



**AN CHOMHAIRLE MHÚINTEOIREACHTA**  
*The Teaching Council*

## **Educational Provision for Children with Speech and Language Difficulties in Mainstream Primary Schools**

Research by Emma Browne (2008/09 Bursary Scheme)

### **Rationale and Aims**

This study is concerned with investigating the nature of educational provision for children in mainstream schools who are described within the study as having general speech and language difficulties (SLDs). The rationale is based on the view that there are gaps in the nature and extent of provision available to children with SLDs in mainstream schools, and that services vary across schools. The aims of the study are: to establish the procedures adopted for identifying children with SLDs in three specific schools; to identify the extent and nature of the provisions that result from assessment; and to identify the means of accessing those provisions.

### **Research Topic**

Drawing from a number of policy documents and research studies, the researcher identifies early screening identification and assessment, collaboration between teachers and speech and language therapists (SLTs) and teachers' knowledge and understanding, as critical factors influencing the quality of provisions for children with SLDs. These factors are then used to inform the questionnaires and interview schedules used to collect data from the study participants.

### **Design and Methodology**

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Questionnaires and interview schedules were designed to elicit information and views on the extent and nature of provision and on participants' background knowledge of SLDs. Ethical considerations are described as having been considered in terms of the ethical guidelines and policies in place in the awarding university.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The findings provide useful insights into the nature and extent of support for children with SLDs in these three schools. The main findings relating to support highlight the lack of interdisciplinary collaboration between school and health services with most children receiving their support from the SLT in a clinical setting removed from the school. School-based support was, in the main, provided by learning support teachers. The lack of early screening and of assessment for early intervention by class teachers, coupled with teachers' expressed lack of confidence in relation to the identification of children with SLDs, are also significant findings in this study. In the recommendations, the need to develop effective collaborative practice between teachers and SLTs is highlighted. The recommendations also point to the need for further research to develop methods of screening in infant

classrooms and to establish effective ways of including an emphasis on SLDs in programmes of initial teacher education.