



Special Education Support Service

Meeting the Needs of Students with Special Educational Needs through Individualised Planning (Post- Primary)

Case Study 1: 'Peter'

Background Information – ‘Peter’

Peter is in second-year in a large post-primary school. He comes from a disadvantaged background and is a member of a one-parent family living in a socially-deprived area of town. He went to the local primary school where a high number of pupils scored under the tenth percentile in standardised tests.

On Peter’s transition, his post-primary school received a report stating that he had a STen score of 2 in the Drumcondra Primary Reading test, indicating that he was well below average in reading. His SIGMA-T STen score of 6 indicated that he was in the average range in maths.

Peter’s post-primary school has a mixed-ability policy for first-years students and uses a variety of standardised, norms-referenced, and time-limited tests with in-coming first year students for assessment purposes. These tests confirmed the low reading and writing ability reported from his primary school. He was therefore referred for Learning Support as part of a group of five and the main focus of this support was attention to phonological skills and the whole-word learning – or the ‘look-and-say’ method

As the year progressed Peter’s attendance deteriorated and there were difficulties in getting the necessary explanations from home. His Christmas test results were generally weak, with some teachers reporting a lack of interest. He was considered quiet and withdrawn in class.

Before Easter, his History teacher consulted with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in the school. She had noticed that Peter has a very strong interest in History, along with a breadth and depth of knowledge in particular historical topics. This was not evident from his homework or class tests and had become apparent through the use of teaching strategies such as table-quizzes and the use of computers and an interactive whiteboard.

From discussion with Peter, the History teacher teased out that his knowledge had mainly come from watching history-related satellite TV channels. She had also noted that his retention of information was excellent if presented verbally, as was his comprehension of text. Likewise, his verbal response – especially when time was taken to let him articulate his ideas sufficiently – showed a breadth of understanding and retention of information. However, when left to read information independently his comprehension was poor as were his written responses. His engagement with such tasks was also extremely poor.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator then took a number of steps based on this observation. She asked his Year Head to gather information about Peter from his subject teachers. She asked the Guidance Councillor to speak with Peter. She asked the Home-school liaison teacher to visit Peter’s mother at home. She advised each about the student. She also reviewed some of his subject copies.

The Year Head reported that his teachers were unhappy with Peter’s written work in terms of legibility and contributions. Three teachers reported that his reading was poor, with little expression or fluency. Some teachers had begun to avoid asking him to read as they suspected that he was uncomfortable when asked and that his quiet and withdrawn demeanour might be a form of avoidance strategy. His organisation was also poor – he sometimes seemed to have difficulty in following instructions and this brought him to the attention of teachers. However, his CSPE teacher especially noted that he revealed complex thinking in discussion about world issues, but that he seemed concerned about certain world matters to the point of anxiety. He also seemed to have an aptitude with

computers as he sourced video-clips and graphics easily from the web for CSPE class projects. When provided with the opportunity he presented his CSPE project very creatively on the computer.

The Home-school Liaison Teacher reported that, in his mother's view, Peter 'hated' school and she found it difficult to get him to attend on some days – she noticed that days when he had History were an exception. She also indicated that, contrary to his demeanour in school, he sometimes behaved in an angry and frustrated manner at home, and his behaviour could be challenging. She confirmed his strong interest in watching history programmes on TV, but she was trying to discourage this as he watched it a lot on days when he didn't go to school.

The Guidance Councillor was concerned that Peter might be very anxious and somewhat negative about school. While he liked some subjects – especially where the teacher spoke or read a lot, or used visual methods – Peter's consistent poor performance was disheartening him and possibly damaging his self-image. He formed an opinion that Peter might be primarily an auditory and visual learner, and that he was having special difficulty with teachers who relied a lot on text. From discussion with the Home-school Liaison Officer, he also suspected that the limited amount of family discussion at home, in combination with his poor reading ability, may have inhibited his ability to express himself orally. He therefore administered the Cognitive Ability Test (CAT3). His Non-Verbal Reasoning scores were very high, but his Verbal Reasoning less so. The scores indicated that his reasoning ability was very significantly higher than his attainment and he was therefore underachieving in school to a high degree.

From an error-analysis of Peter's written work, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator noticed dyslexic-type indicators, such as some letter reversals and inconsistency in the spelling of frequently used words.

Following the gathering of this information, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator administered the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability assessment test. The results indicated a reading age of eight years and ten months in terms of accuracy and eight years and six months for reading rate. Comprehension was better at 11 years and two months. The error analysis showed a high rate of reversals and substitutions.

From a review of this background information, the Special Educational Needs Team suspected that Peter might have a specific learning disability, along with a higher level of intelligence and comprehension. They therefore requested a NEPS psychological assessment. This occurred at the beginning of Peter's second year in school and the results indicated that Peter had dyslexia and an Intelligence Quotient of 132. Assistive technology was recommended and purchased.

Peter was therefore considered 'dual-exceptional': i.e. he has a specific learning disability – and was below the 2nd percentile in terms of reading – along with an exceptional ability with a very high IQ.

Individual Education Plan

| 1. Summary Information | |
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| <i>Name of Student:</i> Peter O'Connor | <i>D.O.B.:</i> 21.06.95 |
| <i>Parent(s):</i> Sheila O'Connor | <i>Current Age:</i> 14 |
| <i>IEP Coordinator:</i> Nora O'Rourke (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) | <i>S.N.A.:</i> N/A |
| <i>Other Professionals / Agencies:</i> | <i>Psychologist:</i> Shauna O'Shaughnessy |
| <i>Nature of Special Educational Need:</i> Dyslexia and Exceptionally Able ('Dual Exceptional') | |
| <i>Impact of Special Educational Needs on Educational Development:</i> Peter's poor reading and writing ability is inhibiting his learning. He is underachieving. His organisational skills are poor and this is giving rise to difficulties in class and with homework. This is exacerbated by short-term memory problems. He is getting little stimulus or affirmation at home. His self-image is suffering and he is need of social and emotional support. His attendance is becoming worse, he is becoming negative in his attitudes to school and he is at risk of dropping out of formal education at an early age. These difficulties, up to now, have masked his exceptional cognitive ability and strong interest in specific areas. | |
| <i>Special Education Provision:</i> Peter is in a mainstream class and has access to two hours resource teaching | |
| <i>Other Relevant Summary Information:</i> | |
| <i>Date of IEP Planning Meeting:</i> 15/10/2010 | <i>Date of Review:</i> 18/02/2011 |
| <i>Present at Meeting:</i> Sheila O'Connor (Mother) Nora O'Rourke (<i>Special Educational Needs Coordinator</i>) John Patwell (Guidance Councillor) John Peters (NEPS Psychologist) Peter O'Connor (Student – to discuss targets at the end of the meeting). | |

2. Assessment of Educational Performance

Formal Assessment

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Name of Test</i> | <i>Administered By</i> | <i>Outcome</i> |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| 13/04/2009 | Cognitive Ability Test (CAT3). | Katrina Andrews (Guidance Councillor) | Verbal – 85 Non-Verbal – 129 Quantitative – 118 (Standard Age Scores) |
| 20/04/2009 | Neale Analysis of Reading Ability. | Nora O'Rourke (<i>Special Educational Needs</i> Coordinator) | Accuracy – 8:10 Rate – 8:06 Comprehension – 11:10 Error Analysis – High rate of reversals and substitutions |
| 15/09/2009 | Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales - Fifth Edition (SB5) The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test Second UK Edition (WIAT-IIuk). | John Peters (NEPS Psychologist). | Full-scale Intelligence Quotient = 132. A specific learning disability (Dyslexia). |

Informal Assessment (*information gathered from student, parents, class teacher, resource teacher, SNA, etc*)

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| <i>Literacy</i> | Peter's reading is weak and lacks fluency. His rate of reading is very slow and he has difficulty decoding. He has weak phonological processing. His writing is similarly weak – he has difficulty with letter reversals and he sometimes tries to spell phonetically but there is no consistency in his approach. His written vocabulary is poor and he lacks fluency. |
| <i>Numeracy</i> | Peter has difficulty in interpreting and understanding some mathematical symbols and in reading mathematical-related words. His sequencing and short-term memory difficulties – related to his specific learning disability – are also causing difficulties. |
| <i>Communication</i> | Peter has had limited experience of being involved in adult-type discussion on topics of interest to him. He lacks confidence, fluency and articulation in general discussion |
| <i>Social Skills</i> | Peter is conscious of his 'difference' but does not understand it. He has begun to use avoidance strategies at home and at school and is losing self-confidence and becoming more isolated. |
| <i>Other</i> | Peter has a strong interest in certain topics, including history, the environment, computing and world economics. He displays deep concern on some of these matters, to the point of anxiety. |

3. Abilities and Learning Needs

Summary of Abilities and Learning Needs

Summary of Abilities, Skills, Talents and Interests

Talents

- Motivated in relation to certain topics
- Computer Literate
- Strong Auditory Memory
- Likes visual cues, colour and sound
- High IQ

Summary of Learning Needs

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| <i>Social Skills</i> | Peter needs social and emotional support, along with opportunities to engage with peers with common interests and abilities. |
| <i>Literacy</i> | Increased reading fluency and accuracy. |
| <i>Numeracy</i> | Improved reading accuracy of mathematical symbols and key mathematical-related words and mathematical sentences. Improved organisational skills. |
| <i>Communication</i> | Learn to be more confident and articulate in discussion. |
| <i>Other</i> | Assistive technologies (AT) would assist his access to the curriculum and provide an additional form of text. |

Priority Learning Needs

| <i>Area of Need</i> | <i>Description of Need</i> |
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| <i>1. Reading</i> | Increased reading fluency and accuracy. |
| <i>2. ICT (Assistive Technologies)</i> | To optimise the benefits of assistive technology as an additional access to text and as a means of displaying his knowledge. Peter also needs to learn to present information in a more organised fashion. |
| <i>3. Social and Emotional Needs</i> | Affirmation in relation to his academic ability and performance. Learn group entry skills to promote social inclusion at school. |
| <i>4. Higher Order Thinking and Challenges</i> | Opportunities to access, express and present his knowledge through curricular extension and enrichment activities |

Individual Educational Plan

| The process of preparing an individualised plan to support his learning was then initiated. . Targets, Strategies and Resources | | | |
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| <i>Targets</i> | <i>Strategies</i> | <i>Resources / Materials</i> | <i>Personnel / Location</i> |
| (A) Increase Reading Fluency and Accuracy. <u>Start Date:</u> 22/10/2010; <u>Review Date:</u> 18/02/2011. | | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will recognise a list of 20 keywords in each of Business, Science and Maths. 2. Will use a list of keywords to complete a Cloze exercise in each of the subjects Business, Science and Maths to 90% accuracy. 3. Once a week, will write and read aloud prepared 'target text' containing each of the keywords. 4. Will use definitions of terms in Business, Science and Maths to generate appropriate sentences with 70% or greater accuracy. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liaise with subject teachers in Maths, Business and Science to identify key vocabulary to be taught and read before the topics are addressed in class 2. Teach 20 key words in each identified subject. 3. Teach for reading fluency in identified text-book sections. 4. Subject teachers will initiate the use of key-words notebooks and wall charts in class. 5. Teachers of Business, Science and Maths will identify a list of the key words to be pre taught by the resource teacher. 6. Resource teacher will liaise with Patrick and teachers on weekly 'target texts'. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resource book 'Help for Vocabulary: Handbook of Exercises for Language Processing'. 2. 'Vocabulary for Maths' p148-152. 3. 'Vocabulary for Science' p156-159. 4. JCSP keywords notebook and charts. 5. Cloze Maker software. 6. Keywords lists in Business, Science and Maths from subject textbooks. 7. 'Look, Cover, Write and Check' spelling strategy | <p>Learning Support Teacher / Learning Support Room.</p> <p>Subject teachers in Maths, Business and Science / mainstream classes.</p> |
| (B) ICT (Assistive Technology - AT). <u>Start Date:</u> 20/10/2010; <u>Review Date:</u> 18/02/2011 | | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve a touch-typing speed of 18 words per minute. 2. Learn spell-check function in his scan-read software. 3. Learn basic layout functions of word processor. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using scan-read software, Peter will type up to 18 words per minute on a chosen topic every week 2. Peter will use the spell-check function in his scan-read software every day. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Typing Tutor Assignments 1 to 24 2. One computer class per week using word processor and scan-read software 3. Laptop for class and home use. 4. USB key. | <p>Learning Support Room.</p> <p>Mainstream English and History classes (SEN Coordinator to liaise with teachers).</p> <p>Home (Home-school Liaison Teacher will liaise with mother).</p> |

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| | 3. Will type a one-page English essay assignment every two weeks using the word processor and use alignment and formatting functions of word processor. | | |
| (C) Social and Emotional Needs. <u>Start Date:</u> 02/11/2010; <u>Review Date:</u> 03/03/2011. | | | |
| 1. Peter will participate in the school quiz team's twice-weekly lunchtime meetings. 2. Peter will discuss the nature of his dual exceptional needs with Guidance Councillor and achieve understanding of these. 3. Understanding of mother | Social interaction and academic enrichment encouraged through participation in team. Counselling by Guidance Councillor. Home visit by Home-school Liaison Teacher and discussion with mother about the nature of his special needs. | School quiz team. Guidance Councillor Home-school Liaison Teacher | Year Head and the coordinator of school quiz team. Guidance Councillor. Home-school Liaison Teacher. |
| (D) Higher Order Thinking and Extension Activities. <u>Start Date:</u> 02/11/2010; <u>Review Date:</u> 25/03/2011. | | | |
| 1. Will complete a cross-curricular self-directed extension task, involving higher-order thinking, once a term (achieve depth of understanding and bridge attainment gap). | Cross-curricular extension activity (History / Maths / Science): Peter will research 'The Discovery of Longitude' and make a class presentation on its historical background and significance, along with the mathematical principles involved. | <i>Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time</i> , by Dava Sobel (2007). Teachers of History, Maths and Science. ICT: Scan-read software for reading book and PowerPoint for presentation. The Internet. | Teachers of History, Maths and Science. Library / Home: use of internet for research; scan-read software and hardware for reading book; on-line PowerPoint tutorial. Learning Support Room: support as required. |

Date: _____