

## SUMMARY

In the Netherlands a growing number of Down's syndrome children enter regular schools. Chapter 1 describes the factors that have contributed to this growth. The well organized parents of these children have contributed to making placements in regular primary schools possible. The mainstreaming of these children keeping in with international trends aimed at inclusive education. The Dutch government supports these parents via pupil-bound funding for mentally and physically disabled pupils.

Placing Down's syndrome children in regular schools is a fairly recent Dutch development. Parents and schools need information on how best to educate these children. To obtain this kind of information, we undertook a survey on the best way these children can be educated in regular primary schools.

In chapter 2 integration research is divided in two categories. The first category is research based on comparing children in special and regular settings, while the second relates to research of special needs children in regular settings.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the number of Down's syndrome pupils in between four and fourteen in recent school years. The number of Down's syndrome pupils in regular primary schools is estimated using figures from the Dutch ministry of education. The data did not always match school data so the estimates are conservative. The number of Down's syndrome pupils in the school years commencing 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996 is estimated at 221, 303, 339, and 398 respectively. At the end of the 1993-94 school year 26 Down's syndrome pupils left regular education and over the next two school years the figures were 55 and 48.

Chapter 4 describes the first empirical research on Down's syndrome pupils in regular primary schools. The three research questions were: How are Down's syndrome children placed in regular primary education? What are the curricular contents for these children? Is there any provision for other special needs pupils?

In this descriptive study, the opinions and experiences of the schools and parents concerned played an important part in the data collection. A brief answer to the first research question is that parents want to place their Down's syndrome child in a regular school because they think it is good for their child's social development to attend a neighbourhood school. It is not always easy however to place a Down's syndrome child in a regular school. Teachers are afraid they cannot handle such a child's education. Despite this fear a growing number of

schools do accept them as they think it will have a positive effect on both the Down's syndrome pupil and their classmates.

There are no general directives for what a Down's syndrome child is thought in a regular school. These children have an amended program which is partially taught out of the classroom. Infants receive less adaptive programs and spent more time in the classroom than Down's syndrome pupils in the higher grades. Teachers state that the rules for behaviour are the same for Down's syndrome children as for their classmates. The presence of a Down's syndrome pupil has a positive influence on classmates. The presence of the pupil does not affect the education provided for the other pupils.

In spite of the positive opinions of parents and teachers not all Down's syndrome pupils stay in a regular primary school for the entire period. Sometimes, schools or parents do not think regular education is in the best interest of the child. From parents and teachers in the responses there are three main groups of reasons for this. Teachers no longer support integration in regular education; social or emotional problems of the pupil and a lack of progress. These provide a basis to discuss ways of reducing the number of (early) transfers.

Chapter 6 describes a theoretical framework for the social aspects of integrating Down's syndrome children. The central issue here are the social contacts of the Down's syndrome pupil with fellow classmates. The first section discusses the contacts between children in general, subsequently followed by the contacts between children with and without disability. These contacts can be positively influenced by teachers' stimulation of a cooperation between a Down's syndrome pupil and fellow pupils, peer tutoring, giving information on handicaps in general, or placing the pupil with same-aged classmates.

The third and last study described in chapter 7, concerns the social contacts between the Down's syndrome pupil in Grade 1 and his or her classmates. The three research questions are: 1) What are the social contacts like between Down's syndrome pupils and their primary school classmates? 2) Which Down's syndrome characteristics influence contacts with classmates? 3) What role does the teacher play in these contacts? Data showed that Down's syndrome pupils have less contact with classmates when compared with low and average achieving pupils. Classmates that have the most contact with Down's syndrome pupils can be described as 'caring' and sometimes as 'wild'. Parents and teachers are positive about the contacts of the Down's syndrome pupil with fellow classmates. Using sociometric scale the 'neglected' category is most common. Teachers mostly name the category 'average'. A school behaviour list indicated that Down's syndrome pupils have a low working attitude, and an average score

on emotional, extravert and pleasant behaviour. Their language is understandable to both teachers and classmates. Nevertheless most Down's syndrome pupils suffer with speech problems. To encourage contact between the Down's syndrome pupils and fellow classmates, the teachers actively involve them giving them a favourable place in the classroom, practises social skills between these pupils and fellow pupils and uses cooperative learning instructions.

Teachers see educating Down's syndrome pupils as fun and instructive, though a tough challenge. They think primary schools are good for the social development and social contacts of such pupils. Most teachers see the presence of a Down's syndrome pupil as enriching to the education of other pupils. Some teachers think a special school has more to offer in terms of educational resources and special experience.

The last chapter critically assesses the research. A new educational policy regarding the placing of disabled children and the changing of the Down's syndrome population in regular schools makes some results already outdated. Despite criticism, educating Down's syndrome pupils in regular schools seems a good option. By using well structured integration programs, the social contact between Down's syndrome pupils and their classmates can only improve.