

How does your
current school meet
the holistic needs of a
child?

[Education](#), [School](#)



Critically evaluate how the principles and approaches of your school meet the holistic needs of every child. This assignment will look to critically evaluate how a school in which I am currently on placement meets the holistic needs of the children in their care. In order to protect the school's identity they will be known as School A. I will look to evaluate how the school's ethos is put into practice in everyday teaching and learning, and how this benefits/disadvantages the pupils.

Due to the limited allotted word count for this assignment I am unable to describe in depth how the school meets the holistic needs of every child in attendance, therefore I will look at one group of children in particular who will be known as Group X. I am also unable to look in depth at all of the holistic needs and instead will focus on the intellectual and social needs.

I will analyse the practice of Every Child Matters (2002)-(ECM)- this government initiative for England and Wales looked to help schools to meet what the government believed to be the basic needs of every child, these being: - Be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. Even though ECM is not current legislation, its themes still underpin the ethos of the majority of schools in England and Wales.

I shall also look at current legislation and recent reports regarding education including: The Cambridge Primary Review (2009) and The Rose Review (2009) to examine how the government look to support and develop learning. I will look to debate the ideas of three major theorists - Jean Piaget (1932), Lev Vygotsky (1978) and Abraham Maslow (1943), to

describe the practice that I have observed in School A. When looking at the holistic needs of a child we are really looking at the whole child, what they need in order to develop to their full potential.

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These needs are defined as the need for physical, emotional, intellectual, social and creative fulfilment. In order to meet the physical needs of a child we must endeavour to provide them with the basic provisions of air, food, water, sleep and exercise. Emotionally children need praise, love, trust, security, and a feeling of self-fulfilment. As teachers, it was often perceived in the past by people outside of the profession that we are solely responsible for the intellectual needs of a child, these being the need for challenging thoughts, reading, learning something new, and mind stimulation.

In order to develop fully children need social interaction through companionship and friendship. Creativity is the need to express ones self in an imaginative way. This can include the arts, dancing, acting, and writing. Holistic education is the idea that every child finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace. This can be achieved, not through an academic curriculum, but through contact with the outside environment.

Montessori, for example, spoke of "cosmic" education: "Help the person feel part of the wholeness of the universe, and learning will naturally be enchanted and inviting." Montessori (1912) It can be said that there is not one effective way to accomplish this goal, as there are many ways of

learning and many types of learner and the holistic educator values them all; what is appropriate for some children, in some situations, may not be best for others. School A has been judged to be outstanding in two consecutive Ofsted reports.

Behaviour is exemplary and pupils feel safe, confident and capable of, as they put it, 'reaching our potential'. Ofsted, (2004) This is an example of many praising quotes from the schools 2008 Ofsted report. From this report it can be seen that Ofsted viewed the school to be meeting the holistic needs of the children. It is without question that the school provides excellent provisions to meet the children's physical needs. There is a breakfast club, where children can have a healthy breakfast giving them a good start to the day.

Hot meals are provided at lunchtimes for those who do not wish to bring packed lunches from home, and fresh fruit is provided free of charge at both morning and afternoon playtimes. The school are clearly still working under the guise of ECM- Be Healthy, hence why these provisions are in place. Socially, children are encouraged to form strong friendships and there is certainly a " family" spirit around the school. Parents are encouraged to take part in and support their child's learning experience both in and out of school.

Rewards assemblies are held every Friday morning, in which children from each class are rewarded for both their academic (writer & mathematician of the week) and their social achievements (helpful & well mannered and effort stars of the week). Parents are invited to attend these assemblies to share in the celebration of their child's achievement. There are an abundance of

opportunities for the children to engage in creative activities, there are extra curricular clubs run almost every day after school including Yoga, Dance, Zumba and Art clubs.

Creativity is also included within the classroom, most activities are concluded with an element of art or design to make the children's work appear more attractive, which seems to help certain children (especially those who are visual learners) to embed their learning. Group X is small group of six children with some behavioural issues and some delayed intellectual development, they try hard but often become frustrated that they are unable to accomplish certain tasks, which then causes them to misbehave.

These children are often sent to work with a Higher Level Teaching Assistant- (HLTA) who helps them to work at a slower pace in order for them to not feel inadequate in a whole class setting. In mathematics, for example, the HLTA will work with the children using a variety of apparatus such as cubes, coins and counters, to help them to use a tangible object in order to provide them with a context for their learning. She poses open ended questions in order for the children to show their method and understanding of the information.

This is a clear example of Piaget's theory being put into practice. The teaching is being matched to the needs of the individual and this kind of teaching is helping to trigger assimilation and accommodation for the child (Pound 2005, pg. 38). This theory is supported by a number of theorists, in particular Margaret Donaldson who believes that children's errors or misunderstanding occurred as they are not responding to what was asked of

them but were also seeking to understand the meaning of the task or request (Pound, 2005 pg. 0), hence by the HLTA using money to aid with the learning of mathematics she was demonstrating to the children why they needed to know this information. Theorist and writers, who believe in inclusion, would however argue that by separating these children from their peer group the school are not demonstrating inclusive practice. Len Barton for example argued that: Inclusive education is about the participation of all children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice Barton (1998 cited in Clough and Corbett, 2000, pg. 85).

By accepting both arguments benefits and disadvantages of this type of practice can easily be seen. The children are obtaining the knowledge and understanding they require at their own level and speed, however they are being removed from their peer group which may cause discomfort and embarrassment as it could be viewed that they are being highlighted as the individuals with special needs. It can also be argued that they are not being given the same opportunities as other children within the class as although the work has been planned by the classteacher the majority of their teaching is being conducted by a HLTA not a qualified teacher.

However, by working in a small group and not being completely isolated or immersed in a whole class setting, the children have more opportunity to speak, listen and question what they are being taught. Vygotsky's theory would be in support of this as he believed that language played a significant role in abstract thought and helped a child develop awareness for a particular way of thinking and interpreting their own ideas. This is in contrast

to Piaget's view, who believed that the use of relevant language follows the development of a concept. Bee and Boyd, 2007) Sir Jim Rose is in agreement with Vygotsky and outlined his findings in his final report. Good primary teaching involves far more than waiting for children to develop by following their every whim. It deliberately deepens and widens children's understanding by firing their imagination and interest and paving the way to higher achievement through 'scaffolding' learning in a community of learners. (Rose Review, 2009 pg. 56) School A are clearly meeting the expectations of the current government by helping children of all abilities to develop their language skills in a variety of ways in order to progress their learning.

The children in Group X seem to be very sociable. Having observed them in the playground I have found that they interact well with each other; however tend to distance themselves from other children in their peer group. This could be due to the limited amount of time they spend in the classroom and therefore the stronger bonds they have forged with each other. Due to some of the behavioural problems these children possess, conflict with other children can sometimes lead to violence. The school manage these problems well and ensure that parents and the schools behaviour support worker are involved in resolving these issues.

School A are clearly trying to help their pupils to "Make a Positive Contribution" (ECM, 2002) by encouraging them to develop positive relationships and not discriminate or bully. Many Children in attendance at School A are from impoverished backgrounds, the number of children eligible

for free school meals are above the national average. It is clear that the school are striving to make this a non-issue in terms of the children's attainment; however it is widely acknowledged that children from poor backgrounds can be disadvantaged due to a lack of resources, space, overcrowding and poor diet (Curtis and O'Hagan 2003 pg. 7) Abraham Maslow spoke of deficiency needs, these being the need for esteem, friendship and love, security, and physical needs (Maslow, 1954). I have observed during my time spent in the school that it is clear that the children feel a sense of belonging and safety, have forged solid friendships and are physically well and able to learn, in short the school are meeting the core needs of its pupils, as outlined by Maslow. The Cambridge Review found that there is a " pervasive anxiety" about the pressure on pupils at school, and this concern often overshadow and conceal the fact that poverty is the single biggest threat to children's lives.

In this same report it is discussed that children like those at School A lack the massively compensating advantages of financial wealth, emotional harmony and a home life which is linguistically, intellectually, culturally and spiritually rich (Curtis, 2009, p. 6) The school is located in an impoverished area and the school are doing all they can in order to provide their children with a stable environment, which they may not experience at home. School A's philosophy on achievement, attainment and children's well-being is outlined in its prospectus (See Appendix A) and is clearly implemented in the teaching and learning.

They have a child centred curriculum, which is broad balanced and differentiated to meet the needs of all children including those with special educational needs. The children clearly progress throughout their time at School A with attainment targets regularly being met and exceeded. In short the school meet all of their own targets, whilst encompassing the key themes of ECM. I believe that the short time I have spent in School A, has already helped me to begin to forge my own teaching philosophy. The school has the best interest of all children at its core.

Even though ECM is no longer current legislation its themes are still at the heart of what makes a good teacher and a good school and School A encompasses these whole heartedly. For my future professional development, I believe that I will endeavour to encompass all of the points raised by ECM as I believe these things are the key to becoming not just an adequate but an outstanding teacher. Vygotsky and Piaget both present theories which are not just useful but essential for the modern education professional to be everything they need to be. In conclusion, School A is an outstanding school.

They are practicing the key points raised in recent legislation and reports and are demonstrating the theories of Vygotsky, Piaget and a variety of other theorists. The children's intellectual and emotional well being is at the heart of its ethos and this is reflected in the everyday teaching at the school.

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