



Project description “Warteschleife” [“On Hold”]

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Kranke Kinder in der Schule e.V. [association for sick children in school]

The majority of members of the association “Kranke Kinder in der Schule” are teachers at the School for Sick Children at the University Clinic Tübingen. The association’s objective is to undertake initiatives within the field of the education of sick children wherever these children and adolescents require support: within the spheres of education, vocational training, school and the transition periods between school and clinic.

Description of the project “Warteschleife” [“on hold”]:

“On hold” is a term describing a school pupil with a diagnosed psychiatric problem requiring treatment who cannot be immediately admitted to a clinic due to insufficient capacity. In certain cases, the child can face a wait of four to six months for an outpatient or inpatient therapy place. During this waiting period which we have termed an “on hold” period, the majority of these children and also their home school need multiple forms of support:

- Before receiving confirmation of an inpatient or outpatient place in a clinic, the children and adolescents requiring psychiatric treatment frequently find themselves in critical situations at school.
- Following confirmation of a therapy place – i.e. during this time “on hold” – the patient’s symptoms will frequently become aggravated, also at school. These symptoms can include dissocial aggressive behaviour, highly pronounced non-cooperative behaviour, learning disorders, emotional disorders with depression and anxiety, truancy,
- This waiting period frequently turns out to be the dreaded catastrophe for both the school and the pupil if no help is on hand from the education authority or youth welfare and social services. The pupil is not able to cope with lessons; the lack of external support for the pupil is an imposition for the class and can lead to the pupil being written off as sick to enable him or her to receive home schooling.
- The majority of clinic teachers do not consider home schooling a suitable option in this type of case. Home schooling means being given lessons in isolation from the rest of the class, so that the pupil feels excluded and in worst cases even rejected by the school community which is far from an ideal situation prior to the commencement of treatment.

Thanks to our experience within this problem field, the association “Kranke Kinder in der Schule, e.V.” has been cooperating with the School for Sick Children over a period of eighteen months at selected primary schools in the development and organisation of the project “Warteschleife”.



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The development status of this project:

- We began with the project phase in the summer of 2009: the project has already provided support for six children and their schools.
- The state education authority in Tübingen currently reports five children “on hold” with an increasing tendency.
- Unfortunately there is no financial public support (from the regional council, office for cultural affairs or youth welfare) currently available for this project which has been recognised as highly commendable within expert circles.
- In cooperation with the faculty of special educational needs at the teacher training college, we have been successful in having this working field adopted as a scope of activity and included in the examination regulations for students studying special needs education courses from 2011/2012.

Conditions and realisation

- A prime condition is that the school is fundamentally willing to re-integrate the pupil in his or her former class following the stay in the clinic, although it can become established during the course of treatment that a change of school would be better for the pupil.
- A school support service is considered helpful for both the school and the pupil. The special educational needs service at the School for Sick Children offers advisory support.
- A round table consisting of parents/school/special educational needs service will determine the extent and nature of required support.
- The sick pupil and his/her parents must give their consent to the planned support.
- A competent person (students on special needs education courses or educational sciences) will be employed by the association “Kranke Kinder in der Schule, e.V.” during the intermediate period up to admittance to the clinic for between eight and twelve hours a week (the school undertakes responsibility for accident insurance cover).
- The individual undertaking school support services will provide help for the pupil during lessons and undertake protective measures in any problematic situations following consultation with the class teacher. This support service also helps the class teacher. Regular consultation services and instruction are provided by the educational special needs services at the School for Sick Children or by a specialist within the field and will be financed by the association “Kranke Kinder in der Schule, e.V.”

Objectives:

- The child should experience that help is being offered; he or she will recognise that the school has a real interest in his or her wellbeing and that illness is no reason for exclusion from school.
- The school will receive support in its efforts to integrate the pupil.
- This form of school support service is beneficial for therapeutic success and eases the transition period leading into inpatient or outpatient clinic treatment.



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Conclusion and outlook

In two years, it is hoped that students from the Faculty of Special Education at the University of Education in Ludwigsburg will be able to undertake support services for a certain proportion of the sick pupils on the waiting list. It is envisaged that this will reduce the number of persons undertaking school support services receiving payment.

Up until this time, the school landscape will have changed regarding the entitlement for inclusion. A school support service will hopefully then be integrated into everyday life at school. We have been able to make a contribution to inclusion through the development and documentation of structures favouring inclusion at school. The special feature of our project "Warteschleife" is that it provides an interim period of school support in critical situations.