
SECTION 6 ACCESSING PRINT MATERIALS

Objective 6: To identify methods by which schools can support pupils who have difficulty reading and accessing printed curriculum materials.

Outcome: Knowledge of the range of methods schools can use to support pupils to access the curriculum and school information, and report on the advantages and disadvantages of those methods.

Summary

- 1) A range of formats is required to suit individual pupils including those with difficulty handling books and turning pages; reading; seeing print; understanding what is written; writing; and spelling.
- 2) Pupils' literacy support needs can be highly individual and require knowledge of the pupil. Similar support needs may require a range of different methods in order to address them effectively. Support need cannot predict methods used (and impairment is even less useful as a predictor of method to address that support need).
- 3) In all sectors, teachers of pupils with support plans in place request materials in different formats. Wider access to alternative formats would increase pupils' independence, confidence and motivation. ICT has the potential to contribute on a large scale to produce the range of formats required.
- 4) Methods are required not just for accessing the curriculum but so that pupils can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.
- 5) Readers and scribes represent substantial investment of school and authority resources. Fewer would be needed if accessible formats were available. Every pupil would benefit from redeploying staff, from reading and scribing for individuals, to other types of support
- 6) Reading and writing difficulties affect access to all areas of the curriculum; e.g. in maths reading difficulties affects reading questions and topic information not just ability to use mathematics.
- 7) The lack of availability of materials in alternative formats and the inability to create them has a large adverse effect on pupils' access to the curriculum.

Background to Section 6

As well as knowing what kinds of curriculum materials are required in accessible formats we also needed to find out what sort of formats schools could and already do provide materials in, and what methods are used to support pupils to access curriculum materials. Best value decisions would be informed by knowing which materials to focus on making accessible.

Specific examples of alternative accessible formats are presented in Section 9. In this section we concentrate instead on identifying the formats required and methods used.

Methods used

Because different support needs might have different format requirements we needed to ensure that the full range was represented. To answer this question we again approached from a number of different perspectives in order to triangulate information. We:

1. Approached a small number of schools to establish which formats pupils required.
2. Contacted a small number of service providers to find out which alternative formats were required to suit the support needs of pupils they worked with.
3. Contacted Scottish Qualifications Authority to find out which and how many alternative formats and methods of support were requested.
4. Sent out questionnaires to schools asking for estimates of the likely demand for different formats.

Teachers use many approaches to support pupils who have difficulty accessing the curriculum and demonstrating knowledge and understanding. These include strategies to improve reading, spelling and writing skills (e.g. Alpha to Omega (Horsnby et al), Toe by Toe (Cowling & Cowling, 1994); Catch Up; Nessy; SpeedUp handwriting (Addy, 2004); etc). Rather than considering such rehabilitative approaches – attempting to improve on conventional methods of reading and writing – we consider here methods of support that depend on using alternative formats. Before doing so however it is worth considering whether it would be better to spend scarce resources on improving these skills by rehabilitation rather than looking into the use of alternative formats.

Aside from the not insignificant obligations under Disability Strategies legislation and the ASL Act requirement to address the support needs of **each** pupil in an adequate and efficient manner, there is evidence that doing more of the same is not necessarily the best approach to take.

In a study of what schools felt they wanted out of input from educational psychologists, Boyle & Mackay (1994) found that teachers working with pupils with a range of learning difficulties responded differently depending on whether they worked with primary or secondary age pupils. Teachers in primary sector reported that pupils were more accepting of attempts to remediate difficulties. In contrast teachers in secondary schools reported that pupils were more likely to 'buy into' strategies that did not simply provide more of the same. In the primary

sector there was greater emphasis on remediation, an expectation that something can be done to remedy learning difficulties if only the best advice was available on teaching methods. However by the time a pupil reaches secondary age it is unlikely that similar expectation remains. The emphasis shifts from remediation to compensation to help pupils to cope with or bypass their learning difficulties. (An update of the original study is due out soon.)

A number of methods can be used to support pupils who have difficulty reading and accessing printed material and/or writing and recording their work. Table 6.1 summarises these and the main reason the method is used to support pupils.

Support given with:	Reading text	Seeing text	Understanding text	Holding book / turning pages	Recording work e.g. handwriting
Human support					
Reader					
Scribe					
Signing					
Printed formats					
Different font					
Large print					
Coloured paper					
Simplified language					
With symbol support					
Braille					
Coloured lenses/ film					
Magnifier/ low vision aid					
Audio formats					
Tape					
Audio CD					
MP3/digital audio file					
Computer formats					
Digital version on computer					
Digital version read by computer (text to speech)					
Word processor or other writing software					

Table 6.1: Type of support suitable to pupils with different support needs. The shaded cells indicate that that type of support is typically associated with a support need.

Evidence from schools

Secondary school learning support department

Table 6.2 below shows the range of formats with which the learning support department of one secondary school was familiar and that were used with pupils.

Access to materials supported by:	Access to materials supported by:
Human Support	Audio formats
Reader	Tape
Scribe	CD
Signing	MP3 file
Prostheses	Computer formats
Coloured lenses/ film	Digital resources on computer
Magnifier/ LVA	Scanned into computer
Printed formats	Read by computer (text to speech)
Different font	Word processor or other writing software
Large print	
Coloured paper	
Simplified language	
With symbol support	
Braille	

Table 6.2: Range of formats with which a Learning Support Department were familiar

In terms of scale this secondary school volunteered that the most useful thing that could be done to aid access to print and to the curriculum was to use a different font for all materials. They considered that all pupils in this mainstream secondary school (almost 1,000) would benefit. They further noted the following requirements:

- All new materials produced by teachers should be done on computer.
- Availability on audio to be made standard.
- Materials must be available electronically for text-to-speech software.
- Correct choice of the typeface.
- Enough space between lines.
- Colour of text, background & images.
- Appropriate word readability.
- Appropriate use of desktop publishing layout.

Specific adaptations were recommended for pupils with specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, following Hannell's guidelines (Hannell, 2004):

- Larger font minimum 12 point.
- Arial / Comic font.

- Space round items.
- Tinted / off white paper.
- 1.5 spaced / double line space.
- Small quantities of text.
- Bullet points to cover main issues.

Special school

One special school was approached in City of Edinburgh and invited to indicate what formats were suitable for its pupils. The school noted that:

- many of its pupils could “not read at all”;
- 3 or 4 can read with some difficulty but not at an age appropriate level;
- all have difficulty understanding text and recording their work;
- in addition “quite a few” of the pupils have a visual impairment.

The school produces printed and ‘talking’ books on computer using Clicker 4¹⁹ to lay out appropriate pictures, symbols and simplified text with an easy read font at a larger size. Examples of the paper books produced are shown in Figure 6.1.



Figure 6.1: Paper versions of Clicker talking books produced by one special school in Edinburgh

The talking books on the computer can be accessed by pupils who use switches to turn the pages where they cannot use a mouse. The computer reads out the text using either a computer voice or where a human voice has been recorded.

¹⁹ A popular software package which can be used to support children across curricular areas.
www.cricksoft.com/uk/

Staff at this special school note the following requirements:

- symbol supported reading materials that are switch accessible;
- materials in simplified language;
- use of photos;
- some staff can spend more than 75% of their time producing materials;
- as well as books on computer they requested tape and CD format.

The materials produced by staff in this school are not shared with other schools or pupils, even though it is very likely that they could be of benefit. In the main, this is because there are no or inadequate mechanisms for sharing materials.

Evidence from service providers

Alternative formats provided for VI pupils	Number of pupils	% VI Service covering four authorities
Edinburgh & Lothians	230	100%
Braille Current ²⁰	3	1.3%
Braille Future	3	1.3%
Large Print various formats	27	11.74%
DAISY users current	0	
DAISY users estimated		
Total VI pupils for whom alternative formats are required	30	13%

Table 6.3 Alternative formats required for one well-established VI service

In contrast, City of Edinburgh, in collaboration with neighbouring authorities, has authority-wide provision of materials for pupils with a visual impairment. All pupils noted in Table 6.3 have in place some arrangement for materials to be made available in formats that suits them. This does not mean that all pupils have their format needs fully met but that they are known, planned for and are in the process of being met.

At least two questions arise from the results shown in this table. First, does one form of large print meet all needs? And second, are there other format needs required by the pupils who are on this VI service caseload but not in place? We discuss these two questions separately.

Does one size fit all?

Discussions about alternative formats leads inevitably to the question of whether each respondent uses the same interpretation of 'alternative format'. More specifically, when one respondent indicates use of Large Print, will that have the same meaning for all respondents? And from the child's perspective is it a case of 'one size fits all', i.e. that there is a certain large print format that suits everyone.

²⁰ Three pupils who require Braille will leave schooling over the next one to two years. Thereafter it is estimated that three pupils maximum might require Braille (all are in pre-school / P1 period at present)

While research has been undertaken to find out what is the most likely size of large print to suit most people with a visual impairment (Aitken, Ravenscroft & Buultjens, 2000), this is not the same as asking whether a particular size of large print will suit a particular child.

This is an important question. If one form of Large Print suits all pupils then it is much easier to plan, design, produce, and disseminate materials in one font and size, confident that all pupils can use the materials. We therefore asked one visual impairment service to list the specific outputs produced for individual pupils. Table 6.4 reports on this. Column 1 lists the particular primary or secondary class attended by each pupil. Alongside this is shown the particular format preferred by that pupil. Additional information is given such as preferred colour of paper. [The term 'decluttered' does not refer to the amount of rubbish but is a technical term referring to the need to keep visual information simplified.]

Table 6.4 shows that:

- 4 pupils required large print size **18**
- 1 pupil required large print size **20**
- 12 pupils required large print size **24**
- 4 pupils required large print size **36**
- a variety of other changes were required including text in **bold**, three colours of paper green yellow and pink (using the precise shade is important);
- 1 used audio;
- 3 used Braille and there were 3 potential future Braille users (by which time the current 3 will have left school);
- simplified graphics are helpful;
- some materials had been prepared in other formats including: 14 point, 30 point, 40 point, 48 point, 50 point and 65 point (the larger fonts in landscape orientation).

Out of a caseload of around 200 – 250 visually impaired pupils, alternative formats were provided for approximately thirty pupils. This service noted that the production of materials in alternative formats had to be local so as to meet individual children's needs. They acknowledge that some items could be partly prepared centrally, but would still need adjustment at a local level for the individual child. They further noted that it was "nice for the children to know people who produce their books and vice versa".

CLASS	TYPE	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
P1	LP 24	
P1	LP 36	Decluttered
P1	LP 36	
P2	LP 24	Decluttered
P3	LP 18	
P3	LP 24	
P3	LP 36	
P4	LP 24	
P4	LP 36	Green Paper
P5	LP 24	
P5	LP 24	
P5	LP 24	
P6		
P6	LP 18	
P6	LP 24	
P7		Graphics Change
P7	LP 18	Yellow Paper
Pre-school	(future Braille user)	
Pre-school	(future Braille user)	
Pre-school	(future Braille user)	
S1	Braille	
S1	LP 24	Bold
S2	LP 20	
S2	LP 24	Bold
S2	LP 24	
S3	Braille	
S3	LP 18	
S4	Audio	Tactile Diagrams - no Braille
S5	LP 24	
S6	Braille	

Table 6.4: Particular Format Requirements of pupils in Primary and Secondary classes

Other formats required by visually impaired pupils?

Recall that around 200 pupils are known to this particular service. Of the 200, 30 pupils require material in the formats described above. What about the other 170+ pupils on the caseload? Do these formats described above suit all of the pupils? Are arrangements in place to provide these formats?

No other formats were produced although the VI service recognised that a number of pupils were likely to require them. As we will see in Section 8 some of the remaining 170+ pupils would likely benefit from different formats.

Other formats required for pupils with VI and additional disabilities	Number requiring (sample VI Service)
Switch accessible	Not Known
Symbol supported literacy	Not Known
Other estimated	Not Known

Table 6.5: Number of users of Alternative formats known to a VI Service

Pupils requiring curriculum materials in Braille

We also approached some members of Scottish Association for Educators of Visually Impaired (SAVIE) to identify the number of pupils requiring materials to be produced in Braille Grade 1 or 2. The Scottish Sensory Centre notes that around 80 to 85 pupils in Scotland require materials in Braille (1 or 2). Sorenson found a similar figure whereby 88 Scottish pupils were listed as using Braille as their preferred primary format.

This figure is supported by research reported in the British Journal of Visual Impairment by Clunies-Ross (1997). She estimated over 19,000 VI children across the UK, of whom almost 5% were Braille users. This translates to around 70 Braille users in each year group across the UK - 6 per year group in Scotland, or 90 in total across primary and secondary school sector.

Access to 5-14 National Assessments

Schools download 5-14 assessment tests in either PDF or Microsoft Word format and then usually print and copy them for pupils to use. If the standard print size is not suitable the school may adapt it:

“If visually impaired pupils need to have assessments with enlarged text or on coloured paper, etc, then schools should make arrangements to prepare copies themselves. Schools are free to adapt the appearance of an assessment to suit the individual needs of pupils with visual impairments.”

http://www.aifl-na.net/na/guid_asn.htm

It is assumed that this advice and dispensation is also applicable to other children with visual difficulties who may require the text double-spaced or in another font.

It is acceptable to make adjustments to the assessment arrangements provided the assessment is not compromised. SQA provides the following helpful guidance:

“Reading

*Pupils may have the text of the questions read to them and use the services of a scribe but **not** have the passage read to them as the aim is to assess reading comprehension and not simply listening or recall.*

Writing

A pupil who normally has the services of a scribe or uses a computer may have the same degree of support when writing for a national assessment. For pupils with specific learning difficulties such as Dyslexia, the spelling bullet within the writing criteria can be ignored.

Mathematics

*It is important that a pupil’s ability to cope with the language demands of the assessment units does not interfere with her/his ability to carry out the mathematical problems set. While it is not anticipated that pupils will have difficulty in reading the written questions in National Assessments, teachers may, at their discretion, read individual questions to pupils to facilitate understanding. **It is important that any additional support a pupil requires to demonstrate their level of achievement is recorded and reported to all interested parties e.g. pupil, parents, and subsequent teachers.”**²¹*

Pupils can also use the digital version of the assessment in either Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF provided the assessment is not compromised (e.g. a text-to-speech reader could be used to read the questions but not the text in an English test). In practice, few schools seem to be aware that they are able to adapt the printed assessment or use the digital original.

National Assessment Bank

National Assessment Bank tests are used by schools internally at the end of a course unit. The assessments are downloaded in PDF from a secure SQA web site, and the ‘Instrument of Assessment’ is printed off for use by students. Students who have difficulty with the printed paper can use ‘Assessment Arrangements’ (AA). SQA provide guidance for Assessment Arrangements (SQA, 2004) which applies to both internal assessment using NABs and external assessment via SQA examinations. The main principles of this guidance are to allow reasonable adjustments to be made where candidates have difficulty accessing questions or presenting written responses, while ensuring that any adjustments do **not compensate for a candidate’s inability to meet set standards**. In addition, these arrangements should be **tailored to meet the individual needs of candidates** and should **reflect, as far as possible, the candidate’s normal way of learning and producing work**.

The school is responsible for identifying students who will require assessment arrangements and for deciding on what type of arrangement to use. The pupil may use: a modified paper (e.g. printed on coloured paper, in a large or different font; in Braille); low vision aids; coloured overlays; ICT; reader, scribe or signer; prompter or helper; amplification; extra time; and transcription of responses.

²¹ Guidance on support that can be given to pupils with additional support needs, http://www.aifl-na.net/na/guid_asn.htm

The school need only contact SQA “for an adjustment to the published assessment arrangements if it changes the assessment arrangements in any significant way.” (SQA, 2004).

SQA will provide NABs in adapted alternative formats such as Braille and minority languages on request. They are also able to provide NABs in Microsoft Word format. However, we suspect that few schools are aware of this provision because SQA report that they have only had 12 requests for adapted NABs over the past three years.

Support requested for SQA examinations

Table 6.9 gives a breakdown of the different types of support requested for the SQA 2006 examination diet and the underlying impairment.

In most cases, schools will request more than one type of Assessment Arrangement for a pupil, so that 43,291 requests resulted in a total of 77,374 individual instances of support.

Given that “Any adjustment to the assessment arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate’s normal way of learning and producing work” (SQA, 2004), the requests provide an indication of the methods that schools use to support pupils with reading and writing difficulties.

Supporting reading, seeing, understanding and/or handling papers

Method of supporting Reading, Seeing, Understanding and/or Handling the paper	No of requests
Extra Time	34,803
Reader	16,815
Coloured Paper	1,327
Enlarged Print	889
Question Paper signed to candidate	69
Braille	28
Total number of requests	53,931

Table 6.6: Number and type of requests to support students in seeing, reading, understanding or handling the paper.

The most common support is more time, either because pupils are slow readers (due to dyslexia, for example), or they take longer to navigate or manipulate the paper (e.g. because the paper is in Braille or the pupil has a physical difficulty) or because they take longer to write (due to dyspraxia or a physical impairment) or to plan and compose (due for example to difficulties organising ideas or concentrating).

The next most common method is to use a human reader, and this occurred in 16,815 instances – over 7 times as many readers were used as adapted papers. There are many advantages with using a reader, particularly in the pressured examination situation, but there are also issues concerning independence and so an obvious question that should be asked here, with regard to unmet need, is how

many pupils could be using some form of accessible adapted paper or other technique independently, rather than a human reader? The CALL Centre's recent project to develop and trial digital question papers is of interest in relation to this: in one school pupils with reading difficulties used a PDF digital paper with text-reading software in almost half (48%) the examinations; a human reader was used in the others.

SQA provided 5,369 adapted format question papers in 2006 (more than one paper is often required for an examination) (Table 6.7).

The largest category (2,600 out of 5,369, or 48%) of adapted papers produced were in alternative colours (white rather than pastel, or another colour specifically requested for the pupil). 52% of these papers were requested for pupils with specific learning difficulties; 40% for visually impaired pupils and the remainder (7%) for pupils with physical, general or other learning difficulties.

The second largest category of adapted papers is large print, where 1,996 papers were produced, mostly for visually impaired pupils (72%) with the remainder produced for pupils with specific learning difficulties (15%), followed by a range of other difficulties.

The smallest category of adapted papers produced was Braille: 80 papers (1.5%).

Adapted Papers provided by SQA in 2006	Number of papers
White paper	1,662
Large print	1,071
Colour copies	938
N14-18 font	562
Reader copy	408
N20-28 font	259
Adapted content	139
N36-48 font	104
Digital question papers	146
Braille	80
Total	5,369

Table 6.7: Number and format of SQA papers provided in 2006

Support for writing

Table 6.8 analyses methods of supporting writing or recording.

Method of supporting writing and recording answers	No of requests
Extra Time	34,803
Scribe	15,059
Use of ICT	3,063
PA Referral	2,480
Transcription with correction	1,190
Transcription without correction	678
Candidate Signs Responses	56
Use of tape recorder for responses	25
Total	57,354

Table 6.8: Number of requests and methods to support writing

Again, the most popular type of support is extra time. It is not possible to differentiate between requests for extra time as a result of a difficulty with reading compared to extra time to compensate for difficulty with writing – in most cases extra time would be requested for both reading and writing.

The second most popular method is the use of a scribe, with pupils using a scribe in 15,059 instances.

Use of ICT is third. Furthermore, analysis of the statistics over the past few years shows that ICT is being used more frequently. However, if we discount the use of extra time, use of scribes constitutes 67% of instances of writing support requested. If we further consider the requests where a pupil is writing independently (i.e. using ICT, signing and a tape recorder), compared with receiving assistance from a member of staff (i.e. scribe, referral of the paper to the principal assessor, transcription) then we find that the pupil is working independently of a member of staff in only 14% of instances. Certainly, we should question the use of transcription of the paper in 1,868 instances and ask why these pupils are not using ICT or some other independent means of writing and recording.

Because the method of support used in examinations follows the support used in class, we suggest that these statistics reflect unmet need: if the statistics reflect classroom practice, then human support may be being used too readily and there is a need for other more independent methods using accessible, alternative formats.

Again, results of the CALL Centre / SQA digital papers project (Nisbet *et al* 2006) may give an indication of the potential for materials to be provided and answered using ICT. 8 schools took part in the project and the percentage of pupils using independent writing support methods (ICT, digital papers, tape recorder) varied from 17% to 85% of the pupils who required assessments arrangements, with an average of 57%.

Table 6.9 details the types of support requests to help students write or record their answers.

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Table 6.9: 2006 SQA requests for Assessment Arrangements	SAA requests	Extra Time	Reader	Scribe	Large Print	Braille	Question Paper signed to candidate	Candidate Signs Responses	Tape recorder for responses	Coloured Paper	Transcription with correction	Transcription without correction	Calculator	PA Referral	Use of ICT	Totals
Visual Impairment	1,357	965	339	213	642	28	0	0	0	527	15	32	5	16	105	2,887
Hearing Impairment	721	589	176	72	13	0	62	56	21	6	7	0	9	54	15	1,080
Epilepsy	277	248	34	53	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	19	359
Myalgic Encephalomyelitis	126	106	3	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	6	138
Other Health Problems	1,557	1,005	75	166	1	0	0	0	0	13	8	5	3	6	107	1,389
General Learning Difficulties	2,924	2,401	1,605	1,354	23	0	0	0	0	10	56	12	41	46	58	5,606
Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia	23,636	19,954	11,663	9,638	138	0	1	0	0	564	790	119	656	1,988	1,337	46,848
Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyspraxia	2,185	1,811	441	761	6	0	0	0	0	14	67	100	26	62	392	3,680
Specific Learning Difficulties/Other	3,181	2,597	905	832	6	0	0	0	0	118	151	80	65	184	282	5,220
Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD)	984	341	186	156	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	6	7	25	725
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	870	570	264	231	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	14	4	35	1,119
Concentration Difficulties																0
Mental health problems	215	106	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	117
Speech and Language Impairments	720	635	329	268	3	0	0	0	0	8	22	11	11	34	23	1,344
Autistic Difficulties	1,401	1,118	463	466	8	0	0	0	2	0	11	27	24	13	70	2,202
Physical Disability	1,602	1,457	225	647	40	0	0	0	2	18	1	21	13	9	284	2,717
EAL	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other Disability/Difficulty	1,530	899	105	179	9	0	6	0	0	49	60	261	15	54	301	1,938
None	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
Totals	43,291	34,803	16,815	15,059	889	28	69	56	25	1,327	1,190	678	892	2,480	3,063	77,374

Evidence from questionnaires

Short questionnaire

Formats required

Respondents were asked to note in what specific formats they would require materials so that pupils could access the curriculum. The following were required in order of number of requests:

- Microsoft Word;
- Adobe PDF;
- DAISY;
- Enlarged texts, clear fonts;
- Audio / MP3, but taggable;
- BrowseAloud (a text-to-speech program for reading web pages).

The references to DAISY were made by people who had either used DAISY or had heard of it though had never seen it.

Methods of support currently offered

Table 6.10 gives the type of support respondents currently offered to pupils.

Type of Support	No.
Reader	34
Audio tapes/CD/MP3	25
Adapted colour/font/size	21
Electronic/digital/computer	16
Other	3

Table 6.10: Type of support respondents currently offered to pupils

Types of formats required

We asked people to state what type of format would be most useful for the pupils they work with.

Type of Support	No.
Electronic/digital/computer	30
Audio tapes/CD/MP3	22
Adapted colour/font/size	20
Other e.g. translated and simplified with visual support	3

Table 6.11: Number and type of formats required for pupils worked with

When asked to note which formats other than those listed they would like to use comments included, for example, text translated and simplified with added visual support (although the comments did not say which kind of visual support we assume this meant graphics in the form of either pictures or symbols, or both).

Comments

Respondents were also invited to add any comments and the textbox shows a few examples:

“It’s essential for inclusion.”

“[Need to] reduce copyright problems.”

“Resources are always a problem. Copyright problems. Manpower.”

“It would be useful to get round the copyright difficulties by encouraging publishers to provide accessible resources as a matter of course.”

“Would be wonderful [to have materials in accessible formats].”

“Need to have backup of senior manager at school and prioritise and perhaps new legislation [reference to ASL Act, DDA and Disability Strategies legislation] will help.”

“Could versions of standard textbooks also have a range of print and reading age standards incorporated? e.g. less print on the page, just the main points covered, larger font sizes etc?”

“Why is it so difficult for publishers to provide texts in accessible formats?”

“Bear in mind that we have an increasing number of Polish and Portuguese pupils in Moray schools as well as other Eastern European pupils who may speak little English.”

“[Pupils with literacy difficulties] should have the same access to reading and work materials as other children do.”

Table 6.12: Comments on the need for alternative formats

Comments indicate that respondents are aware of copyright issues and the effect this has on pupils’ access to the curriculum and the opportunities they have to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Furthermore they recognize the opportunities offered by arrangements under the ASL Act, the DDA and under the Disability Strategies legislation.

Long questionnaire

As with previous sections of this report, rather than carrying out statistical analysis of results obtained for the long questionnaire, we will focus on one authority whose results we have tracked through for two primary and two secondary schools. We asked respondents to include information on the formats in which they currently produce materials as well as to say what formats pupils would benefit from in an ideal world. We asked them to do this in respect of all forms of support given (e.g. reader, scribe, large print etc.) to meet each type of support need (e.g. difficulties reading text, seeing text, understanding text etc).

Rather than providing totals of what were very detailed responses we report here on the main points:

- most of the pupils who had difficulty with literacy (i.e. around 12% to 14% of pupils) were expected to be assisted by having text available in alternative formats;
- different pupils require different formats;
- voice recording of answers was suggested as a means of writing and recording;

- use of visual tools e.g. mindmapping to record ideas;
- homework: MP3 players for pupils to record book reviews, personal projects;
- reading & writing difficulties affect access to all areas of the curriculum e.g. in maths reading difficulties affects reading questions, topic information.
- accessible resources would help a larger number of children than those currently designated as having a specific or labelled difficulty;
- bleached white paper is not helpful to many pupils under fluorescent lighting;
- simplified language in differentiated worksheets is sometimes available, but also used and needed by others performing below average;
- there is a need for symbol supported materials;
- the lack of availability of materials in alternative formats and the inability to create them has a large adverse effect on pupils' ability to access the curriculum;
- accessible formats would increase independence of pupils, increase their confidence and motivation;
- the benefits of [audio] CD for able reluctant readers throughout school as well as less able readers;
- less able pupils without specific difficulties would be able to access the materials either individually or as part of a mixed ability group;
- every pupil would benefit from the redeployment of staff that could follow from more pupils working independently;
- a smaller number of readers and scribes would be required if audio / computer formats were made available. In an ideal world youngsters would gain independence with audio/computer formats, freeing up staff to work in other support areas;
- what is good practice for ASN would benefit even high level achievers.

