools used their funds for:

¹⁵ YAS and the Transition challenge are supported by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and follow their curriculum.

- a .5 SENCO position to identify students, assess need and work with teachers and teacher aides. The work is supported by the development of resources
- a numeracy programme for targeted students through one-to-one or in class support
- restorative justice processes to improve relationships within the school
- creation of extra classes at Year 9 and 10 to concentrate on reading and basic literacy
- adapting curriculum resources for students with moderate special needs
- a literacy enhancement initiative targeting Year 11 students
- small group and individual support for students in Year 10
- a small class for targeted Year 9 and Year 10 students who cannot cope in the mainstream.

Professional development in relation to EPF funded programmes has been limited in all case study schools.

Example 4: Curriculum adaptation

A large secondary school employed two staff part-time to prepare resources in maths, English, science and social studies for Year 9 and 10 students with moderate special education need.

The resources are produced as booklets with information and guidance for teachers and teacher aides as well as activities for students. Each student gets a copy of the booklet to use as a workbook. The teachers preparing the resources keep in close contact with classroom teachers so that their resources match what teachers are delivering in the mainstream. The aim is to fill the gap between the most needy and mainstream students.

The booklets are used for small groups of students who work in a homeroom with a teacher and teacher-aide, as well as for students with special education needs in mainstream classes. Each teacher gets a copy of resources relevant for their classes and they can order more. Many found the booklets useful for mainstream students as well.

This school made the adapted resources available to other schools in the area at cost, a move that has been very well received.

Example 5 Small group support

A single sex secondary school attracted a number of students with behavioural or learning needs who could not cope in a large class. The school developed programmes to allow the students the opportunity to learn in a small group with more individual programmes.

The school originally planned a full 25-hour a week programme but when it received only half the funds applied for, staff modified the programme to focus on the YAS and Transition Challenge for students in Year 10. The classes for this programme are timetabled alongside social studies classes; students take part for three or six hours per week and their activities are assessed against standards within the programme. The EPF coordinator takes one class and another teacher the other. Students remain in the mainstream for other classes. This has benefits for the students who are not labelled as 'failing' and remain connected to a wider group of students within the school.

In association with the RTLB, the coordinator developed IEPs for each student. She also works with parents, teachers and the students themselves. While all students made good progress against targets in their IEPs, transferring the confidence they gained in small groups to mainstream classes remained a challenge.

5.4 PROGRAMMES, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

The evaluation was asked whether there was any evidence on the relative merits of spending EPF on programmes, or spending it on systems, processes and personnel – such as a SENCO¹⁶.

The 2006 EPF Guidelines make it clear that the prime aim of the EPF is to increase whole school capability to manage students with moderate special education need. Earlier Guidelines were less clear on this point. Case study schools that took a whole school approach to student management or that appointed a SENCO to develop school wide systems and processes and/or to work with teachers to extend their knowledge and improve their classroom practice were more likely to achieve this than schools which used their EPF funding to implement programmes with groups of students.

Schools whose primary goal was to lift the achievement and participation in learning of targeted students often found that they were unable to meet their needs within their regular classroom, and many EPF funded programmes included an element of withdrawal. Where the programme included a high degree of withdrawal, the transfer of skills to other staff was usually limited. Where the programme included a combination of integration and withdrawal, there was usually some transfer of skills to other staff but the extent of this depended very much on how the programme was delivered and the commitment of the programme coordinator and senior management.

¹⁶ See Supplementary Report 3: Questions of interest to the Ministry of Education

6. Evidence linking funded programmes to improved achievement

6.1 ASSESSMENT

6.1.1 *Achievement*

Most of the case study schools tracked the learning of students benefiting from EPF funded programmes through the data they were already collecting. Some collected it more often and analysed it more closely for students identified as having moderate special education need.

Schools kept good records on individual students and most used PAT, STAR and PROBE tests to assess gains in learning. Two schools also mentioned the Burt test, the Schonell spelling test, the McCarthy-Kirk and JOST screening tests. Most schools were transitioning from PATs to AsTTLe as an assessment tool, or assessing students against curriculum levels. Some schools also obtained written evaluation comments from teachers on targeted students' achievement.

One primary school found it very useful to plot each student's achievement against national norms for the student's age group. This resulted in teachers, who had previously been satisfied when a student was making progress, setting their sights on closing the gap between the student's achievement and the age group norm.

6.1.2 *Attitudes and behaviour*

Schools found it difficult to measure attitudinal changes or to assess improvements in confidence, personal skills, relationship development or, for teachers, ease of classroom management. Schools believed that these changes are important because they signal greater engagement with education.

Schools sought to find out whether the EPF programme had any impact on students' behaviour or social interactions through:

- a systematic review of students on the special needs register with an opportunity for all staff to contribute observations and other feedback
- developing checklists to note changes in skills and attitudes
- tracking the number of times a student appeared in a 'serious incident' log
- analysing students' absenteeism and discipline records
- monitoring the time students could manage in the mainstream programme without disrupting it, and
- recording falls in the number of IEPs needed.

Some schools surveyed teachers' perceptions of and confidence in working with students with moderate special education needs.

6.2 OUTCOMES

All schools reported improved achievement from students who fully participated in EPF programmes to support student learning and achievement. In most cases their data confirmed that the gap between the achievement of targeted students and those of their age peers had reduced.

Schools reported that supporting the learning needs of moderate special needs students generally improved their behaviour and attendance. One intermediate school initially split its EPF funding between a programme to support students' literacy and numeracy and a programme to deal with students with difficult behaviour. After two terms they discontinued the behavioural programme having become convinced that attending to students' learning needs was the key to reducing behavioural difficulties.

Sharing resources among staff improved teaching, encouraged collegiality and facilitated more discussion about students' problems and progress. Two secondary schools were surprised at the extent to which teachers shared resources and developed new ones. Having adapted curriculum resources also often benefited a much broader group of students than those initially targeted under EPF.

6.3 ELEMENTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Within the 17 case study schools some EPF funded programmes were more successful than others. Successful programmes showed coherence and continuity, which is to say there was clarity about the group of students being targeted, and while the programme may have changed and developed over the life of the funding, there were clear reasons and a rationale for any changes. Schools with successful programmes engaged with the evaluators and were keen to discuss ideas for supporting students with moderate special education needs and to find out what other EPF funded schools were doing. Schools with successful programmes were committed to supporting students with moderate special education needs and worried about how they were going to maintain initiatives once EPF funding was no longer available. This section draws together some elements of good practice apparent in case study schools with successful programmes.

6.3.1 Planning and leadership

In some small schools, programmes were led directly by the principal; in larger schools, responsibility was often delegated to a member of the senior management team. In both instances, the principal and senior staff were committed to the programme, provided appropriate resources and support, were familiar with the programme and actively promoted it within the school.

6.3.2 A whole school approach

In schools with successful programmes there was an acceptance by staff that supporting the learning of students with moderate special education needs is the responsibility of the whole school and requires a whole school approach. Programmes that worked well were able to draw on a supportive culture within the school and on the resources and skills of staff and management to enhance the programme. The whole school benefited from the programme's success.

Some primary and intermediate schools adopted a whole school approach from the outset, which included familiarising staff with the programme, putting systems in place that all staff could use to access the skills of programme leaders and professional development for staff so they could use the skills and resources arising from the programme.

In secondary schools, successful programmes either began in one curriculum department, usually English, and from there were actively promoted through other departments or began with a particular cluster of students and teachers and were then promoted to and adopted by other teachers.

6.3.3 The right people

Programmes that worked well were all led by at least one committed staff member. Most had a team of two who were able to provide each other with support and backup. Staff in these roles included SENCOs, RTLBs, a designated EPF coordinator, staff with specialist skills and Heads of Departments.

Staff working on successful programmes were passionate about their work and believed in their students' ability to do well. They were seen as an integral part of the school's staff and did not work in isolation. This enabled them to convey their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm to other staff as part of their routine meetings and connections.

6.3.4 Clear identification of the students the programme is trying to help

Schools with programmes that worked well had a clear understanding of the students they were targeting and what they wanted to achieve. They identified students using sound academic, behavioural and, where appropriate, medical and family records.

6.3.5 Intensive monitoring of students and programme implementation

During the programme, schools kept detailed records including academic achievement, attendance and suspension figures, teacher and often parent ratings on behaviour and students' own perceptions of how well they were doing. Schools also surveyed teachers' views on the implementation and effectiveness of the programme and adapted it accordingly. Staff involved with the targeted students met regularly to discuss their progress.

6.3.6 A commitment to measuring programme effects, even if this is difficult.

Successful schools were committed to learning from the programme and using that knowledge to improve teaching in the school as a whole. Some schools modified their programmes as a result of their experience. Some developed innovative forms of measurement including checklists and behaviour registers to assess programme success.

6.3.7 Good systems that survive the life of the programme

Several schools focused on establishing clear procedures for identifying and managing students with moderate special education needs. They implemented these systems across the school and provided resources and support for teachers as they identified students with these needs. As they became familiar with the systems and realised that support was available, staff became more confident, both in seeking help and in managing students' needs.

6.3.8 Support for students in both withdrawal and inclusion settings

Most programmes adopted an integrative rather than a fully inclusive approach, that is, targeted students were in mainstream classes most of the time but were withdrawn for varying periods of time for one-to-one or small group support and teaching. In the most successful programmes, there were clear links between the mainstream and support classes, with teachers supporting each other through sharing information and resources as well as adopting similar teaching and behaviour management strategies.

6.3.9 Full use of adapted curriculum resources

A number of schools adapted curriculum resources to suit targeted students. Staff soon realised that these resources could benefit a much wider range of students and facilitate teaching in mainstream classes. Their use in mainstream classes often facilitated the return of students from withdrawal settings. Some schools were generous in sharing their resources with other schools in the area, a gesture which was greatly appreciated.

6.3.9 Investment in professional development for teachers

While very few schools invested extensively in professional development as part of their EPF programme, those that did found staff confidence and capability grew and that staff were more willing to discuss problems, identify solutions and try new initiatives.

6.3.10 Support for teacher aides

Schools implementing EPF programmes relied extensively on skilled teacher aides. Programmes that worked well invested in professional development for their teacher aides and drew on their experience in designing and implementing the programme. They explicitly acknowledged the contribution teacher aides made to the programme's success.

6.4 EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SETTINGS

The evaluation team was asked whether the evaluation could provide any guidance on whether effective mechanisms for supporting students with moderate special education needs differ between primary and secondary schools¹⁷.

The size and structure of primary and secondary schools tends to be very different. It is therefore not surprising that they took different approaches to supporting the achievement of students with moderate special education needs.

Primary schools tended to take a more holistic approach, paying as much attention to students' behaviour and emotional problems and learning difficulties as they did to curriculum content. Most of these schools were relatively small, which made a whole school approach a feasible and effective option. Primary schools that used their funds for a full or part-time SENCO improved their systems for identifying and assessing students with moderate special education needs, which was also effective both in providing immediate support for students with moderate special education needs and in setting the groundwork for a sustainable approach to managing these students in the future.

Case studies suggested it is more challenging for a large secondary school to adopt a school-wide approach to managing students with moderate special education needs and none of the case study secondary schools did this. Their focus on junior school students and on literacy enabled them to offer smaller classes and increased teacher attention, which was as effective for their students as it was for primary school students.

In secondary schools a small class of students with moderate special education needs sometimes operated as a 'regular' class in its own right, or included a mix of mainstreaming and withdrawal which allowed students to maintain a connection with their regular class for some of their learning.

Adaptation of curriculum resources that could be used in both the mainstream class and in smaller, targeted classes was a promising approach used in some secondary schools. One secondary school used its EPF grant to adapt curriculum resources for Year 9 and 10 students and extended its work across the core curriculum areas. The booklets were used for small groups of students who worked in a homeroom with a teacher and teacher-aide, as well as for students with special education needs in mainstream classes. Each teacher was given a copy of resources relevant for their classes and many found the booklets useful for mainstream students. Demand for the booklets grew, as did requests for advice from the Special Needs Department, and the school enhanced the effectiveness of the booklets by making them available to other schools in the area.

6.5 EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES AND SYSTEMS IN MAGNET SCHOOLS

Ten of the 17 case study schools claimed some form of magnet status. The programmes the 10 schools offered varied but they shared some common characteristics:

- they had strong leadership and support from senior staff
- senior staff either took an active role in delivering the programme or had close oversight of it
- schools selected staff carefully to deliver the programme
- three of the four primary schools and one intermediate school took a whole school approach and embedded the programme in the culture and practice of the school
- secondary schools strove to maintain a good balance between inclusion and withdrawal
- schools sought to minimise stigma and labelling

¹⁷ See Supplementary Report 3: Questions of interest to the Ministry of Education.

- staff shared resources and knowledge
- schools set up good systems that increased teacher confidence, improved consistency of practice and provided clarity for parents, students and staff
- all schools kept excellent records and monitored students' progress and teacher confidence and practice
- schools took a strategic view of the funding they had available and sought to increase capacity in preparation for the end of EPF¹⁸.

¹⁸ See Supplementary Report 1: Magnet schools.

7. Other countries' provisions

The evaluation was asked to provide information on three questions relating to other countries' provisions for students with moderate special educational need.

1. What mechanisms have countries used to support the achievement of students with moderate special education need?
2. Have other countries developed any means by which they can identify schools that include a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education need?
3. If so, do they provide support to these schools and in what ways?

The literature was gathered primarily through an internet search, supplemented by material supplied by GSE, Ministry of Education. Most of the literature is from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States with smaller amounts from other OECD countries, Hong Kong and Singapore¹⁹.

The literature has three significant limitations. Firstly, while the review's focus is on funding initiatives for students with moderate special education need, only a small proportion of the literature specifically discusses such students. Secondly, none of the literature found during this search refers to schools that include a disproportionate number of students with special education needs. Finally, a number of countries are reviewing their provision for students with special education needs.

7.1 IDENTIFYING STUDENTS WITH MODERATE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Identifying students with moderate special education need is fraught with difficulty. Most countries are expanding their definition to include a broader range of students but as yet there is no agreement about how this should be done. As noted earlier, a recent OECD report²⁰ proposes categorising students with special education needs under three headings:

- disabilities – students with disabilities or impairments
- difficulties – students with behavioural or emotional disorders
- disadvantages - students with disadvantages arising primarily from socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors.

This categorisation has yet to be accepted by the international community.

This review of international literature looked at ways of identifying students with moderate special education need in Australia, Canada, England, Hong Kong, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the USA. It found that most of these countries use some form of classification system to identify students and allocate resources but the systems they use vary. They include codes of practice with set criteria, normative measures, teacher identification, parent/teacher identification and identification based on the resources required to meet a student's educational needs.

7.2 MODELS OF SUPPORT

Countries vary in the way and extent to which they provide for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages. Many are reviewing their support practices.

¹⁹ See Supplementary Report 2: A literature review on international school-based funding initiatives for students with moderate special education need

²⁰ OECD 2005 Students with Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Disadvantages OECD: Paris

Discussion in the literature centres round the nature and benefits of inclusion, models of funding that follow the individual or go directly to the school, the need for greater accountability and better monitoring, more extensive professional development and closer relationships with parents. It is often unclear whether the support mechanisms are only for those with disabilities, or whether they extend to students with learning difficulties or those who are otherwise disadvantaged. Very little of the available literature refers specifically to students with moderate special education need as a separate category.

Mechanisms of support are equally varied but generally include targeted funding for students who have more severe special education needs. A number of countries are considering or experimenting with a combination of support mechanisms for other students with special education needs. These include some form of population based funding, using indices of disadvantage or population indicators with funding based on needs in individual schools, based on assessments of student performance.

Schools have more or less flexibility in how funds are spent, but options usually include specialist teachers, teacher coordinators, teacher aides, special classes within mainstream schools, lower class sizes, training and development and curriculum adaptation.

7.3 MAGNET SCHOOLS

The concept of magnet schools as schools attracting a disproportionate number of special education needs students because of the programmes they offer or the skill they have in catering for such students is not one that appears in the literature.

That does not mean such schools do not exist or that funding authorities do not have mechanisms for supporting them. It just means that information is not available to enable this evaluation to address this issue in any meaningful way.

8.0 Discussion

This evaluation is not able to confirm that the EPF has been allocated to schools that have disproportionately high numbers of students with moderate special education needs. Multiple policy goals matched with a lack of definition of key concepts such as 'moderate special education needs' and 'disproportionate' made it impossible to design and manage an allocation process which gave confidence that funded schools were those with the highest needs, those with the best programmes, or magnet schools.

The team managing the allocation process was both reflective and responsive to feedback on the process but was ultimately unable to overcome the problems created by the confusion around policy intent.

However, the evaluation did find evidence that the very existence of the Fund, and the application process, raised schools' awareness of students with moderate special education need and prompted applicant schools to consider the systems, processes and programmes they needed to meet the needs of those students.

Case studies of funded schools suggest that when EPF reached schools it was spent in ways that benefited students with moderate special education need, however the school defined that. Some case study schools gave greater confidence that their commitment to and efforts with students with moderate special education needs were embedded in the school systems and culture and would survive the life of their EPF grant.

These schools commonly had school leadership which advocated for students with moderate special education need and committed resources to meeting their needs. Schools with this kind of leadership were much more likely to see supporting students with moderate special education needs as a whole school responsibility and take a whole school approach. They were more likely to invest in professional development related to meeting the needs of students with moderate special education needs, and they reaped the benefits of improved staff capability and increased confidence to discuss problems, identify solutions and try new initiatives.

There is no substitute for good people. Schools which had a committed staff member, appropriately resourced, who could help other staff to identify, support and monitor students with moderate special education needs moved further and faster in supporting these students. In some schools the contribution of teacher aides, who were used extensively in EPF programmes, was explicitly acknowledged and they were encouraged to contribute to programme design and implementation in a way that enriched provision to students.

Schools with programmes that worked well had a clear understanding of the students they were targeting and what they wanted to achieve. They identified students using sound academic, behavioural and where appropriate medical and family records. Once identified, detailed records were kept on students to measure their progress. Successful schools were committed to doing more with the data; aggregating student achievement information to learn about the effectiveness of the programme and whether what had been learned about working with students with moderate special education need could be transferred to improve teaching across the school.

Most programmes in case study schools adopted an integrative rather than a fully inclusive approach. Targeted students were in inclusive settings most of the time but were withdrawn for varying periods of time for individual or small group teaching. In the most successful programmes there were well developed links between the withdrawal and inclusion settings with teachers sharing information and resources as well as adopting similar teaching and behaviour management strategies.

Finally, some secondary schools had success with adapting curriculum resources to suit targeted students. These resources, designed initially for students with moderate special education needs, were soon in demand in mainstream classrooms and used to the benefit of many more students than originally envisaged.