As previously stated, the policy in Cyprus is to ensure integration into mainstream education for any child with special educational needs who will benefit. The separate provision which remains (approximately 5-6% of children with special educational needs) is for children who are unable, for whatever reason, to integrate into the mainstream, usually because the challenges the child faces are too severe to permit any form of integration. For this reason, in many of the special education schools, the focus is on care rather than on education, and on the provision of services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Currently, separate special education needs provision is offered through the following nine institutions:

● Seven regional special education schools – two in Lefkosia, two in Lemesos, one in Larnaka, one in Ammochostos and one in Pafos;

● The School for the Blind in Lefkosia, for children with visual impairment; and,

● The School for the Deaf in Lefkosia, for children with hearing impairment.

The latter two schools also offer services for visually or hearing impaired children who are integrated into mainstream education, as well as to adults requiring specialist assistance.

The general objectives of the schools in this category of education are:

● To assist children most in need of special educational support to develop their skills and abilities;

● To enable such children to become as independent as possible with regard to their personal care and social adjustment; and,

● To allow such children to integrate into the social system to the greatest degree possible.

According to the law, all new special education schools must be built within the grounds of a mainstream school, and new and existing special education schools must develop networks of contacts and joint activities in order to minimise segregation.

**Definition of the target group(s)**

Target groups are the same as those detailed in 12.1.1, in this Chapter.
Admission requirements and choice of school

Given the small number and narrow range of schools in this sector, a child will be referred to the school that is nearest to where he/she lives, and that meets the needs of the child. Parents have not the right to choose a special school for their children; however, an attempt is always made to satisfy both the wish of the parents and the recommendations of the evaluation committee.

Age levels and grouping of pupils

The age level and grouping of pupils in the special education schools depend on the number of children in the group, their ages, and their abilities. Such matters are not determined by legislation but left to the school authorities to decide on the basis of what is best for the whole group. Special education schools usually have a maximum of seven pupils per class.

Curriculum, subjects

As the majority of children with special needs attend mainstream schools, those in the special education schools present the greatest learning difficulties. Hence, the curricula of such schools contain a major element of skills development in the areas of self-help and independence skills, social and emotional interaction, recreation and communication as well as vocational training. Where a child is able to follow elements of the mainstream curriculum, this is provided for.

The content of the curriculum, the subjects taught and the period of provision are decided by the individual school. There is no element of the compulsory or optional curriculum. A pupil will study what he/she is able to.

The director of the school ensures that each child is offered an individualised programme of learning (IEP) which will assist in his/her development as a whole person. The IEP focusses particularly on the psychological, social, educational and pre-professional areas and is devised according to the abilities, weaknesses and special characteristics of the child. The IEP is drawn up by the special needs coordinator in cooperation with parents and is based on the suggestions contained in the report from the District Committee of Special Education; it is then approved by the Head of the appropriate Directorate in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The IEP will include elements of the following:

- Academic knowledge;
- Abilities and skills from various subjects in the curricula of public schools in Cyprus;
- Skills connected with hygiene, movement, language development, communication, and the emotional and psychological support needed to gain a degree of independence;
- Necessary skills towards achieving integration into the school and wider society as a whole;
- Any therapies (for example physiotherapy, occupational or speech therapy) that may be required.

If a pupil is able to take certain subjects or classes in mainstream schools, he/she will be allocated to
the mainstream provision of special education and not the separate provision.

In kindergartens and primary schools teachers appointed to teach children with special needs specialise in one of the following areas: speech therapy; psychology; physiotherapy; special physical education; music therapy; occupational therapy; audiology; teaching children with learning difficulties or emotional problems; visual impairments and hearing impairments (see also 9.1.1: Institutions, Level and Models of Training [1]).

At secondary level the following special education programmes ran in 2010/2011:

- **Learning difficulties programme**: Pupils are offered support, individually or in groups of no more than four children, in Modern Greek, History, Mathematics and Physics. Support is also offered in other subjects according to the pupils' needs.

- **Special units programme**: Special education and training is offered to pupils within an everyday school. Pupils attend 17 periods in their everyday class without any participation and then in two to eight pupils attend lessons in the special unit. Special staff is hired to offer help in the unit.

- **Literacy programme**: This programme started in 1989 and is run under the auspices of the Educational Psychology Service and the Secondary Education Directorate. It aims at offering equal educational opportunities and preventing social exclusion by fostering basic skills and reinforcing self esteem and offering emotional support.

- **Hearing programme**: This programme takes place either in an everyday class without support, or, if necessary, with support in a special room mostly for the subjects which are examined at the end of the year.

- **Sight programme**: This programme is run in cooperation with the School for the Blind.

- **At home Instruction**: This programme aims at offering instruction at home (or at the medical centre) to children with health problems which prevent them from attending school. This help is provided at the request of the parents or the director of the school which the child normally attends. The request must be accompanied by medical certificates which are submitted to the District Committee of Special Education for approval.

**Teaching methods and materials**

The child’s IEP will determine what instructional methodology will be implemented. The use of practical equipment, audiovisual aids and information and communication technology (ICT) is continually increasing in an effort to maximise learning and contribute to the education of the children. Teachers also adopt differentiating techniques, such as step-by-step teaching and the use of simplified educational material in order to facilitate learning. Hands-on learning, visits and course trips also constitute an integral part of the educational process.

The administration in a special education school selects whatever teaching materials are felt to be most beneficial to the pupils. These are provided free of charge.
Progression of pupils

Children attending the School for the Blind and the School for the Deaf are evaluated using criteria developed for their individual needs. The majority of blind / partially blind and deaf / partially deaf children attend mainstream schools and receive whatever support is needed.

Children attending other special education schools are evaluated on the progress made in accordance with their IEP. The IEP is reviewed by the special needs coordinator every six months and reassessment of the child must be carried out every two years by the District Committee, and on a more regular basis if requested either by the Committee, the coordinator, the director of the school or the parents of the child. Moreover, the school director, in cooperation with the teaching staff, must prepare a report on the child at the end of the school year (mid-June).

The report by the coordinator is sent via the Inspector of Special Education to the District Committee. The report includes the views and opinions of the parents and, if possible, the child, as well as those of the management team of the school and the teaching staff and others involved in the child’s education; samples of work done by the child; the progress achieved; and, suggestions for educational or other types of programme.

In addition to the re-evaluation of the IEP by the District Committee, there is an assessment by the teachers throughout the year. Teachers will assess educational achievement in the fields of literacy (pre-writing and reading skills) and numeracy skills. A teacher will also assess behaviour and social maturity as exhibited within the classroom setting. Teachers assess their goals and review IEPs in cooperation with the special needs coordinator, every six months. There may also be some repeated formal assessment in such areas as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and psychometric reassessment.

Certification

There is no provision in the law for certification in special education schools. However, the schools for the Blind and the Deaf have their own certificates which are awarded on students' completion of their programme of studies.

In addition, there is a provision in the law for the kinds of support that may be given to children with special needs who are taking examinations of any kind. The regulations specify that, if a child requiring special education support is to sit an examination in a mainstream school, certain allowances are permitted to be made to ensure that the child gets all the support that he/she needs, including the provision of extra time, alterations to the presentation of the examination paper and special services such as lip-reading, sign language and the use of an interpreter.