

New Zealand Day-Special Schools: Changes and Challenges Under Special Education 2000

TRISH MCMENAMIN

Abstract:

Special Education 2000 was introduced in 1996; the policy heralded a new era of resourcing and organisation for special education aimed to foster and develop an inclusive education system in New Zealand. This article explores the impact of that policy on New Zealand day-special schools. It is suggested that an unintended consequence of the implementation of Special Education 2000 was that day-special schools experienced a period of significant growth and expansion. The effects of this growth and expansion on the schools and their communities are discussed and the future role of day-special schools in an "inclusive" policy environment is considered.

Special Education 2000 (SE2000), a new policy that was to set the direction for the provision of special education in the New Zealand public school system, was introduced in 1996; the aim of this policy was to achieve a "world class" inclusive education system. A key tenet of the policy was, and still is, that all children and young people with special needs should receive their education in regular classrooms in inclusive education settings. SE2000 built on the principles espoused in the 1989 Education Act which enshrined the rights of all children and young people between the ages of 6-15 to receive their education at their local state school. Significantly, no mention was made in the policy of the role of day-special schools in an inclusive education system. However it would not be unreasonable, given the thrust of this policy, to suggest that there was an implicit expectation that special school roles, and rolls, would reduce significantly as the policy took effect.

The reality today, ten years after the introduction of SE2000, is that many New Zealand children and young people with high and very high special needs continue to receive their education in state-funded day-special schools. The rights of parents to choose where their children go to school is well entrenched in the New Zealand psyche; many parents of children with high and very high special needs continue to choose special schools over regular schools. It would seem then, that there is a tension between the policy direction as defined in SE2000 and the practical application of that policy.

This article focuses on day-special schools in New Zealand with particular reference to how SE2000 has impacted on them, both directly and indirectly, in the ten years since its introduction. In the article I will explore the changes and challenges faced by day-special schools as a result of the implementation of SE2000. I will show how the implementation of the Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS) led to two important, but unintended, consequences; a significant growth in the day-special school rolls and an expansion of the role of day-special schools. This growth and expansion, it could be argued, represented the opposite effect of the desired policy goals of SE2000 and demonstrated the result of what Wills (2005) has described as a "mismatch" between the desired policy goals and the impact of the policy tools. I will suggest that in response to this growth and expansion, those charged with the implementation of the policy, Ministry of Education, Group Special Education (GSE), attempted to redress this situation by tightening enrolment regulations, an action which appears to have been a significant factor in the development of increased solidarity in the day-special school communities and the consequent formation of new support and lobby groups amongst them. I conclude by briefly considering the future role of day-special schools in "inclusive education systems".

Education Policy and Provision for Children and Young People with Special Needs in New Zealand

Children with special education needs in New Zealand have access to a range of state-funded educational settings. The rights of all children and young people between the ages of 5-19 to attend their local state-funded school are enshrined in Section 8 of the 1989 Education Act which states that "people who have special education needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as do people who do not."

In the twenty years since this Act was passed, the principle of inclusion, as it applies to disabled children and young people, has, in New Zealand as in many other countries, gained widespread support; it is now commonplace for disabled children and young people to attend a regular class in their local state-funded school.

In 1996 the government introduced SE2000, a new policy framework for the delivery of special education services in New Zealand. The stated aim of this policy was "to achieve, over the next decade, a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 5). While the exact nature and characteristics of a "world class inclusive education system" were not defined, and have never been, it is fairly clear that the changes introduced in the policy were intended to ease the access of disabled children into regular school settings by providing fully portable funding which would follow them wherever they went. This contention is supported by Wylie's comment in her review of SE2000 "that one of the intentions of the Special Education 2000 policy was to make it easier for students with special needs to enrol at their local school ..." (Wylie, 2001 p. 70). Further support can be found in the Ministry of Education's national report on local services which, in reference to SE2000, stated that:

The new policy recognised the increasing numbers of children requiring special education service support and the increased number of parents who wished to have their children receive their education in regular settings ... (and) was based on an international move towards inclusion of all children with special education needs in local educational settings. (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 18)

It could be argued that implicit in the stated aim of the policy is a concern for and a focus on where the child or young person with special education needs receives his/her education and with whom; inherent in this concern is the view that the regular school setting is the best place for all disabled children and young people to receive their education. The corollary to this is, of course, that special school settings are not the optimum places for disabled children and young people to receive their education. This view is consistent with prevailing definitions of that time which, in relation to the educational needs of disabled children and young people, referred to "inclusive education", as: "the right for every student to access the curriculum as a fulltime member of an ordinary classroom alongside other students of a similar chronological age" (Ballard, 1996. p. 33).

SE2000 described a new model for the provision of special education resources and delivery. Under SE2000 the funding and service model was conceived as a pyramid divided into three sections that, to a large extent, can be said to represent diminishing levels of need among increasing numbers of eligible students. Since its inception there have been significant additions and alterations made to the policy in the light of information derived from Ministry of Education commissioned reviews (Massey University, 1999, 2000, 2002; Wylie, 2000) and in response to feedback from stakeholders, including parents and schools.

Under the present scheme, approximately 3 percent of school-aged students are estimated to have "high" to "very high" needs for support to access the education system. Classification as having "high" or "very high" needs is determined by "the amount of additional assistance the student needs in order to participate in and benefit from the school programme" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 7). Children and young people who are classified as having "high" or "very high" needs receive support under the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS). It is this scheme that is particularly pertinent to the impact of SE2000 on day-special schools and of particular interest in this article.

The Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme

ORRS is the means by which funding is provided to students with the highest levels of need. Students who are eligible for ORRS attract both additional teacher time and a cash component to fund support from specialist therapists such as speech-language therapists, physiotherapists, and sign language interpreters and also to fund teacher-aide support. The level of the cash component and the additional teacher time varies according to the assessed level of need; a student assessed as eligible for very high needs support attracts 0.2 teacher time and a higher cash component than a student assessed as eligible for high needs support who attracts 0.1 teacher time and a lesser cash amount.

The funds for ORRS are managed either by GSE (approximately 60% of the funds) or by schools acting under a delegation and known as Accredited Special Education Service Providers (ASESPS). In order for a school or cluster of schools to manage ORRS funds they need to be receiving funds for 20 or more students with high or very high needs. The funds received for all students are expected to be aggregated into a pool by fundholders. These funds are to provide specialist and teacher-aide support for the individual student. However the money

does not constitute an individual entitlement; this is not always well understood by parents and families and can be a cause of contention. The nature and quantum of specialist and teacher-aide support for individual students is determined on the basis of identified specific needs as agreed by parents, school, fund holders and the student, and described in an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The Ministry of Education expects this model of delivery to operate on an “unders and overs” system whereby the needs of all the students in the pool are balanced against one another so that some students are deemed to have lesser needs and others greater; the money is then distributed accordingly. This model is inherently competitive in that the person who can make the better case for need is likely to get the bigger amount of support; this can potentially lead to a situation in which some students come out as winners and others as losers.

The Impact of SE2000 on Day-Special Schools

There are 28 state-funded special schools in New Zealand, 6 in the South Island and 22 in the North Island. As would be expected, the majority of these special schools are located in urban centres. These schools generally cater for children and young people who have complex multiple needs with intellectual and physical impairment, the majority of whom have been verified as having high or very high needs. There is quite considerable variation among the 28 schools both in terms of their size and the way they operate. School rolls range from the smallest at 18 students, to the largest with over 150. Some schools consist of a single school facility, while others have a base facility and additional classes, known as “satellite units”, which are located at local regular schools but are managed, governed and staffed by the day-special school. In addition some schools provide an itinerant service which supports ORRS-funded students and their teachers in regular school settings; there is one school that does only this and has no students on site. A significant number of schools are ASESPs and hold funds for their own students and in many cases for a cluster of regular schools as well.

Day-special schools have to meet government-regulated national requirements for education as set out in the National Education Guidelines which specify, among other things, the national curriculum to be followed in all state-funded schools. The schools are funded essentially in the same way as any other state-funded school and are subject to the same legislative and regulatory requirements in relation

to their organisation and management. The schools are governed by an elected Board of Trustees comprising parent representatives, the school principal, and an elected staff representative and, in some cases, an elected student representative. Under this system the Board acts as the governing body while the principal is seen as the executive manager and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. Staffing and management within these schools are determined on the basis of student roll numbers as in all other state-funded schools. As with other state-funded schools, the general running costs of the school are funded by the Ministry of Education through “operational funding”. In addition to this base funding, each school gets funding through the Special Education Grant (SEG) which is allocated to all state-funded schools on the basis of roll number and school decile rating. The decile rating is the indicator used to measure the extent to which schools draw pupils from low socio-economic communities; Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities while Decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students.

Growth and Expansion

The implementation of SE2000 brought significant changes and challenges to day-special schools. Arguably the most obvious impacts occurred as a result of the changes in the level and nature of support provided for children and young people under the ORRS scheme.

In 2000 Wylie reported that “special schools have been revived by the new policy” (p. 52). She elaborated on this as follows:

Special school enrolments increased by 4 percent between 1998 and 1999, with some schools gaining more than ten students in a single year. The smallest special school has 12 students, the largest 125. A number of special schools were also substantially renovated recently, adding to their attractiveness. The schools have been able to offer much more as a result of Special Education 2000, and there are anecdotal reports of improved outcomes for students. They also report more parents coming to them as units close and mainstream options are inadequate, or become too difficult. The special schools are no longer “segregated”. Many offer satellite units in regular schools, allowing some flexibility as student needs or capabilities change. Often they make use of community facilities and support to provide students with knowledge and skills needed for everyday life. (Wylie 2000, p. 75)

How then did this revival happen? Largely, it would appear that it was a result of the introduction of the ORRS component of SE2000 which not only led to an increase in student numbers and school resources but also gave greater control of the use and management of these resources to the schools.

Very early in the implementation of SE2000 it became obvious that many parents were choosing special schools over regular schools. During these years, verification as having high or very high needs was considered to confer agreement for day-special school enrolment. Thus any student who was verified as having high or very high needs was entitled to enrol in a day-special school. Parents could approach the day-special school directly and the appropriateness or otherwise of the enrolment was decided on by the family and the school.

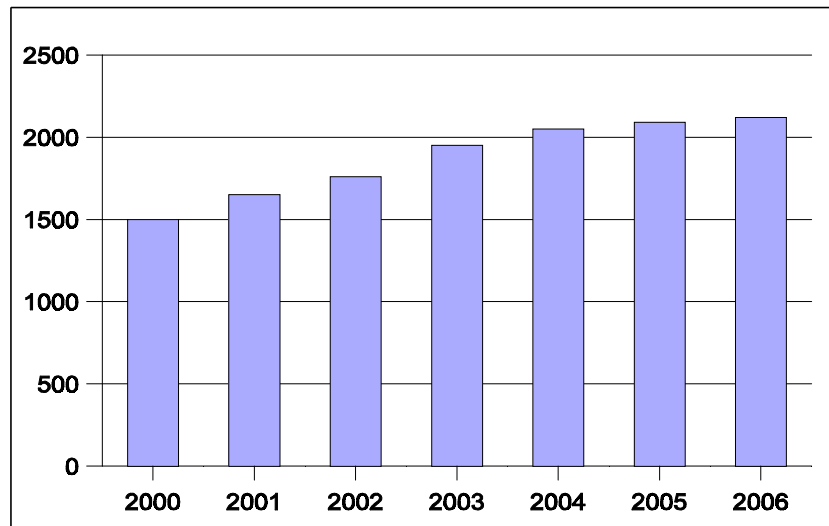


Figure 1 National Roll Growth in Day-Special Schools

Wylie reported national roll growth of 4% between 1998-99 (Wylie, 2000, p. 75). Figures taken from the Education Counts website and shown in Figure 1 suggest that growth nationally from 2000-2006 was 40%. What is particularly interesting is the rapid growth in the first years of the implementation of SE2000 (29% between 2000-2003).

At the local level some individual schools experienced significant and unprecedented roll growth over this period. A comparison of roll

figures reported in Education Review Office reports for individual schools show that some rolls increased by over 100% in the period 2000-2007. It is difficult to obtain accurate comparisons of these figures as the reviews were conducted in different years. But what is evident is that of the 28 special schools, there were only 6 whose rolls show no significant increase in the period from 2000-2006/07. Of the other 22 schools, 16 recorded roll increases of over 30%; 3 of the schools recorded roll growth of over 100%. The size of roll growth would suggest that the nature of provision available in day-special schools was particularly appealing to parents and caregivers. In 2004 parents whose children attended special schools reported that they felt the special schools worked well. They identified a number of factors contributing to this, including the availability of therapy and specialist teachers, the commitment of the teachers to children with special education needs, the teachers' passion, and a safer and less judgemental environment. (Ministry of Education, 2005).

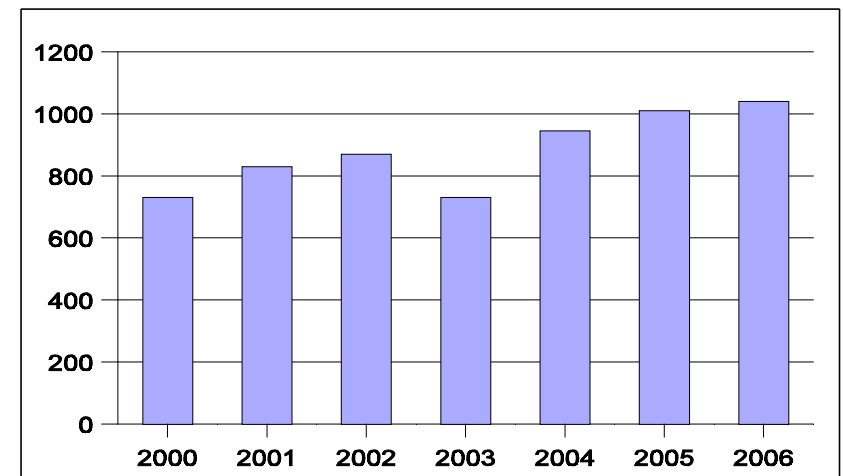


Figure 2 National Teacher Numbers in Day-Special Schools

Concurrent with the growth of the student rolls was a significant growth in teacher staffing (Figure 2). This was due not only to the growth in student numbers, but also because of the additional 0.1 and 0.2 of teacher time that each student verified as having high or very high needs attracted. In the period 2000-2006 the number of teaching staff in special schools grew by approximately 48%. This increase in

teacher numbers obviously allowed lower staff-student ratios and the provision of individualised programmes for children. The increase in teacher numbers in individual schools also led to increasingly complex roles for principals and the development of more middle management roles in the schools, making them more similar to regular schools in terms of staffing structures and levels.

As described previously, under ORRS students verified as having high and very high needs attract both funding and additional teacher support. Most day-special schools had sufficient numbers of students to be able to become their own “fundholders”, as they were then known, (ASESPs, now) and some also became “fundholders” for other schools. As a consequence of this, the day-special schools had significant pools of funding available to them which they could manage in flexible ways to meet the needs of the students they served. Schools were now able to purchase specialist and teacher-aide support directly and manage the use of their own funds. Individual day-special schools and clusters were able to use economies of scale and had a sufficient critical mass to enable them to use their funding and staffing in ways that best suited the needs of individual students and best met the expectations of their parents and caregivers.

Over time, as they became more confident and assured in the new environment, the day-special schools came to employ their own specialist therapists, including speech language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. At a time when there was a shortage of these specialists in the education sector at large, special schools were able to offer attractive employment and satisfying work. At a time when the model of specialist support provided in regular education settings was consultative, specialists in day-special schools were able to work hands-on with the students.

As a result of the implementation of ORRS under SE2000, day-special schools were able to offer low student:teacher ratios, high levels of specialist support on-site, and high levels of teacher-aide support. Day-special schools were able to attract and retain teachers, specialists and teacher-aides because of the predictability and certainty of the ORRS funding. This also meant that day-special schools were able to offer students, and their parents and caregivers, certainty and consistency of staffing.

Many of the schools had developed relationships with regular schools by establishing “satellite” units in these schools and/or through the provision of itinerant support services. Strategic development of

satellite units allowed the special schools to provide for those students whose parents wanted them to have access to social experiences with their similar-age peers while still enjoying the benefits and resources available in the day-special school. Some schools had established satellite units prior to SE2000, but their numbers increased after its implementation.

Similarly, prior to SE2000 some day-special schools were providing itinerant support for children with special needs in regular settings. These relationships were able to continue and grow after SE2000; some regular schools transferred the 0.1 and 0.2 teacher allocations to a day-special school in order to access the support of specialist teachers. Day-special schools were developing, to some extent, into specialist centres which offered a range of services both within their own school settings and to regular schools.

Undoubtedly this dramatic growth and expansion created significant challenges in terms of the management and governance of these schools. Prior to SE2000 the financial environment and staffing profiles of the schools were relatively simple. Boards and principals had to manage only the operational funding and, generally, were responsible only for the employment of teachers, teacher assistants, teacher-aides, a cleaner/caretaker and an administrative officer. After SE2000, boards were charged with the management of the operational funding and also the ORRS money that was bulk-funded to schools. In some schools the ORRS funding constituted very substantial amounts which had to be spent across a range of activities and monitored and accounted for carefully. The employment environment had also become increasingly complex as a range of specialists was added to the employee profiles of many of the schools. Evidence from Education Review Office reports indicates that the schools generally rose to these challenges and most schools received commendation on their governance and management systems. Reports referred to “innovative use of funding”, “increased executive responsibilities”, the “increasingly complex organisational structure” and to the boards “successfully managing their extended responsibilities” (Education Review Office, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d).

Challenging Times

It would appear then that day-special schools thrived in the post SE2000 environment. However that is too simplistic a view. Despite their obvious success in attracting students, and the clear support from

parents and families, day-special schools were, and to some extent still are, in an invidious position. The government's special education policy clearly articulated an aim to achieve "a world class inclusive education system"; implicit in this aim is a belief that all children should receive their education in regular school settings with their similar age peers. Clearly day-special schools were, and are, an anomaly in such an environment. Moreover the dramatic growth of these schools could perhaps also be seen as presenting a significant threat to the aims of the policy. In recent years, there have been significant increases in compliance requirements in relation to the management and allocation of the ORRS funds. While these could be seen as standard administrative changes they could, equally reasonably, be seen as an indication of GSE's aim to increase its control over and involvement in the affairs of day-special schools. Perhaps the most significant and overt action that lends support to the view that education authorities were concerned about the rise and rise of day-special schools, was the change in the enrolment process for entry to a day-special school. This change, which was introduced in 2005, had the effect of providing the Ministry of Education with the means to control the numbers of students enrolling in day-special schools.

Prior to the introduction of SE2000, children and young people were required to have a "Section Nine" agreement to access special education services and provision including special school enrolment. This agreement was named after Section Nine of the Education Act 1989 and referred to "agreements between parents and the Secretary of Education" (Wylie, 2000, p. 36) about the provision of special education for the individual child or young person. The section reads as follows:

- (1) If satisfied that a person under 21 should have special education, the Secretary shall –
- (a) Agree with the person's parents that the person should be enrolled, or direct them to enrol the person, at a particular state school, special school, special class, or special clinic;
 - or
 - (b) Agree with the person's parents that the person should have, or direct them to ensure that the person has, education or help from a special service.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything in section 12 of this Act (which relates to enrolment schemes), but subject to the rest of Part II of this Act (which relates to the suspension, expulsion, and

exclusion of students), where there has been an agreement or direction under subsection (1) of this section, the person concerned shall be allowed to enrol at the state school, special school, special class, or special clinic, concerned or (as the case requires) to have education or help from the special service concerned.

When SE2000 was introduced, ORRS verification was "deemed to equate to a "Section Nine" agreement" (Wylie, 2000, p. 40). ORRS verification thus constituted a proxy for the agreement between the parents and the Secretary of Education for the provision of special education services including day-special school enrolment. This situation continued without any apparent problems until 2004 when GSE informed day-special schools that there was to be a change in the enrolment process for students wishing to enrol in day-special schools. GSE's explanation for this action was that having reviewed the enrolment process they realised that it was in contravention of the legislative requirements, as set out in Section 9 of the Education Act 1989, that all children or young people who were enrolled in or wished to enrol in a day-special school must have permission by way of a Section 9 agreement. ORRS verification was no longer "deemed to equate to a 'Section Nine' agreement."

The current description of a Section 9 agreement as found on the Ministry of Education website is as follows:

A section 9 agreement is a formal agreement between the Ministry of Education and the parents/guardians of a child or young person that allows the child or young person to receive special education services or to enrol at a special school.

A section 9 agreement is for a child to receive a special service or to attend a named school, and in some circumstances, a named satellite class of a special school.

When the student leaves that particular school or class, ORRS resourcing continues wherever that student is enrolled, but the section 9 agreement specifying that school or class does not. A new application is required each time a student seeks enrolment at a special school or class other than that named on the section 9 agreement. (Ministry of Education, 2009)

The current enrolment process is as follows:

1. The parents of any child wishing to apply for enrolment in day-special school have to apply to the GSE for a Section 9 agreement.
2. A meeting is convened with the parents, the principal of the day-special school, and GSE staff. At this meeting the appropriateness of the enrolment is discussed and determined.
3. If the enrolment is approved, the child or young person can be enrolled at the day-special school
4. The agreement is not permanent; it has to be reviewed at any significant transition times.
5. A new Section 9 agreement is required to transfer a student to a different satellite class within the school.
6. If approval is not given then the parent has the right to appeal.

The significance of these changes cannot be overstated. The new process removed control of enrolment from the day-special schools and parents to Special Education, Ministry of Education. While the process occurs in consultation with parents and schools, the Ministry has the final say over whether the enrolment will proceed. Arguably this provides the Ministry with the ability to control the nature and number of students enrolling in day-special schools. But this process also clearly challenges the notion of parents' right to choose the appropriate school for their children. This right, except where a school has an approved enrolment scheme, is clearly and boldly stated on the Ministry of Education website. "You have the right to choose which school your child attends" (Ministry of Education, 2009).

However it would seem that this refers to the right of parents of a child with special educational needs to choose the school the child will attend only if they choose a regular school setting. Apparently this right is not available to parents of children with special needs who wish to choose a day-special school setting.

Furthermore by requiring a new Section 9 agreement to alter a student's class placement within the school, the Ministry is actually exerting control over the day-to-day management of the school. This represents a significant interference on the part of the Ministry of Education in the day-to-day running of the school, the more so because in New Zealand schools are considered to be self-governing and self-managing.

It could also be argued that the nature of the process represents an attack on the professional judgement and professionalism of principals in day-special schools who are being deprived of the right to make decisions concerning the appropriateness of enrolment of students into their schools and the appropriate placement of students in classes within their schools. The implication that a representative of GSE is better placed to determine the appropriate placement of a student within a school than the principal and teachers at the school flies in the face of the conventional wisdom that decisions about a child or young person's education are best made by those closest to and most involved with the child or young person.

A further constraint on the day-special school management relates to the maintenance of ENROL, a web-based national student enrolment register which was implemented in all New Zealand schools in 2007. While regular schools enter their own new enrolments onto this database, currently day-special schools are not permitted to do so; day-special school enrolments are entered by GSE.

Meeting the Challenges

Faced with circumstances such as those outlined above, it would have been hardly surprising if day-special schools had begun to feel somewhat beleaguered. There were two developments within the day-special school communities that suggest that they did.

The first was the establishment of the South Island Regional Special Schools Association. The national Special Schools Principals' Association was well established and had a long history of advocating for Special Schools. However with the increasing complexity of the issues faced by special schools, the principals in the South Island decided there was a need to have a body that represented the interests of South Island special schools. This Association includes principals from day and residential special schools; they meet regularly to provide support and share expertise and resources. A significant factor in the development of this group was a sense that the schools needed to work together and present a united front; that as a group they were more likely to be heard and be able to influence any decision-making that might affect their schools (R. Farrelly, personal communication, May 22, 2008).

The second, and arguably more significant, was the establishment of a national parents' association. In 2005 a group of Auckland special school board of trustees' members met to discuss issues they faced in common. As a result of this meeting they decided to establish a national

association called the Special Schools Parents Association (SSPA) which would have parent representation from each school, (P. Deverall, personal communication, May 25, 2008). This was the first time that parents of children enrolled at Special Schools had banded together in a national group. So far the influence of the Association has been in voicing needs and concerns directly to the education authorities concerned with special education. The establishment of this group marks a significant step; prior to this, the school principals were the only voice of the day-special schools. While special school principals could, and do, act as advocates, they are of necessity more constrained in their dealings with educational authorities than parents might be.

As a result of their concern about the limited information on day-special schools available on the Ministry of Education website, the Association was able to gain the Ministry of Education's agreement to post a statement on the website which SSPA believes more fairly represents the range of special education provision available in New Zealand. In this statement the association argues that the right to enrol at the local regular school is an enabling policy and does not mean that a child *has* to thus enrol. They also assert the legitimacy of all available options. The presence of this statement on the website makes the association very visible. It also raises the issue of what the Ministry's position is vis-à-vis the statement. Its presence on the website would suggest that the Ministry concurs with the content and tenor of the statement; however clearly the views expressed in the statement are a long way removed from the notion of an "inclusive education system" in which all children access their education in their local regular school setting.

Whatever the future roles of the SSPA and the South Island Regional Special School Principals' Association, their inception and continued presence suggest that their communities felt the need to band together to meet perceived external challenges and to make their voices heard. It would seem more than coincidental that these two developments occurred soon after the implementation of the new enrolment processes by GSE. Through the implementation of what could fairly be described as a "draconian" procedure for enrolment in day-special schools, GSE may have inadvertently prompted the increased solidarity among day-special school communities and thus added to the development of their identity and increased their visibility and influence.

Conclusion

Despite the introduction of SE2000, a significant number of children and young people with disabilities continue to attend state-funded day-special schools. Paradoxically the role and rolls of day-special schools appear to have expanded as a result of SE2000. It would seem that the intention and stated aim of the SE2000 policy was to some extent subverted by the nature and delivery of resources through ORRS. In addition parents of children with high and very high needs appear determined to exercise their right to make educational choices for their children even if these do not match the desired aims and goals of SE2000. Interestingly, despite the change in the enrolment process, day-special school rolls have continued to grow, albeit a little more slowly.

The continued presence of and support for special schools is not peculiar to New Zealand; it is an anomaly that exists in a number of "inclusive" education systems; the future role and functions of special schools, or if there is one, is a widely debated topic. For some, the continued presence of special schools represents the failure of inclusive education policies (Higgins, MacArthur & Morton, 2008; Kearney and Kane, 2006; Wills, 2006); for others, the continued presence of special schools is seen as an important part of a continuum of inclusive provision for children and young people with special needs (Croll & Moses, 2000; Head & Pirie, 2007; Norwich, 2008). Those who promote special schools as part of a continuum of provision for children and young people with special needs identify two major roles for these schools; to provide for children with the most complex needs and to provide outreach services including advice, support and training to regular schools. They also emphasise the need for movement of students, resources and expertise between special and regular schools. Day-special schools in New Zealand are already fulfilling the major roles described, but appear to be doing so without any particular policy direction from the Ministry of Education to support these activities. What the future role of day-special schools will be in New Zealand's inclusive education system is not clear. It would seem that there is no obvious indication from the Ministry of Education as to how that future role is envisioned or where these schools fit within current or future policy directions. What is clear is that while day-special schools are likely to be a continuing option for children with high and very high needs into the near future, the absence of any clearly articulated policy related to their position means that they will continue to be vulnerable

to the imposition of restrictive regulations and the vagaries of bureaucratic whims and decision-making driven by the goals and aims of SE2000, a policy in which day-special schools are conspicuous by their absence. The irony is that as a result of the implementation of SE2000, day-special schools and their communities have become a much stronger and more significant force in New Zealand's inclusive education system and may now be better placed to withstand and meet future changes and challenges.

Irrespective of one's views about the role of day-special schools in an "inclusive education system", this exploration of the impact of SE2000 on New Zealand's day-special schools raises questions not only about the nature and processes of the development, interpretation and implementation of SE2000 itself, but also about how the people and communities affected by the policy experienced that impact. These are questions which warrant further exploration.

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The author

Trish McMenamin is a lecturer in the School of Educational Studies and Human Development at Canterbury University. Trish is a teacher and researcher in special education and has a background in teaching both in regular and special settings. Her research interests are in the areas of inclusive and special education policy and practice, autism, curriculum, teacher education and disability.