

Boys and Summer Birth Dates – Vulnerable Groups?

Commitment to research

As part of an on-going commitment to research, Learning Services (SEN) Ltd is currently analysing data gathered over the past four years to consider vulnerable groups in education.

Data is being collated from all school requests for individual pupil assessment advice for children at predominantly School Action Plus on the Special Educational Needs Register, with some children also at School Action and with a Statement of SEN. This information is currently stored by date and pupil name, with all assessment advice containing dates of birth. Learning Services (SEN) Ltd has provided assessment advice on over 400 primary age children in 4 years of existence as an independent service provider to schools.

Vulnerable groups in education

Analysis of this data will focus on considering the existence of vulnerable groups in education, who may have an increased incidence of special educational needs at some time during the primary phase in education.

Contributing factors

My own perspective is that there are a number of contributing factors that predispose some groups of children to higher incidence of experiencing special educational needs. In particular, I am aware of changes to requests for service provision since the formation of Learning Services (SEN) Ltd. One such change has been the increased frequency of requests for pupil assessment advice for boys, and equally of an increase in requests for support for schools to manage pupil fixed term exclusions, and for Pastoral Support Plans.

With regard to the high incidence of Summer birth dates in children with special educational needs, my theory at present is that our educational system, for the most part, serves to support this divide. Frequently, the majority of children on a school's SEN register will be in Key Stage 2, with some schools holding few records for reception year children. Key times for intervention with Key Stage 1 pupils is often at the time of estimated KS1 SATs results, which often sees a sharp rise in the number of children moving onto the special needs register during the second term of Year 2.

Many children with Summer birth dates are given the 'benefit of the doubt', with allowances given for maturity often for an extended period of time after difficulties have been diagnosed. Conversely, older children within the same year group are often considered a priority for special needs support, with interventions and more targeted support at an earlier stage.

Requests for further support for research

From the initial analysis from Learning Services' own data base, further information will be gathered from client schools and all schools who are willing to submit information relating to the number of children on their Special Educational Needs Register who are male with a Summer birth date. This information will be treated in confidence, and will only relate to the number of children on a school's register, at a given time, who meet the criteria. It will not require schools to submit any further individual details regarding pupils in their care.

Goals of research

To analyse existing service data on children with special educational needs.

To consider evidence to support a view that there may be vulnerable groups in education with a higher incidence of experiencing special educational needs.

To seek further evidence from schools through their special needs registers.

To draw conclusions from the data analysis and present findings.