

UK is in a transition period, while both sides attempt to draw up an agreement for the future relationship between the UK and the EU. By June this year we will know more details about what that arrangement will look like. Until then, this story looks likely to continue to dominate the headlines in the UK and abroad.

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CHILDREN WITH REDUCED FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES IN SCHOOL AND LEISURE TIME IN NORWAY

This article is deduced from a study done by the Norwegian Department of Education. Its theme is “Integration of Children with reduced functional abilities in the Norwegian primary and junior high school”.

Key words: *physically handicapped children, special adapted education, disabilities, inclusive school, social participation*

All children get the most out of an education when it is adapted to their level of performance ability, and some children need extra adaption to perform the best according to their abilities. Among those who need extra adaption, are pupils with challenges connected to behavior, reading and writing issues, reduced functional abilities and over average skilled pupils. Adaption according to each pupil's individual needs may include physical adaption, special pedagogical support or special training.

Main Points

80% of primary schools are not sufficiently accessible for physically handicapped children.

About 8% of all pupils are included in some kind of special adaption for the year 2018/19

Since 2013-14 there is a decline in the number of pupils who have their special education outside their ordinary class.

Premises for an inclusive school

All children in primary school have a right to attend the school which is in their nearest geographical location or the school that belongs to their parish. The right to attend a school with the children in their neighborhood is important for their belonging and being included in their local environment. The school is also obliged to be accessible for all children.

Many pupils chose to attend other schools in fear of lack of resources

Children cannot be placed in another school without an application or consent from the parents. Parents shall participate in the selection of a different school but most often they have no other real alternatives to choose among. The owner of the school and the priorities of the manager of the school often influences their choice. Many chose to attend other schools in fear of lack of resources in the local school and in fear of their children being isolated.

When a local school is not available, the parents are forced to choose a school at another location within the municipality. This applies to a growing number of pupils and the number of pupils who receives their education outside of the ordinary school is almost doubled over the past 20 years. This applies to both pupils with reduced functional abilities and pupils in general.

80% of primary schools are not sufficiently accessible for physically handicapped children.

A survey accomplished in 2013 showed that almost 80% of primary schools in Norway are not sufficiently accessible for physically handicapped children. Stairs, doors which are too heavy and difficult to open, lack of elevators and lack of accessible restrooms constitute physical barriers in the school buildings.

The school is an important arena and an important cornerstone for the growing up conditions for children and adolescents. It is supposed to be adapted so children are not excluded because of physical hindrances. The school must be furnished in a

way that it takes into consideration pupil's with physical handicaps. All children have a right to a workplace which is adapted to their needs.

Alternative and complementary means of communication.

But it is however not only physical barriers which may hinder integration. Every year approximately 360 children are born with challenges when it comes to spoken communication. This means, that in an 18-year perspective it will include 6.500 children. Many of these will need special adaption to be included in a good way in the educational system. Especially there will be a great demand for school employees with special skills when it comes to alternative and complementary means of communication.

Special adapted education

All pupils have a right to special adapted education. The aim of adapted education is that all pupils will have a better day at school and a better environment of learning. The schools must evaluate to test out measures in ordinary classes before they decide if the pupil will go through further consideration with the intention of adapting the pupil to special education. The right is not individual and may therefore not be subject to appeal.

The right to special education is built upon the fact that the pupil doesn't have or cannot have satisfactory advantage of the ordinary teaching offered in the ordinary school. The right to special education is given as an individual decision after an assessment by experts and may therefore be subject to appeal.

The portion of pupils with special education is increasing by the grade

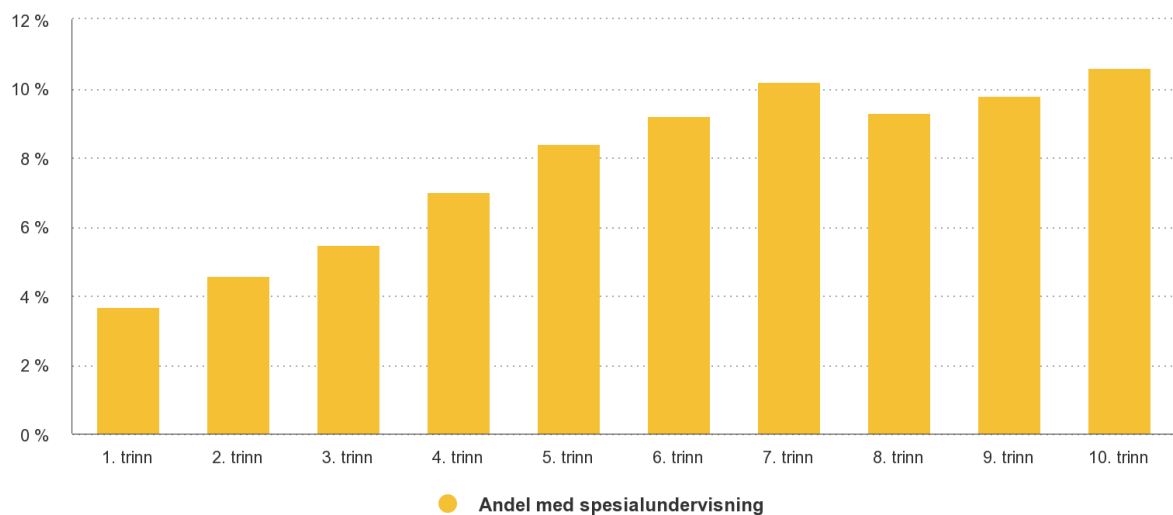
7.8% of all pupils in the primary school has an individual decision about special education for the year 2018-19. The latest years this portion has stabilized on a little below 8%. The number of pupils who receive special education is increasing with the age and grade. This implies that there are far more pupils in junior high school who receives special education than in the primary school. In the 1st grade in primary school 3.7% of the pupils receive special education, while in the 10th grade (which is the 3rd grade in the Norwegian junior high school), the portion has grown to

10.6%. In addition, there are great differences between sexes. Boys receive in a much higher rate special education than girls. This goes for all grades.

Higher density of teachers may contribute to a smaller demand for special education. The most important condition for this is that the teachers have good competence and that special pedagogical support personnel are available. Including pupils with certain needs in the ordinary classes may also have a positive social effect on all pupils.

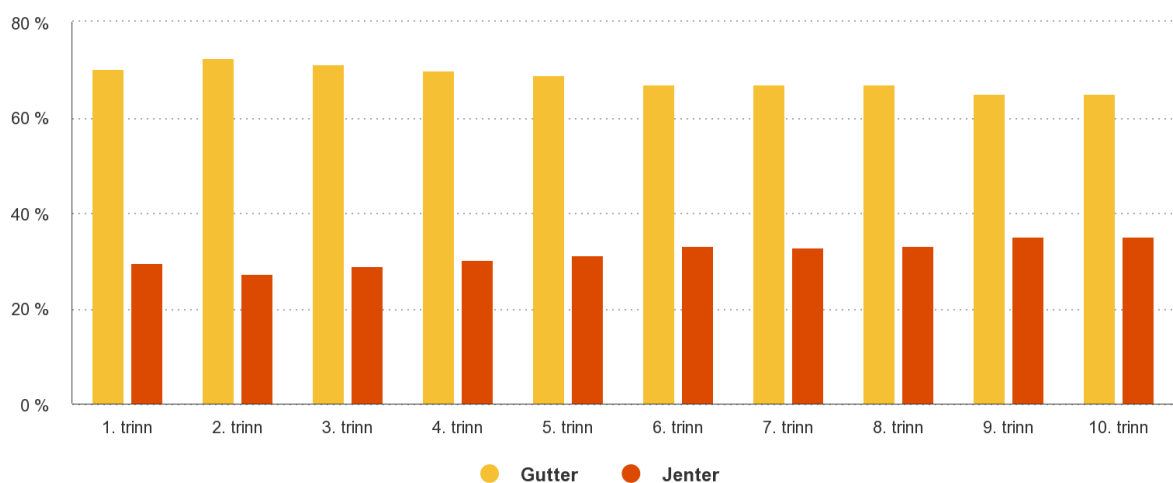
Number of pupils with special education in the Norwegian primary school by grade 1-10. 2018/19

Andel elever med spesialundervisning i grunnskolen, pr. skoletrinn. 2018/19



Kilde: Utdanningsdirektoratet 2019 - GSI

Elever med spesialundervisning i grunnskolen, fordeling mellom gutter og jenter. Pr. trinn.



Kilde: Utdanningsdirektoratet 2019 - GSI

Yellow = boys, red = girls. By grade 1-10.

Skills and the density of teachers reduce the demand for special education

How the special education is organized

An important discussion connected to the special education revolves around the question where the actual teaching takes place – in the ordinary class or outside the class in smaller or larger groups.

57% receives their special education outside the ordinary class

About 6 out of 10 of the pupils who receives special education, does this outside their ordinary class. This happens either in small groups or alone with a teacher or assistant. During the last couple of years, it has been an increase in the portion of pupils who mainly receive their special education in the ordinary class. In 2013/14 the portion was 28%, while today it is 43%.

4.100 children belong to a permanent department for special education.

Out of the approximately 50.000 pupils who received special education in 2018/19, about 4.100 belonged mainly to a permanent department of special education. This constitutes 8% of all children who receive special education.

The size of the school affects how the special education is organized. The bigger the school, the greater portion of pupils receives special education outside the ordinary class. At the same time there are more pupils who receives special education alone on small schools than on bigger ones.

Including children with reduced functional ability in the school.

Several studies (Finnvold 2013; Kermit et al. 2014; Tøssebro & Wendelborg 2014) prove that children and adolescents with different kinds of reduced functional abilities in a too little degree are included in school and leisure time. It is a trend that children to a larger degree is taken out of ordinary teaching the older they get (Finnvold 2013).

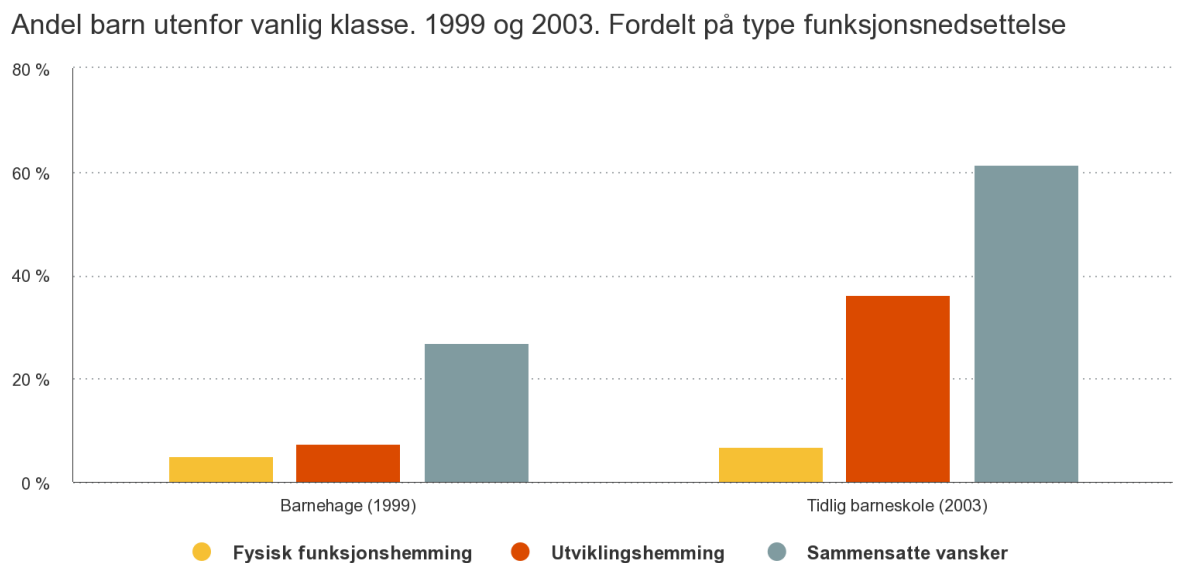
Children and adolescents with reduced functional abilities are to a greater degree taken out of ordinary classes in the transitional years between primary school and junior high school.

Three times as many pupils is outside an ordinary class in primary school as in the kinder garden.

From kinder garden to primary school the portion of children to receive teaching in separated groups or class are tripled. The development continues from primary school to junior high school. In junior high school pupils with reduced functional abilities tend to a large degree to receive their teaching on another facility than where their schoolmates are. (Wendelborg 2014).

The number of children outside their ordinary class.

1999 (kinder garden) and 2003 (primary school, early years)



Kilde: Wendelborg 2014

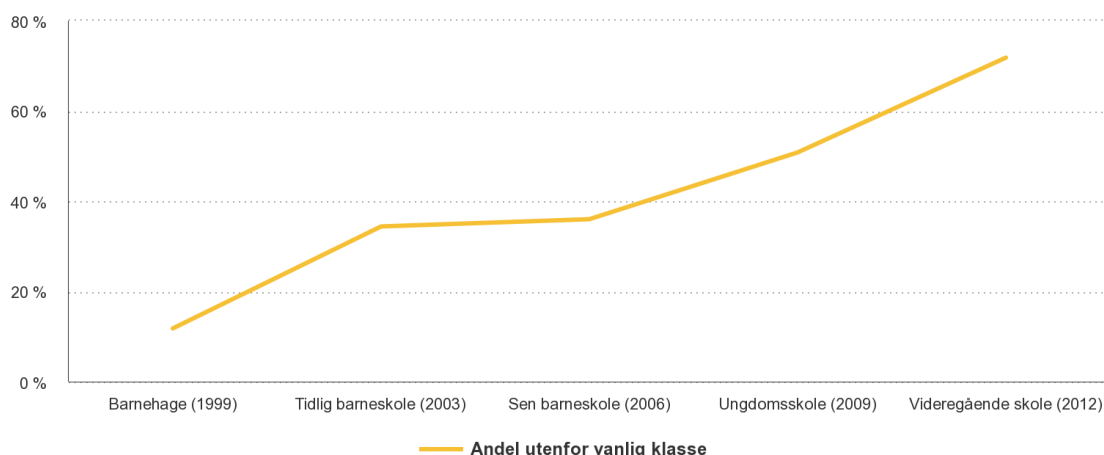
Yellow = physical disability, red = mentally impaired, blue = mixed

For mentally impaired children there is a great degree of reorganizing in the transitional period between kinder garden and primary school. 7.5% of mentally impaired children did not attend an ordinary department in the kinder garden. The portion that was not a part of an ordinary primary school class rose to 36.2% in early primary school age. More than one fourth of children with mixed disabilities does not attend an ordinary department in the kinder garden.

Children with disabilities outside their ordinary class.

From 1999 (kinder garden) until 2012 (high school)

Andel elever med nedsatt funksjonsevne utenfor vanlig klasse. Fra barnehagealder i 1999 til videregående skole i 2012.



Kilde: Wendelborg 2014

Kinder garden 1999, Early primary 2003, Late primary 2006, Junior high 2009, High 2012

The decline in classroom participation apply to all children with reduced functional abilities but is significantly clearer for children with mixed disabilities and mentally impaired than for children with physical disabilities. (Wendelborg 2014).

Participation in physical education

Children and adolescents with reduced functional abilities have a very varied participation in the physical education – a subject that potentially can improve their functional ability. Lack of participation is often explained by the fact that pupils have no possibility to participate in the activities the physical education prepares for (Elnan 2010).

The everyday school life is for many children the only arena where they meet and interact with other children at the same age. The school is important for development of social belonging and identity. Lack of inclusion in school may also affect the participation in leisure time activities.

Participation in school is important for participation on other arenas

Inclusion at school is important both for the benefit of teaching and for active participation and belonging. Children who are taken out of the ordinary school do learn from very early age that they are different. At the same time, they lose the

possibility to participate in education, play and the local environment with other children of the same age. (Finnvold 2013, Wendelborg 2014).

Less participation in school and leisure time as age increases

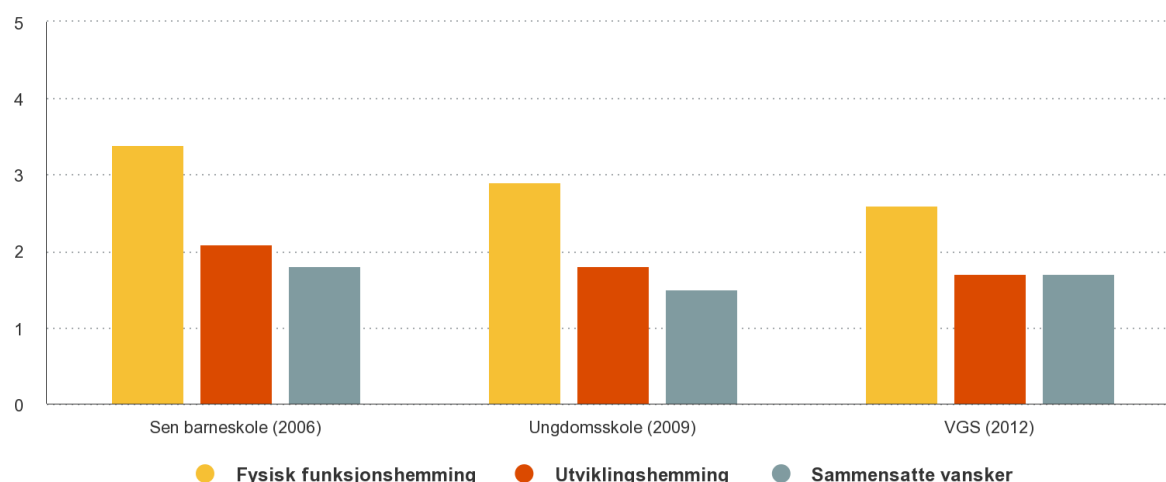
As children with reduced functional abilities grow older, it seems to be an increasing segregation of young people with reduced functional abilities also on the sports arena – parallel to the development in school. They participate in a smaller degree than most children in organized leisure and sports activities (Wendelborg & Paulsen 2014).

Social participation in leisure time

Development of social participation from late Primary to High School

1= little social participation – 5 = much social participation

Utvikling i sosial deltakelse i fritida fra sen barneskole til VGS. Fordelt på type funksjonsnedsettelse. 1= lite sosial deltakelse - 5= mye sosial deltakelse.



Kilde: Wendelborg og Paulsen 2014

Yellow = physical disability, red = mentally impaired, blue = mixed

The social participation is reduced as age increases for children with reduced functional abilities (Wendelborg & Paulsen 2014). Children with mixed disabilities and children who are mentally impaired spend less time with friends in their leisure time than children with physical disabilities. These are also the children which to a larger degree is taken out of ordinary education.

Many barriers against participation

Barriers against participation may be a lack of physical accessibility, financial and human resources, transport and lack of information. Barriers may also be of

social character such as an underestimation of own abilities, competence and prejudice in the surrounding environment. (Finnvold 2013; Kermit et al. 2014; Tøssebro & Wendelborg 2014).

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