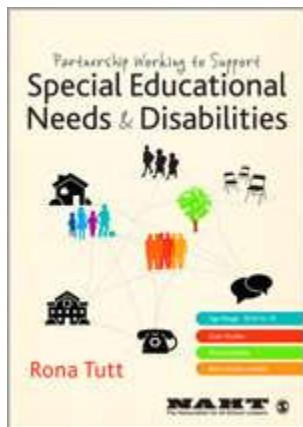


Book Review



Partnership Working to Support Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

by Rona Tutt

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Review by **Robert Keatley**

This book offers a comprehensive picture of how partnerships are working in education in Great Britain. The policy and legal framework is presented with case studies of innovative ways in which people are responding to increasingly diverse educational settings. People are finding new ways of working together to help in the education of all children, and particularly children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Tutt describes the changing nature of schools and services and how the educational sector has developed from a traditional model where head teachers controlled their schools and staff to one in which leadership is a shared responsibility. Teamwork is now encouraged and partnerships are formed between children, young people, parents, teachers and professionals in other sectors. This new inclusive approach is an exciting environment that encourages collaboration and participation. Tutt explains how schools have moved from being in competition with each other to working together. The example of St. Marylebone School – a specialist Arts, Maths, Computing and SEN College - is given. Some of the school's Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) have been working closely for some time with the two special schools in the borough to establish joint sixth form provision. With all the staff having received training in communication and interaction, it will make it easier for the curriculum to be presented in ways in which the students from the special schools can access. Schools are increasingly outward looking and forward thinking in their strategies to meet the needs of their children.

Tutt explains how Britain has global commitments to meet in the education of its children. The British Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. In addition, Britain has recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These Conventions set out international standards regarding – amongst other things – the rights of children to education. In ratifying these Conventions, the Government is obliged to meet the educational needs of all children, including those with SEND. Through interagency working and developing partnerships, it looks like the commitments that the Government has signed up to can be met. An important part of ratifying these international conventions is the education of people – including children - about human rights and duties contained therein. Within the spirit of the Conventions, Tutt gives an example of how Grangewood school in Pinner is eliciting the views of its children about the kind of learning environment they want to have. Grangewood's pupils have very complex needs, including severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and autism. The school's speech and language therapist worked with the children to find ways of helping all the children to express his or her own views and opinions about how the school should be run. This resulted in the school's Ten Golden Rules. The rules are displayed throughout the school and are a reminder about how everyone has the right to express themselves and to voice their thoughts about their school and how it should operate.

As children are being diagnosed with increasingly complex needs, schools have had to respond. In an environment in which technology is advancing so fast, schools have to change; it is reassuring to note that they are. This book shows how some schools are embracing the challenge of change to work more closely with different sectors, particularly health and social care, to find new and innovative ways of supporting children and young people to achieve their potential. Tutt presents Goddard Park Community Primary School and Integrated Children's Centre in Swindon as good example of how this is happening. The school is a fully extended school and is recognised as dyslexia-friendly and provides personalised programmes for pupils who have SEND. In order to meet the requirements of this extended role, the school has successfully remodelled its workforce to best meet these increased demands and needs.

The book is very reader-friendly. There are 7 chapters with each one illustrating the different ways in which partnership is working to find new ways of providing education to children with SEND. Chapter 1 and 2 look at how the structure of education has changed over the last 20 years and how schools are working closely with their children and families. Chapters 2 and 3 expand upon how individual schools, through outreach work or becoming specialist schools with a SEN specialism have teamed up with other schools to form partnerships. Some of these partnerships have expanded to include more schools so that groups of schools are now working together in some areas. Chapter 4 examines how some schools are developing wider partnerships by becoming academies, trust schools, or by setting up other business links. Chapter 5 focuses on interagency working through children's centres, extended schools and services for children and young people with SEND. Chapter 6 contains photocopiable materials that can be used to initiate further discussion and debate. The final chapter concludes with a final analysis of the value of partnership. Within each chapter, there is a 'Key Points' section which highlights issues raised and explored. This is supported by 'Questions for Reflection' sections. Readers are able to work through a series of questions to gain a greater level of understanding. For those who wish to research issues more for further analysis, Tutt provides 'Further Reading' lists at the end of each chapter.

In essence, this book is an encouraging read that gives numerous examples from across Britain of where people in communities are successfully working together to achieve the common goal of education for all. It is a must-have for all those who wish to know more about how the education sector has and continues to change to meet the increasingly complex needs and challenges to help all children get the best education that's relevant and right for them.