

## **Inclusive Leadership**

### **Section 1**

Inclusive leadership is considered an essential concept that emphasises the need of fostering an environment where all individuals feel appreciated, included, and respected (Ferdman, Prime, and Riggio, 2020). An inclusive leadership style values variety, invites and embraces each person's unique contribution, and promotes active participation in the processes that shape reality and decision making (Ferdman, 2013). The foundation of an inclusive leadership approach is the idea that every child has an entitlement to basic human rights (Childhood Education Institution, 2021). Randel, *et al.* (2018) further agree and state that promoting attitudes and behaviours that work to remove obstacles for those who run the risk of facing discrimination and exclusion from society is a key component of inclusive leadership. In addition, inclusive leaders promote community involvement in all aspects of school operations and avoid the conventional hierarchical leadership style (Leithwood, 2021; Rodd, 2013). Furthermore, raising standards and improving the calibre of children's social, health, and educational results has been acknowledged as a major benefit of leadership in early childhood settings, schools, and children's centres. The development of high-quality services for young children and families increasingly depends on having leadership that is both compassionate and effective (Siraj and Hallet, 2014). Furthermore, it appears that the definition of inclusivity is consistent across several sources, therefore this will be the definition referred to throughout this portfolio.

Two factors of student learning were discovered by Bronfenbrenner: the first was the learner's traits and the contexts in which they occur, and the second was the interactions and interconnections among them (El Zaatari and Maalouf, 2022). Scanlan and Johnson (2015) explain when the concept of inclusive education is taken into account, the differences between Bronfenbrenner's two theories become intriguing as it is the learner's attributes that should not determine whether or not a student receives an effective inclusive education. The settings and elements that make up them, as well as the links and relationships between them, are what ultimately determine whether or not Inclusive Education is successful (Anderson, Boyle, and Deppeler, 2014).

**Scenario**

You are a school teaching assistant and have started to grow concern over the items of food four year old Toby receives in his lunchbox, and the state of his appearance arriving at school. Toby's parents separated a few months ago, you have noticed that he continuously asks yourself and other practitioners who he is staying with after school, and does not look forward to going home with mum. He does however look forward to going home with Dad every Friday for the weekend. Weeks ago, Toby had a good variety of a balanced diet when he has packed lunch or school dinners. Through recent observation, you notice that this is now inconsistent. You are aware that Mam is struggling financially since Dad and her separated. You do not know if other staff members have noticed this, and if Dad is aware due to a lack of communication between himself and Toby's Mam. You believe a social worker is now involved.

**Child**

Cprek, *et al.* (2021) state that the years between birth and five years old are crucial for brain development that impacts social, emotional, and cognitive abilities. Toby's social development may be negatively impacted by childhood poverty (Hughes and Davies, 2019). Maunder and Crafter (2018) suggest that Toby may find it difficult to maintain friendships and participate in social interactions due to the consequences of poverty and lack of resources. As a result, Toby may be subject to bullying and feel excluded. Toby could also be bullied by other children due to not belonging to the same social class, or to the extreme of not wearing appropriate clothing (Tippett and Wolke, 2014; Underwood and Ehrenreich, 2014). Toby could be harmed not just in terms of his current health and well-being but also in terms of his chances for the future, which could ultimately leave himself impoverished (Blair and Raver, 2016; MacDonald, Shildrick, and Furlong, 2020). Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stressful childhood events that can have a negative impact on Toby's mental and physical health, both during childhood and into adulthood (Scott, 2021). ACEs are three times more likely to occur in the environment of poverty than in prosperity (Marryat and Frank, 2019). A sense of belonging in the early years is important to children as it develops their ability to build trust and confidence in others, as well as being more likely to engage in their learning (UK Government, no date). In early childhood

education and care, a sense of belonging is also widely recognised and cherished (Erwin, Valentine, and Toumazou, 2022).

To support Toby, an inclusive leader could ensure that anti-bullying policies are thoroughly implemented and take proactive steps to avoid and address with bullying events (Fujimoto and Uddin, 2021). Interventions against bullying might take the form of having posters throughout the school so that children and practitioners are familiar with them, as well as reminding children what bullying is every so often (Gaffney, Ttofi and Farrington, 2021). White and Cooper (2013) suggest that instilling empathy and kindness in other children as well as offering social-emotional learning programmes can contribute to the development of an inclusive and respectful school community, where Toby could feel a sense of belonging. However, anti-bullying policies are not without difficulties and restrictions, despite their potential to address and prevent bullying (ESTYN, 2014). The requirement for continuous professional development and training for school staff in order to successfully execute these rules is one of the main limitations (NSPCC Learning, 2022). Examining and modifying present school policies from an equity perspective is an extensive task that must be undertaken in order to improve inadequate policies. Due to a heavy workload and other common time constraints faced by school staff members, it is possible that this task might not be completed with priority (Department for Education, 2022; Oplatka, 2017; OECD, 2012).

### ***Family***

A growing number of families and children similar to Toby and his Mam are finding it difficult to buy necessities such as soap and laundry detergent, or to eat a sufficient amount of wholesome food due to the cost of living crisis in Wales (Public Health Wales, 2023; Oxfam, 2021). In addition to having a detrimental effect on Toby and his mother's physical and mental health, poor hygiene can exacerbate the stigma that Toby may feel as a result of living in poverty (Knifton and Inglis, 2020). A lack of knowledge about what it means to live in poverty, along with how simple it can be to fall into it, and the difficulty Mum could have in escaping it is what underlies these stigmatising behaviours and attitudes (Wincup, Embleton, and Elliott, 2022). As previously mentioned, Toby arrives to school in uniform that is dirty and appearing to be too small for him. An inclusive leader should direct Toby's Mam to apply for a School

Essentials Grant to avoid this. This is a Welsh Government funded grant. Toby's mum could be entitled to financial support of up to £125 that can be used on new school uniform for Toby, including footwear and coats (Welsh Government, no date). To ensure Toby does not feel excluded, this grant can also be used to pay for his extracurricular activities in school, such as school trips (Carmarthenshire County Council, 2023).

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, before Toby himself can feel love and belonging, his basic physiological needs are to be met first, such as, food, water, shelter, and clothing (Rodulfo, 2018). Achieving these needs are essential for Toby to reach self-actualization (Ivtzan, *et al.*, 2013). Similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child (UNCRC) state that Toby has the right to a standard of living sufficiently to meet his physical and social needs, as well as to promote his holistic development (UNICEF, 2019). In the event that material assistance and support programmes are required, they must be provided by the Government, especially in regard to housing, clothing, and nutrition (Children And Young People Commissioner Scotland, 2023). An inclusive leader could direct Toby's Mum to register him or submit a request for Universal Primary Free School Meals. In an effort to alleviate poverty among children, the Welsh Government has committed to providing free school lunches to all children enrolled in primary schools by the year 2024 (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), 2022). This would support Mum's financial stability and alleviate some of her worries knowing that Toby is having a fulfilling meal at school (Welsh Government, 2022). However, due to the fact that other staff are unaware of these issues, there could be a lack of communication between the team, as well as the possibility of information being misheard or being interpreted in the way (Brodie, 2015).

### **Staff**

Every day, staff who work in schools see first-hand how poverty affects children and families (Child Poverty Action Group, 2023). As a result of the scale and severity of the issue, schools are struggling to address it (Hughes and Davies, 2019).

According to Davis, *et al.*, (2021) compared to the pupils they teach the teacher workforce in Wales is less ethnically diverse, and when compared to teachers, learning

support staff members in schools are more diverse ethnically. Only 15 non-white school leaders were identifiable on the Education Workforce Council (EWC) register (Davis, *et al.*, 2023). The EWC (2019) state that 75.5% of all school teachers in Wales are female, with the remaining 24.4% being male. Both students and teachers may be greatly impacted by stereotypes about the ethnicity of school staff members (Costa, Langher and Pirchio, 2021). Demie and See (2022) and McGrady and Reynolds (2013) explain that children's goals and sense of belonging in the classroom may be limited if they are exposed to a largely homogenous school community, which may reinforce prejudices about who can occupy positions of power or become a teacher. The underrepresentation of and lack of cultural sensitivity among staff members may also affect the academic and socioemotional growth of children from minority ethnic backgrounds (Garner, *et al.*, 2014).

Practitioners' positionality within the school can have a big impact on how they interpret and evaluate Toby's performance and behaviour (Powell, 2021; Save the Children, 2017). Positionality is the term used to describe the subjective viewpoint that an individual uses to see and understand the world (Cronon, Argent, and Collet, 2018). In this case, school staff may not be able to identify children and families living in poverty as they have not experienced it themselves or been educated on it (Warrick, 2023; Moss, 2019). To overcome this an inclusive leader could suggest having further training on child poverty, which may also support them in responding to the needs these children and families may have (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2011). Learning how to decentre themselves to understand poverty and its impact could support children like Toby feel a sense of belonging at school (Payler and Locke, 2023).

However, barriers to this include staff being reluctant to change (Holmes, 2020). Rehman, *et al.* (2021) further explain that if staff are reluctant to change the consequences for families could lead to a lack of support from staff, as well a lack of opportunities for children. Staff may experience periods of both a fixed and a growth mindset, however recognising these mental states allow them to be aware of their behaviours, and understand if they need changing (Dweck, 2017). Moreover, barriers to further training could also include staff ratios, class sizes, and funding (Walton, *et al.*, 2014). However, considering Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory and the Zone of

Proximal Development (ZPD) of one individual learning from a more knowledgeable other, staff that attend further training could relay what they have learnt to other members of staff, which ensures that everyone is well informed (Zaretsky, 2021; Margolis, 2020; Xi and Lantof, 2020).

### ***Community***

Welsh Government (2015a) explain that through multi-agency collaboration, professionals from several agencies collaborate to achieve best practices in teamwork. This method of working will enable practitioners to address a family's requirements from a holistic perspective. Families First is a Welsh Government programme aims to enhance the lives of children, young people, and families whilst also supporting the Welsh child poverty strategy (Welsh Government, 2017). The Guidance explains that it emphasizes supporting whole families rather than individuals alone, as well as early intervention and prevention. In order to guarantee that families receive integrated support when required, the programme encourage increased multi-agency working (Knowles, 2013). In addition to this, a key principle in the Children Act 1989 Section 17 is that unless compulsory involvement in the family is required, children are best cared for within their families, with their parents actively involved. Parental responsibility and the local government's role in supporting children and their families are two examples of how this principle is portrayed (Department for Education, 2021). Consistent with Article 19 of the UNCRC, it is the responsibility of both parents to raise children, and what is best for the child should always be considered (UNICEF, 2017). UNICEF (2019) explains that in order to support parents raise their children, governments should provide child support services and assist parents.

In order to meet the varied requirements of low-income families, social workers are considered essential (Welsh Government, 2015). Toby's Mum is currently receiving support from a social worker. Social Care Wales (2019) explain that one of the roles of a social worker is to support families in overcoming the challenges caused through poverty by providing resources, advocacy and support. As previously mentioned, Toby's Mam is struggling financially and could be finding it difficult to feed Toby and herself at home. Toby's Mum has had support in being referred to a food bank through her social worker and Citizens Advice (Trussell Trust, 2023b). Once Toby's mum is referred to a food bank, she will receive a voucher which she would exchange for a

food parcel (Citizens Advice, 2023). Trussell Trust (2023) states that the food parcel typically contains three days' worth of nutritious food. Families similar to Toby's in need of basic amenities such as deodorant and toothpaste may be able to get them from the foodbank (Trussell Trust, 2023a). However, barriers to this could include not having enough donations at the foodbank, or Toby's mum may feel embarrassed due to the stigma there is around using a foodbank and receiving extra support (Bowe, *et al.*, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this section of the portfolio, it is evident that there are many opportunities for inclusive leadership, and all the strategies that have been suggested would support Toby and his family in the scenario. Toby would feel a greater sense of belonging, and a better understanding on his wellbeing. Additionally, interventions that have been suggested for Toby's Mum would also support them as she may be able to lessen her worries over providing clean clothing, nutritious food, and a fear of Toby missing out on school activities. Going forward, the next steps to be taken to ensure all practitioners continue to provide Toby with a safe and secure environment to thrive in would be to form a good relationship with Toby's family.

## **Section 2**

### **Introduction**

According to Baldock, Fitzgerald, and Kay (2013) policy can be referred to in different ways, such as a stated intention; the action taken on a matter by those with authority; as a procedure in an administrative or organisational practice; and as a statement detailing the official standing of a plan of action (Stewart, 2014). Gullo (2013) further explains that policies offer direction, responsibility, consistency, efficiency, and clarity regarding an organization's operations. Early childhood policies have a significant impact on the experiences and outcomes of young children and the professionals who work with them (Hobbs and Mutebi, 2021; Boyd, Hirst, and Siraj-Blatchford, 2018). The policy that claims to enable inclusive leadership and that will be discussed throughout this section is the 'Flying Start – Annex Transition Guidance' and it will be referred to as 'The Policy' and referenced as Welsh Government (2017a).

The Welsh Government's Flying Start programme is a focused Early Years initiative for families in some of the most impoverished areas of Wales that have children under the age of four years old. Transitions are significant occurrences or processes of change that can occur throughout life (Early Years Matters, 2023). For example, transitions are experienced when children and their families go from one environment to another such as from home to Flying Start childcare (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), 2014). A transition represents the amount of time it takes for children to adapt to such a change (O'Connor, 2017).

Furthermore, according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, The Policy is classed at a Micro level. Ashiabi and O'Neal, (2015) explain that according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, the microsystem is the initial level and the direct interactions with a child in their immediate environments (Lopez, *et al.*, 2021). For example, Garbarino (2017) states that a child's microsystem can include their family, friends, and school. Inclusion is best understood as a multilevel system and collection of practises (Ferdman, 2014, cited in Ferdman *et al.*, 2020, p. 9). From societal and organisational ideologies, beliefs, policies, and practices, inclusion spans and integrates macro, meso, and micro processes and situations (Ferdman, 2017).

Moreover, according to The Policy, all Flying Start staff should be able to "explain the setting's values, the principles behind good quality childcare" (Welsh Government, 2017a, p.35). According to Pianta, Downer, and Hamre (2016), quality in this context refers to a number of factors, such as the physical setting, the curriculum and instruction, the interactions between practitioners and children, and the standard of children's holistic development (Madani, 2019). In addition, research and evidence-based strategies characterize early years policies (Pelatti, *et al.*, 2016). In the processes of creating policies Wood (2013) explains that the term 'quality' is frequently used to describe the calibre, efficacy, and standard of the policies and their outcomes. Dahlberg, Moss, and Pearce (2013) and Selmi, Gallagher, and Mora-Flores (2015) further explain that there is however investigation and discussion surrounding the implementation and meaning of quality in policy making, which can differ throughout contexts (Yoshikawa, *et al.*, 2018). Dallimore (2019a) states that policy concepts for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and investing in them have been recognised as exceptional policies that promote social mobility and equality of

opportunity, whilst also being economically efficient, as they develop productivity and skills. Although this is acknowledged in the majority of countries, there are however a variety of underlying factors that could lead to distinctly varied approaches to ECEC policy (Douglass, 2019; Connors and Morris, 2015).

Furthermore, consistently throughout the guidance, the word 'should' is used. "Support for children through every stage of transition should reflect the rights of the child set out in the UNCRC" (Welsh Government, 2017a, p.8) is a statement used in The Policy. Anderson and Holloway (2020) states that the meaning of the word 'should', which is frequently used to denote a suggestion, obligation, or expectation may have a significant impact on how fair and effective policies are. It can be unclear whether a policy is enforceable when the word 'should' is used (Basin, *et al.*, 2013). According to Medeiros (2013), in contrast to imperative words such as 'must' or 'shall' which indicate a necessary requirement, 'should' implies a suggestion or choice. Moreover, due to the use of the word 'should', care may become inconsistent in different Flying Start settings, due to the term being regarded as misleading. Furthermore, with The Policy consistently stating 'should', some practitioners or settings may read and understand this as a requirement, whilst other practitioners or settings might interpret it as optional, which gives them the choice (Watkins and Meijer, 2016). Similarly, Doucet and Pont (2021) explain that this could therefore have the impact of influencing the quality of children's learning, due to the fact that different practitioners will deliver in different ways.

Furthermore, The Policy claims to have environments that are friendly, approachable and free of stigma. The Policy states that Flying Start employees foster an inclusive, non-judgemental, and inviting environments across all their settings and groups (Welsh Government, 2017a, p.6). However, there is no section in The Policy where practice has been successful or unsuccessful, as well as areas for improvement. As well as this, there are no statements or evidence as to how inclusive practice is implemented.

Moreover, The Policy mentions establishing positive relationships between staff members and children. MacBlain (2021) explains that having a strong relationship with their caregiver can allow a child to feel a greater sense of belonging. Bowlby's attachment theory is based on the belief that individuals are innately to develop close

emotional relationships with their primary caregivers or attachment figures (Kaur, Gendron-Cloutier, and Montreuil, 2023). Bowlby contends that these early attachments serve as the foundation for children's social and emotional growth, forming their internal attachment styles and affects how they act with others in the future (Granqvist, 2021; NSPCC Learning, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative that all children feel a sense of belonging and have a strong relationship with their caregivers (Howard, *et al.*, 2023).

### **Section 3**

#### ***Can schools support children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) through inclusivity?***

##### ***Introduction***

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has an impact on how individuals behave which can lead them to acting impulsively and appearing restless, as well as difficulty focusing (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). Children with ADHD are those in need of support from schools, however some current school policies and procedures that are in place today are not best suited to support and accommodate the behaviours for children with ADHD (Fabiano and Pyle, 2019).

Children with ADHD may have substantial difficulties due to the demands and structure of the traditional educational setting (Ward, Kovshoff, and Kreppner, 2021). (Wilson, *et al.*, 2023) believes that given their inherent

impulsivity and restlessness, children with ADHD may find it especially challenging to sit still for lengthy periods of time, follow tight timetables, and comply with rigid rules at school (Staff, *et al.* 2023; McDougal, *et al.* 2023). Their inability to adjust to the traditional school environment may consequently cause them to feel disconnected and alienated (Graham, *et al.*, 2019; Adelman and Taylor, 2017). An inclusive leader could support a child with ADHD by breaking up the task into more manageable parts (Rief, 2015). Mullet and Rinn (2019) suggest one benefit of this strategy is that it can aid with cognitive organisation. Children with ADHD can therefore concentrate on doing one section at a time rather than feeling overwhelmed by a large task, which may lessen their anxiety and enhance their concentration (McDougal, *et al.*, 2023).

Ojinna *et al.*, (2022) states this method fits nicely with the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy, which emphasises segmenting activities into more manageable and smaller phases in order to increase performance. This could be demonstrated in a classroom setting by visually representing each part of a task using visual aids such as checklists (National Health Service (NHS), 2021).

To support children with ADHD that struggle with sitting still for long periods of time, The ADHD Foundation (2022) suggests that practitioners allow children to have more regular breaks between tasks to move around or do relaxation exercise to de-stress, as it can help them better control their energy and attention capacity (Thomas and Karappali, 2022).

Teachers are considered as essential in fostering an inclusive environment that meets the various learning requirements of children with ADHD (Landolfi, 2014). Therefore, in order to effectively support children with ADHD, teachers should engage in ongoing professional development and receive opportunities for training in inclusive practises and special education. Professional development

opportunities can give practitioners the knowledge and skills they need to implement strategies for supporting children with ADHD (Welsh Government, 2019). (Drechsler, et al., 2020) states that this could entail training in behaviour management techniques, learning how ADHD affects children's learning, and putting assistive technology into practise. By funding their professional development, mainstream schools can ensure that practitioners are better equipped to create inclusive and encouraging environments for children with a range of learning needs (Department for Education, 2023).

Welsh Government (2019) state that the improvements to be expected from these strategies can include a small reduction in hyperactivity and impulsivity, and a decrease in problematic behaviours such as disruption. Children with ADHD may benefit from this by feeling a greater sense of belonging and a greater bond with their peers.

### **Conclusion**

Conclusively, through the use of inclusivity in schools, and using the strategies mentioned, support for children with ADHD can be achieved and successful.

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