

Don't Send Him in Tomorrow by Jarlath O'Brien

In this short and very readable book the author, Jarlath O'Brien, who is himself the headteacher of a special school, clearly demonstrates how the current education system treats SEN as a peripheral issue and children with SEN as an afterthought.

The nine chapters variously cover:

- teachers' ignorance and lack of training in SEN;
- schools' failure to understand that unmet needs underlie difficult behaviour and hence the frequent delays in identifying SEN;
- the over-representation of children with SEN in official exclusion statistics and the use of illegal exclusions to 'manage' them;
- Ofsted's apparently tokenistic approach towards their inspections of special schools;
- how the pressure on mainstream schools to achieve an 'outstanding' grade from Ofsted militates against their willingness to accept children with SEN;
- the tendency of politicians to focus on typical children and extrapolate from them to 'all' children without properly considering the relevance for children with SEN;
- the high proportion of children with SEN who get caught up in the criminal justice system;
- the barriers to achieving inclusion;
- and how a pervasive fear of people with learning disabilities results in a tendency to ignore them and their needs.

This book confirms everything that Afasic members probably know already. It is really aimed at headteachers and staff in mainstream schools, policymakers, commissioners and anyone else who is in a position to improve things for children with SEN.

It would be nice to think they will read the book and act on its implicit pleas for change.

Review by: Alison Huneke, Afasic Helpline Manager

Jarlath O'Brien

Don't Send Him in Tomorrow

Shining a light on the marginalised, disenfranchised and forgotten children of today's schools



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