

FZH Förderzentrum Herzogenaurach
Förderschwerpunkt geistige Entwicklung
A School for children with special educational needs

Networking Partners

Primary Level

Cooperation with regular schools is part of our curriculum. We start by cooperating with our local Primary School. This depends in practice on the partner school to participate as well as the willingness of the teachers to work together. In the German segregated education system regular teachers are often pushed by parents for their children to enter the highest levels of secondary education. So primary schools are not always want to invest time to cooperate with our school. An approach is rarely made by the other schools, we have to make the first step.

In the beginning, cooperative activities usually take place at irregular intervals and are started with joint visits to outside activities such as to the zoo or theatre. This has gone on to arranging joint lessons in for instance Music, Art and Craft or Sports. A successful longer term action with our neighbouring Primary School was created round a school circus project. We were able to establish good contact.

Religious education involves the children helping in the school year opening and closing church services. Here children from all local primary schools meet. The pupils help to prepare the church, select Hymns or read scripts. The emphasis in Religious Education is on Protestant and Roman Catholic themes, but parents of other religious beliefs are free to allow attendance, they often do, or make other arrangements.

Our pupils also are assisted in preparation for Confirmation or First Communion. Formerly religious preparation and these events were held in our own school. This gave the group of children a sense of community with their school family. However, we are now working with the children's local parishes to promote the children's involvement in their local communities. This process is helped by our religious teacher who is allocated time to work with the local parishes. The disadvantage is that not all priests feel able to work with our children. As well some parents are shy to be so public with their handicapped child. Some parents prefer a special service at our school and do not want to mix.

Secondary Level

Joint lessons and activities are continued but educational development differences become more noticeable and can limit progress. Our pupils and those of other secondary schools drift more and more apart. Again there is the necessity of our school to maintain these joint classes against the pressure from

the time commitments of the regular school. As well their school programme is less flexible. One class of our school made a successful art project with our neighbouring Secondary School. Another worked in a mixed theatre project. Good contact could be established and everybody involved thought these projects to be successful.

One autistic pupil from our school is to be assisted to attend individual lessons in our neighbouring Secondary School, accompanied by an individual helper. The autistic pupil's teacher prepared the pupils in the regular school for these visits.

Our curriculum includes activities with outside organisations. For instance, pupils are trained for the bicycle driving licence and make the national test with the local Police. Training courses are arranged to help pupils in safely using the public roads and public transport also in cooperation with the police. On the secondary level mobility training becomes an important part of the curriculum.

Vocational Training

Pupils are prepared for life outside school with specific vocational training and help for social and life experience. Explanatory visits to Sheltered Workshops and local companies give pupils an understanding of what jobs are about to help them choosing a possible career. Vocational training is part of the pupil's school career and takes part in our school.

Fundamental to outside work is the long established system of sheltered workshops run by the large charitable institutions and registration for disabled persons. Most of our pupils join such places after leaving school.

Sheltered Workshops (WfbM). There are 700 of these workshops all over Germany with places for physically and mentally handicapped people. Altogether they employ 258.000 people. None of these workshops offer the same work experience because they have to find products to be sold in the normal commercial market as for example from wood or material, factory out-working or some technical products. Local government is required to offer work to these workshops whenever possible. Special groups are established for the severely handicapped. Those who remain in these workshops are currently paid up to Euro160 per month. The workshops get governmental aid but also have to make a profit. Workers are health insured and will get a pension when they retire. Our pupils take part in "work experience weeks", where there go to work in the local workshop for several weeks per year. These visits are prepared and accompanied by the pupil's teacher.

INTEC Assistance. A number of sheltered workshops have set up independent companies to provide a more challenging level of work opportunities. Here working conditions are like those on the open labour market and pupils who want to get in are assessed as if they wanted to get a job in the open labour market. INTEC assists the vocational pupil to adapt to this work if necessary with modified tools or with personal help. This gets the pupils further out into the general workforce and provides for the higher level of capability, ability to

work longer hours and better social contact than can be achieved in the workshop. Jobs offered by INTEC have open market conditions but are under the roof of a sheltered workshop.

ACCESS Integration Service. These companies provide help for all physical and mentally handicapped people who need help in joining the open labour market. They promote to companies, especially the more flexible middle sized companies, that it is possible to work with handicapped people. These contacts give our school a chance to arrange day visits to such companies to show potential recruits what work is all about before a career decision is made and to develop job opportunities. However, very few of our pupils will be able to use this higher level route.

Access is there to assist the company and the vocational pupil to adapt to this work if necessary with modified tools, advice to the company staff or with personal help. This help continues until the pupil is fully integrated into the new work. For the successful there is a great increase in self confidence and much better integration into everyday society.

The pupil and parents must be highly motivated for real success to be achieved. The young person is being helped to work away from the handicapped social world in a company just like any able-bodied person. They would have a normal work contract, treated as a normal member of the new company and paid market wages.

Local Cooperation. Our vocational staff also work with local companies to integrate outside work visits in the school training programme to help pupils understand the outside working world. This also adds to local companies' understanding of the possible capabilities of our pupils. Local work can help to keep the pupils closer to their familiar home and family life.

Leaving school is also about learning to cope with everyday situations. These young adults are given time in a training flat to learn about how to handle their own home and the use of public services. They also learn about public life, that is not only what society can do for them but what they can do. And they learn about social behaviour and an understanding of friendships. There are two sides to this cooperation: our pupils learn from other people whilst those people learn about us.

Networking Partners for all levels. Our school works with special schools for other types of handicap who can advise us and assess our pupils with specific problems (blindness, physical or hearing disability). In addition there is a local Help Centre for the Autistic. Our local dentist also works with us as many pupils have dental problems.

The Afternoon Care Facility cooperates with us to provide continuity for full day pupils. And as the occasions occur our school is involved in district cultural and festive events.