

Managing Special Needs

Recording and reporting
using ICT

Why use ICT?

In the beginning, there were paper records, lots of them, all filled in by hand and typed up by the school secretary. This took a long time and records would sometimes go astray between offices or disappear in the depths of filing cabinets.

Then, in some schools, the special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinators (Sencos) used word processors to create individual education plans (IEPs), which they printed, photocopied and circulated to staff. This was a one-way process and if staff wanted alterations, the Senco had to edit the document. Schools working with pupils with behavioural problems often created their own observation checklists because there was nothing available which met their needs.

Now there is a range of computer-based solutions for recording and reporting. There are many management programs which incorporate special needs units, but this publication focuses on stand-alone packages, specifically tailored to pupils with special needs.

There are many advantages to using ICT rather than relying on the old paper-based system. First of all, it can provide an across-the-board system which ensures that the whole school is aware of IEP targets and the strategies to be used. This means that all staff can be actively involved so they feel ownership. Computerised IEP packages cover a wide range of information and criteria from P levels to National Numeracy Strategy targets. Some programs specialise in one area such as emotional and behavioural difficulties and so can underpin assessment.

Remember: a good Senco has to have good paperwork.

Choosing what's right for you

SEN management information systems can be a real Senco time-saver as they avoid the need to duplicate information for different purposes. The systems tested and evaluated by teachers as part of the Becta project all had slightly different elements, as you can see in the functionality table. There is no such thing as one package which suits all schools. It all depends on your circumstances. Whatever you use, make sure you consider these features:

- Can the systems be customised to suit the school's needs?
- Can you insert the school logo to give a corporate professional look to paperwork?
- Can the packages bring together assessment, IEPs and monitoring?
- Is it easy to produce data and tables for reports?
- Can you compare data easily?
- Can information be presented in different forms for letters to parents and so on?
- Is data transferable from existing school management systems?
- Can graphs and data analysis be produced?

Have a look at the following schools. They are all fictional but are typical of the broad spread of schools which are considering purchasing IEP packages to manage the recording and reporting for SEN. Each school has particular requirements which are detailed here, along with a shortlist of packages they might like to view.

"Enable is not at all expensive for whole-service use, and works well for non-teacher-trained employees."



Ashley Mead is a generic special school for 200 pupils aged from 2 to 19 with a wide range of abilities from P3 to National Curriculum level 3. Pupils have moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities, and visual and hearing impairments.

The headteacher decided to deploy computers throughout the school to aid administration. Teachers therefore have access to the software from within their own classroom. There are two computers in each classroom for general use; these computers have touch screens, switches, big keys and roller balls. There is also a central computer suite with an ICT co-ordinator and a half-time computer technician.

Look at:

[B Squared – Connecting Steps Summative Assessment](#)
[Learn How Publications – IEP Writer](#)
[SEMERC – IEP Manager](#)

"SENCO Manager is the best software I've ever used."

"IEP Developer is robust and easy to use."

Alderman Kingsley Primary School has 1,300 pupils aged 11–18. Over 150 of them are on the SEN register. ICT provision is limited and many staff are computer phobic. Up to now, SEN staff have created IEPs using a word processor.

The senior managers want to focus on a management information system, therefore the chosen package has to fit seamlessly into this. Many of the staff are complaining about having to learn a new piece of software. It therefore must also be easy to use and staff have to see clear benefits from the new system.

"We expect to have two staff in charge of administration but we want all staff to be involved and feel ownership of the decisions."

Look at:

[Blue Hills – SENCO Manager \(Secondary\)](#)
[Special IT Solutions – IEP Developer](#)
[X Objects – csars \(Complete School Assessment & Recording System\)](#)

"IEP Writer has a good target database."

The Jacobs Centre is a behavioural support service which covers five mainstream schools and three special schools for pupils with learning difficulties, as well as supporting out-of-school provision for a number of excluded pupils.

The school needs to focus on the emotional development of the child and make sure that this is recorded in a consistent manner. Since provision is quite scattered and takes place in a range of very different settings, it is important to have consistent paperwork so everyone knows where to look for specific information.

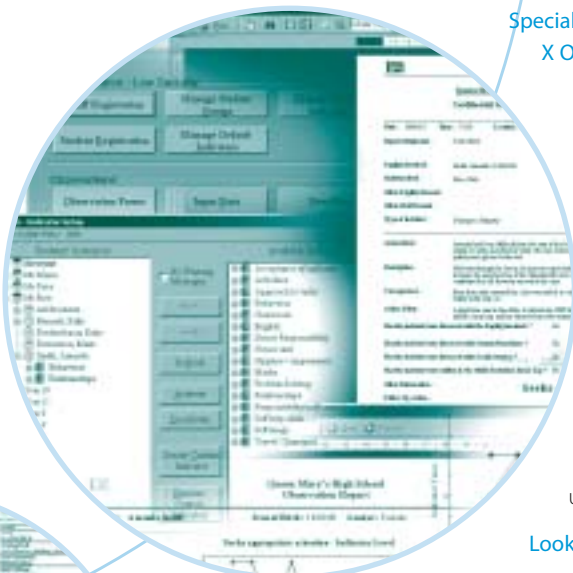
"We also want to be able to do more than assess and record; we want to use the software to help staff see things from a pupil's point of view. We'd also like to use it as the basis for a whole-school audit. It's a tall order!"

Look at:

[B Squared – Connecting Steps Summative Assessment](#)
[Special IT Solutions – IEP Developer](#)
[The Modbury Group – Enable](#)

Great Woodland Primary is a primary special school for 80 children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Ability levels range from P5 to National Curriculum Level 3.

Computers are networked across the school. There is a central computer suite, plus a desktop machine in each classroom. There is no technical support but staff have become quite proficient with the digital camera and whiteboard technology. While not experts, they are ICT literate.



It is envisaged that one person will be the system administrator but that each member of staff – teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and care staff – will have a password. Each password will have an associated level of access, which will dictate which groups each member of staff can view and edit. They will be able to enter data for their own groups but will not be able to see or edit other classes or residential groups.

Staff want to be able to add extra statements which are appropriate for their pupils' particular needs and set behavioural targets. Above all, the system must be easy to use. There is little time for training, so probably one or two members of staff will have to instruct the others.

Look at:

[Blue Hills – SENCO Manager \(Primary\)](#)

[Learn How Publications – IEP Writer 2](#)

[SEMERC – IEP Manager](#)

[The Modbury Group – Enable](#)

[X Objects – csars \(Complete School Assessment & Recording System\)](#)

Beechwood Grove Primary School has nursery, infant and junior departments. The school could cater for 375 pupils but numbers have fallen to 315, which has had implications for the budget. There are 43 pupils on the SEN register and a further 25 who have been noted as giving cause for concern.

There is no technical support so the staff rely on the Senco's ICT expertise. They want a simple, robust system which will cover literacy and behaviour targets. The system must also be cheap and effective.

Look at:

[Blue Hills – SENCO Manager \(Primary\)](#)

[Learn How Publications – IEP Writer 2](#)

[SEMERC – IEP Manager](#)

Future developments

This area is rapidly developing and other products have come to our notice since our initial investigations. Further details are available online:

- INIS (Individualised Information System) has been developed by the Curriculum, Evaluation and Management Centre, Durham University, and is currently being trialled in schools.

<http://cem.dur.ac.uk/inis/>

- Epar (Educational Planning and Reporting) is now available in four versions for specific SEN requirements.

<http://www.epar-software.com/Default.htm>

- Lancashire County Council has an online version of PIVATS (Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting); however, at the time of publishing no users could be contacted.

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/pivats/index.asp>

- IEP Writer 3 is due for release in October 2003 and will include a separate Secondary version.

<http://www.learnhowpublications.co.uk/>



"IEP Manager is easy to use and has a professional look about it."

"csars is a very complete package that can generate a whole range of reports for individuals, classes, curriculum areas and for the whole school."



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	 Connecting Steps Summative Assessment	 csars	 Enable	
Cost	Publisher	B Squared	X Objects	The Modbury Group
	Cost – single	£350	£295 + VAT	£350
	Cost – network	Starts at £1,050	£785 + VAT (includes 'work anywhere' with database replication management)	Site licence £550 – £1,450 (network ready)
	Annual licence fee	None	£100 single user; £200 network user (covering support and future upgrades)	None
Technical	Password protected?	Yes	Yes	User option
	User levels	2	4	1
	Who manages the program?	Administrator	System Administrator (network manager or ICT Coordinator)	User or IT Manager for network version
	Who administers the program?	Anyone	Anyone	Anyone
	IT skill level	Intermediate	Intermediate/experienced	
	Support	Telephone	Online, email, telephone and online discussion forum	Email support and website forum
	Statement banks provided	English, mathematics, science, ICT, PHSE & citizenship, history and geography	All areas of National Curriculum plus four areas of PSD, including behaviour. Facility to record results from other curriculum-based tests such as Sats and NFER. Next version to allow user-definable curriculum areas. Early years module planned for later	
Recording	Will it record P levels ?	Yes	Yes	No (yes in v2 October 2003)*
	Will it record National Curriculum levels?	Yes – PP1 – L5	Yes – P1 – L8	No
	Will it record behaviour targets?	Yes	Yes – also allows monitoring/scoring on a daily basis	Yes
	Will it set targets?	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Can I edit targets	Yes	Yes – can also import a school's own electronic targets and IEPs	Yes
	Is there a paper-based version?	Yes	No	No
	Can I insert school name/logo?	No but publisher will do it for you	Yes	Yes
	Will it produce IEP plans?	Termly targets	Yes – IEP statements linked to appropriate curriculum targets	Yes
Reporting	Will it produce class charts and graphs?	No (in next version) but will produce for individuals	Yes	No (yes in v2 October 2003)
	charts and graphs for school?	No (in next version)	Yes	No (yes in v2 October 2003)
	review meeting letters?	No	No (planned for next version)	No (yes in v2 October 2003)
	other template letters?		No – However, templates of moderation sheets provided for literacy and numeracy	No (yes in v2 October 2003)
	Will it adjust format eg reports?		No – however, all reports can be automatically generated in Word	No (yes in v2 October 2003 via Word or Excel)
Interoperability	Will it export to Word/Excel?	No (in next version)	Yes	No (yes in v2 October 2003)
	What data does it import from MIS?	First name Surname Date of birth Gender Class	Surname First name Gender Date of birth School year Class UPN Date of admission Current SEN stage	First name Surname Gender Date of birth Birth order Ethnic group Religion URN From October 2003: Address Guardian
URL for further information		http://www.bsquaredsen.co.uk/webindex.htm	http://www.csars.co.uk/	http://www.enable-online.com/

*v2 will be available as a free upgrade to existing users

 IEP Developer	 IEP Manager	 IEP Writer 2	 SENCO Manager
Special IT Solutions	SEMERC	Learn How Publications	Bluehills
Designed for network use	£129 + VAT	£70 – £180; £30 per additional subject database	£200 – £400 for a two-user licence; £40 per additional licence
£1,800 to £2,400 including two days' onsite support per year	Site licence £600	£140 – £600	£200 – £400; only installed on machines for which licences have been purchased
£450 – £600 in second year (one day's onsite support), £270 – £360 thereafter	None	None	None
Yes	Yes	Yes, optional	Yes
3	1	1	1
Senco	Senco/teacher	Senco	Senco
Anyone	Anyone	Anyone usually only Senco	Senco (could be used by class teachers)
Beginner/intermediate	Beginner	Beginner	Beginner/intermediate
Email, telephone and onsite	Telephone	Online and telephone	Email and telephone
Uses cross-curricular statement banks/targets/strategies to achieve coherence and continuity on a maximum of five targets	English, mathematics and PSHE	Literacy, mathematics, behaviour, communications skills and early level targets	Literacy, mathematics, behaviour & social skills and communication
Yes (if adapted)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	No – it uses National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy levels	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes – involves teachers in the creation of the targets and the setting of strategies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – just in report or permanently
No	No	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes – have to transfer to Word	Yes – in HTML not editable	Yes	Yes with IEP Pro (£300 for primary site licence; £400 for secondary site licence; special schools usually charged at primary rate)
No	No	Charts if used SNR + (additional £70)	Yes
No	No	Charts if used SNR +	Yes
No	Yes	Yes – in conjunction with SNR+	Yes
No	Yes	Yes – in conjunction with SNR+	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Yes	Yes	Word	No (in next version)
UPN Date of birth Year and registration group Gender Teachers Name Ethnic group Current SEN stage Subjects Form tutor	Not available	Not available	UPN Pupil's first name Sex Address Parent's surname Parent's address Pupil's surname Date of birth Ethnic group Parent's title Parent's forename Parent's telephone no. From Autumn 2003: Free Meal entitlement, year group, SEN provision type
http://www.special-it-solutions.co.uk/	http://www.semerc.com/	http://www.learnhowpublications.co.uk/	http://www.bluehills.co.uk/