

were concerns that her life differed too much from that of her peers. However, Sue's story illustrates that children with extremely challenging behaviours can be fully integrated into the regular classroom. It is an example of effective intervention strategies put in place to make a real qualitative improvement in her relationships.

In finding effective approaches for Sue we came to see that the strategies became a spark which made people re-evaluate other people and their capabilities. The strategies we chose were Supportive Peer Relations and Gentle Teaching. Both of these involved inviting children and adults to participate in the social inclusion of Sue.

## **SUPPORTIVE PEER RELATIONSHIPS**

### ***Philosophy***

In order for children to develop, they must be involved in relationships. Through relationships they acquire, by direct learning and adoption of social roles, the attitudes, values, roles, competencies, and ways of perceiving the world that are shared by their families, schools and communities. Children who are not involved in caring and supportive relationships tend to become increasingly alienated and disconnected from people and activities in their families, schools and societies.

Fostering peer relationships is one means of promoting meaningful interdependence. Peer relationships can provide feelings of support, belonging, acceptance and caring. They give the opportunity to acquire appropriate social roles, and they provide the sensitivity required to build and maintain meaningful relationships. They enable the internalization of values, attitudes, perspectives and goals needed for responsible decision-making and long-term friendships that will provide assistance in adult life.

In our schools and homes there has been a relative neglect of constructive child-to-child relationships. There is often an adult-centric perspective in which adults are seen as the only