

St. Michielsgestel, Breda, The Netherlands



Team for visit:

Sylvia Nolan
Val Quinn
Eric Ryan
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Dates of visits:

18th of November 2008

Contacts at facility:

Wilma Kuipers

Secretary to Director
Project Manager
Development Director
Services Director

Description of services provided at the facility:



Facility is the HQ of Viaatal, the original Institute for the Deaf. They run 9 regional cluster schools, secondary level schools and a pre school with an outreach service to their own schools and the Deaf children in mainstream education.

On site they have the administration service, a Deaf Blind school and support service, a second level school with accommodation for younger people, and older adults in need of support. A deaf museum in the old church and an exhibition centre. A farm for children, a technical department offering sales and repair of equipment, a development service to other countries, a centre of expertise in early diagnosis, audiology speech therapy, medical services, social workers, sign language teachers, family support and advice service, a cochlear implant unit, auditorium, media services room and a family therapy and advice facility with an outreach service.

Description of the facility itself:

Very large facility on circa 20 acres, part of the local town - separate but with no walls



Exterior:

Very beautiful Dutch environment with plants, trees, stone and brick facades. Old and modern buildings designed to suit Deaf and Deaf Blind people. Good use of signage beside all buildings

Interior:

Modernised old buildings, large rooms wide corridors.
Pastel colours with plenty light and good acoustics
Clear signs for room use at entrance to all rooms

Environment:

Plenty of parking and access to public transport
Very well maintained with large open areas and an extensive array of trees and shrubs

Lessons for Village Project:



Centre of expertise as a title not National Centre for Educational Excellence
Full Early diagnosis and family support facility with all professionals including Visiting teachers, medics and education psychologists on site
Need for cochlear implant unit vital
Need to set up parents support network
Village should be bilingual as should schools
Need for speech therapy and language support unit in house and outreach to regions
Children begin in village then move back to mainstream with support
Team provides 'back pack' service to take with them

Positives for inclusion:



- Independent review of individual education plans every 3 years retest every child every 2 years
- All information provided at centre
- Neo natal screening after 9 days
- Early diagnosis team and family support unit
- Visiting teachers on site
- Need for outreach support
- Cochlear implant unit
- Centre for parents needed

Negatives to be avoided:

Don't mix Deaf and Hard of Hearing in same class
Worrying that literacy levels are still low
Payment for service is from government per child

Summary:



900 Deaf students
2150 Hard of Hearing students
430 multi handicapped students

67% in Deaf schools
33% in Hard of Hearing schools
100% in special schools

3480 in total

Run special courses for parents
Class sizes 4 Deaf children to 1 teacher
12 Hard of Hearing children to 1 teacher

Two educational streams from 0 – 21
Vocational, no exams preparation for life
Certified – exams leading to third level`

Other Comments from the group:

Environment:

Large open and penneable campus environment on edge of small town. Very spaced out buildings – no real attempt to group together. New masterplan attempts to consolidate the buildings.

Old building is attractively fitted out with very good lighting and high quality internal foors etc.

Pleasant working environment. Other facilities looked functional but existing landscape makes for attractive settings.

External environment – good.

Classrooms, corridors, staff / student interaction, communication methods and mood of students – no idea.

Too many corridors

Good space between schools / independent living and administration offices (not all on top of each other)

Relaxed atmosphere of whole complex

Lessons for Village Project:

Many parallels between Viataal campus and CIDP Village project. Similar uses to be included in village project.

Masterplan interesting because attempt made to make character areas within the grounds where distinct parts of the programme are to be situated.

Cater for the spatial needs – avoid overcrowding.

Consider the placement of certain group – avoid some combinations.

Welcoming reception

Plenty of open space - not all on top of each other

To have a media room displaying photos, making and updating sign language dvds and to do research and have a library

To have rooms to facilitate all the support required to help needs of the child

Psychologist / social worker / visiting teacher / audiology / doctors / nurses / sign language classes / research etc

Positives for inclusion:

Viataal organisation and structure was most impressive rather than the actual buildings visited.

Masterplan – clear organisational concept proposed.

Moudrian model – character areas – orthogonal layout throughout campus.

Rear of site – most secluded for people with greatest need for support moving to front of site for greatest contact with public realm.

Deaf / Blind school – use of large overhanging eaves.

Relations / links with Department of Health to be developed on D.E.S

Parental care / support system – too much reliance on visiting teacher – one individual has too much influence.

Family support – social worker, psychologist, teaching sign language to parents

“Back package” on cochlear implants

Early screening - nine days after birth

HSE to get involved and refer cases to us in centre of excellence

Having our own doctor / nurses and all other professionals on the campus

Deaf /Blind support and facilities

To have all support / resources on the same site

Negatives to be avoided:

No observations to be made in relation to the buildings.

Less staff could sign.

Less staff were Deaf.

Possibly too spread out to be understood as a cohesive grouping of buildings.

High number of unemployed Deaf people.

Got a feeling that the services provided were very diverse and that it was not easy to monitor all of them.

Maybe we were not meeting the directors – that position.

To move away from Catholic Ethos

To look at the word “Institute”- this needs to be reviewed

Strong religious history - not to carry this over as it tends to be off putting for people

Summary:

Facilities appear to be of high standard of construction although fairly functional in appearance – may be related to the periods of their construction.

Viataal – most interesting in terms of seeing how system is more straightforward in Holland.

Outreach services for Deaf and Deaf / Blind.

Backpack – support system.

Services going to the children by offering support services in mainstream.

Viataal offer education that is stimulating, challenging and secure.

One stop shop model.

External environment – good.

The positioning of schools, in relation to the HSE, the DES must be examined. The expertise of the schools must be made available to parents, perhaps indirectly in a setting away from the school. There must be no threat of inevitability about any course of action – the future.

To have all facilities, support and resources on the one campus

To be able to have access and conduct research when the support is in place with all the different expertise / professionals

I believe if HSE were more involved then this would be a good way of promoting ourselves