

Meeting diverse learning needs



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Introduction.

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of inclusive perspectives, theories and key principles. Inclusive policies and legislations and their implications for practice will be analysed and used to evaluate multidisciplinary practice within the case study example provided. Potential barriers to learning will be identified with recommendations and strategies to promote inclusive practice within the setting.

Inclusion is a term frequently used throughout the education system and can be defined simply as being included. Booth and Ainscow (2011) define inclusion as valuing all students equally. Inclusion enables pupils with or without any special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to learn together in mainstream schools (The Alliance for Inclusive Education, 2018; Special Education Guide, 2018).

Inclusive education is a developing concept. Booth and Ainscow (2002) argue that whilst inclusive education is generally understood as the education of children with disabilities in regular schools, it is a much broader concept. They state that inclusive education refers to a system that removes exclusion from all aspects of schooling and education which ensures academic achievement and progression further in life.

The Education Act (2011) insists that it is unacceptable for pupil's attainment to be affected by gender, race, disability and social class or any other barrier unrelated to ability. Overcoming these potential barriers to education demonstrates effective inclusive practice. Education is vital in global

developments and not only does education benefit children, but also their families, communities and countries. The Department for International Development (n. d. cited in Miles and Singal, 2010: 3) believe that education improves job prospects, promotes health and a good standard of education in less developed countries and could play part in a national reconstruction. Tomasevski (cited in Miles & Singal, 2010: 3) and The International Labour Organization (2002) state that education has helped eliminate child labour in some countries.

Special Education Guide (2018) state that inclusion can be overwhelming to a general education teacher due to the complexity involved in integrating disabled students in to a mainstream school, but with the appropriate training and guidance this can be overcome.

Timeline of Policies.

- The Warnock Report (1978).

Inclusive practice has drastically improved throughout time. The Warnock report (1978) argued that every child had a right to be educated regardless of wherever they had a Special Educational need or disability (SEND) and supported the development of common provision for all children as opposed to separating them into two different groups of 'handicapped' and 'non-handicapped'. This promoted inclusion, as children who would normally be segregated were given the opportunity to be included in mainstream education.

- The Special Educational Needs Act (2001).

Twenty-three years later the Special Educational Needs Act (2001) argued that children with SEND should be educated in a mainstream school unless it was incompatible with the provision of efficient education of other pupils, or, if the pupil's parents rejected the concept of mainstream schooling. In comparison to the Warnock Report (1978) this exhibited inclusive practice as parents and pupils were given more choice regarding where they could be educated. The SEND Act (2001) advised that the appropriate person responsible for the school admissions should take reasonable steps when determining admissions to ensure disabled students were not placed at a significant disadvantage compared to other pupils whom were not disabled. The act also suggested that there should be an accessibility strategy implemented, increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum. The SEND Act (2001) also advised that it would be unlawful for a school to discriminate against students with SEND by excluding them from school.

- The Children and Families Act (2014).

The Children and Families Act (2014) influenced progression in inclusive practice by implying that the local authorities must consider the views, feelings and wishes of the child involved and their parents. It was also stated that the child and the child's parents were to be fully involved in any decisions required to be made and they must be provided with all the necessary support and information to enable them to participate in these decisions.

- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018 – 2025

Main body.

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Overview.

The case study analysed in this report is ‘ Outstanding support for disadvantaged learners: Roots and Shoots Limited’. Roots and Shoots has been operating since 1982 and was set up to help disadvantaged young people in South London to prepare for the world of work and they became an independent charity in 1997. Up to 33 learners aged 16-24 who have experienced difficulties in the education system can access the service. They spend 40 weeks in a full-time training programme which helps develop their skills and confidence therefore preparing them for work life. Roots and Shoots offer individualised programmes that enable young people to gain skills, qualifications, self-respect and potentially employment in the future. The provider claimed that they had strong links within the community which ensured potential learners were referred to the provider and provided learners with the possibility of work placement offers (Ofsted, 2012).

During the inspection, inspectors were impressed by how the provider had managed to engage with its hard to reach learners, with 80% of these learners continuing to develop their learning by embarking onto other training programmes or employment which the inspectors claimed was an ‘ outstandingly effective provision for those with significant disadvantages in life’ (Ofsted, 2012). The learners in the setting were said to have had negative experiences of education, which could have been due to failure to attend school. Learners could have had personal barriers to learning, such as, poor literacy and/or numeracy skills, learning difficulties, behaviour and/or anger management problems or possibly a history of criminal offending. Some learners had self-referred and others were referred by their

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school, or through services such as Connexions (Ofsted, 2012). Success at School (2018) advise that having an awareness of barriers to learning could assist teachers and learning providers understand individual needs of the students. By allowing learners with these negative experiences of education into their provision, they could overcome their first initial barrier to learning.

Programmes .

Roots and Shoots offer Foundation Learning Tier programmes in horticulture and retail. Alongside this, learners were also given the opportunity to gain qualification in literacy and numeracy, art and an enterprise award. Learners were encouraged to devise their own learning outcomes and were assisted to set individualised targets and to measure their progress towards achieving these targets (Ofsted, 2012). This enables learners to take control of their learning which in turn helps the students individually feel included in their learning and stay motivated, promoting effective inclusive practice (Jones, 2005; McLoughlin, 2017). Provision is also available for 14-16-year olds who are at risk of being excluded from school. If a child or young person is excluded from school, this could potentially lead to the learner leaving school without any qualifications. Roots and Shoots offers an ' Access to Apprenticeship' programme which therefore enables young individuals to continue to progress with their education. Qualifications are reportedly a crucial element of an individual's characteristics and for future employment (Wertheimer, 1983: 99; Verdier and Steedman, 2011). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2011) claim that 48. 5% of people in England and Wales of working age without qualifications are in employment in comparison to 80. 7% of working age in employment with one qualification, therefore

demonstrating the cruciality of qualifications for employment in adult life. Mitchell (2012, cited in Ofsted, 2012) explains that all the programmes offered by roots and shoots are delivered in a holistic approach. A holistic approach enables learners to be prepared for later life as it not only focuses on education, but each learners' individual needs and also forming relationships and developing positive social behaviours, social and emotional development and resilience (Miller, 1996 and Teachnology, 2018).

Community links.

Managers at roots and shoot claim they are dedicated to growing links with the local and wider community to benefit learners. These links have enabled learners to work at local parks, exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show and trees to be planted throughout London parks through a high-profile project funded by the National Lottery and the Mayor of London's fund. It is suggested that the organisations high profile generates further opportunities such as meeting the Her Majesty the Queen and The Prince of Wales. This encourages further interest in the programme, appealing to a variety of people. Other community groups use the providers facilities, offering further opportunities for learners. Work placements are usually held one day a week, with learners given the opportunity to work 'in house', in the garden or the 'pop up' shop which is open when events are held. Learners have also decorated local community centres, waited on tables for elderly client's lunch and participated in a carnival, in partnership with a local primary school.

Using community links can be beneficial for inclusive practice. Children and young people learn how to become more responsible adults and they have more opportunities to be involved in their life decisions. Learners will also develop a sense of belonging to their community and by making the local area safer and more attractive they could develop or enhance their motivation to learn and also improve self-discipline and behaviour (National College for School Leadership, n. d.).

Volunteers.

Roots and Shoots recruit members in the ' Friends of Roots and Shoots' group for a subscription fee. The money raised from the subscription to the group helps pay for travel costs and tools, enabling learners who are on low incomes or otherwise could not afford the costs associated to access the scheme. Other community groups, such as adult reading volunteers can use the premises which promotes a greater understanding of what the organisation is doing for its learners and also increases the opportunity of potential work placements. There are also professionals who offer specific workshops at the centre, such as a florist and a solicitor, and other professionals to provide support with writing CV's.

Volunteers appear to be paramount for this provider, and others, to operate. The subscription money enables learners to access the programmes needed to progress in life and to develop the skills required for future employment. The workshops also develop the necessary skills for employment, which learners of a low income may otherwise not be able to access these if they were not made free for them by the volunteers. The concern with the

Friends of Roots and Shoots subscription is that if people did not pay a subscription the learners from disadvantaged background or low-income families may not be able to travel to the centre or they may not have access to the appropriate tools. This would not be inclusive practice as only learners who are financially able to attend would be able to access the service.

Recommendations.

- ICT courses

ICT is becoming a staple part of education and employment, with many jobs requiring basic ICT skills. Luke (2015) claims that along with English and Maths, ICT qualifications are the most important qualifications that can be offered to an employer. Using ICT, learners can develop their problem solving and critical thinking skills, they develop initiative and creativity, gain access to information and the opportunity to analyse such information (Education Business, 2018).

- Fundraising events.

As stated above, the concern of not having enough people paying a subscription to the service could be solved by holding fundraising events. The money from these events could be used towards the learner's transport and the tools they require, ensuring that everyone can be included in the centre. Also, the fundraising events aids the learners to interact with and build relationships within the community, providing more opportunities for the learners and also giving them motivation to work and providing them with experience for working later in life. Fundraising events could help them learn how to include others in activities and also giving other potential

learners the opportunity to participate in the scheme who may not be able to if there are not enough funds.

- Language interpreters

If a learner's barrier to education is not speaking in fluent English language, then participating in these programmes may still be difficult for them if this need isn't being addressed. Having a language interpreter would be beneficial to translate what is being said to the learner or to the rest of the group, this will help the learner with the language barrier learn to the best of their ability, ensuring they are not left struggling. An interpreter could also help the learner build friendships in the groups, promoting inclusion.

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses

These courses could be vital for speakers of other languages to be able to learn and form relationships. Inclusion Employers (2018) claim that ESOL courses give more non-English speakers' opportunities to gain employment and bring greater social inclusion to communities.

Conclusion.

The Roots and Shoots charity promote inclusion in a variety of ways. They appear to offer personalised learning, offered to all participants yet based on their individual learning needs. The services could be described as 'easy to access' due to the ability to be referred through schools and organisations and the option to self-refer could be beneficial for individuals who know of the scheme but aren't in school or registered with other organisations.

Learners gain skills that will aid them in education, employment and in their personal lives, such as confidence and the ability to form friendships. The

Access to Apprenticeship programme could prevent learners who face exclusion from school embarking on a downward spiral in life by learning how to be independent, punctual, reliable and how to remain focused.

Having strong community links provides many opportunities for the learners. Participating in community events helps learners gain confidence and self-belief. The chances of further education and employment can be greatly improved for learners on the programme, which if they attempted alone, they may not have the knowledge or confidence to achieve this. Overall it is apparent that the aim of Roots and Shoots is to offer inclusive education to people from disadvantaged backgrounds and enable them to achieve a better start to adult life.

Case study analysis 2.

Overview.

Central Street Infant and Nursey School are based in West Yorkshire, England. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is below average and the majority of pupils are white British. The school hosts the local authority's autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) provision which accommodates up to six pupils. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) is above average. The school claim that knowledge of different types of families ensures that all parents and carers, regardless of their sexuality or backgrounds, are welcomed into this inclusive school community. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and in key stage 1 ensures that pupils whose parents, carers or other

family members who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) feel included. The school also claim to have tackled homophobic language, attitudes and behaviour successfully. Godfrey (2012, cited in Ofsted, 2012) states that the core part of the school's ethos is celebrating difference and diversity as a way of developing tolerance, understanding and respect for each other. They claim to ensure that each child and adult feels good about themselves and feels valued as a member of the school community. Godfrey continues to state that children with high self-esteem have a positive attitude to all aspects of school life and are confident enough to tackle a range of life situations. They promote Social, Emotional Aspects of learning (SEAL) as an integral part of school life and support children in developing tools and social skills to be confident learners and accepting of different lifestyles and beliefs.

There are several parents and carers at the school in same-sex relationships, with a quarter of children in reception class having same-sex relationships in their families. Senior leaders are said to have created a school with an openminded inclusive atmosphere and they claim to have a strong drive to cater for all forms of diversity before children take their places at the school. Staff, parents/carers and pupils claim that prejudice-based bullying is rare and all staff, including Teaching Assistants (TA) and lunchtime assistants are trained how to deal with homophobic language and how to work positively with 'different' families.

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