

Section 1

Ferdman (2021) states that inclusion is brought to life through inclusive leadership, whether in an individual relation, a group, a workplace meeting, or through a community. Being an inclusive leader requires the mindset and the ability to identify, engage, and provide space for many different kinds of diversity, as well as the various methods in which people deal with this diversity. It includes explaining why diversity is important and assisting people in closing the gap between the propensity to avoid, reject, or minimise variations in identities or cultures and the need to shift towards approaches that emphasise the value of diversity and other positive diversity mindsets. Furthermore Gerritsen (2020) explains how it is claimed that inclusion provides a number of advantages, including improved career advancement and job prospects, higher job satisfaction, and an enhanced sense of wellbeing. Inclusion contributes to people feeling important, trustworthy, and worthy of respect. The increasing interest in inclusion by organisations can be related to these favourable results.

Inclusive leadership is especially valuable in the early years. In order to provide high-quality child-focused environments, inclusive practice is essential. A leader's job in inclusive practice is to ensure that both they and their team create an environment in which everyone feels welcome, appreciated, and respected. However in one setting, it is impossible to know and understand everything about all of the diverse backgrounds of the children and their families. It is preferable to promote an environment in which people inquire rather than assume, where people learn from one another and try to understand, rather than to foster preconceptions based on ignorance or avoidance reaction. An inclusive leader should foster an environment of openness and tolerance by encouraging children and practitioners to be open-minded (Newstead and Isles-Buck, 2019).

Samuel is 4 years old and has recently started school, he is in reception. During the last two terms of school teachers have noticed that Samuel lacks school readiness. Samuel is still in nappies, he has limited confidence and social skills, he also struggles to regulate his feelings and emotions which often leaves him feeling frustrated. Samuel regularly comes to school with poor hygiene and teachers suspect that he often comes to school with the same nappy on from the day before, which contributes to Samuel regularly suffering from nappy rash. Samuel often comes to school without a coat and in the incorrect uniform. He also is known to take his shoes off as soon as he gets to school due to his shoes being too small and causing him pain. Samuel is entitled to free schools meals however always seems hungry and often asks his peers and teachers for food.

Samuel comes from a one parent household, his Mother is a young parent and is only 17 years old. They are currently living in emergency accommodation awaiting for a council house to become available to them. Samuels mother has no support system after being cut off from her parents and

has a history of mental health illnesses. Samuels mother is unemployed and out of education she relies only on universal credit. Samuels mother is also a smoker and often leaves Samuel with a neighbour to go out drinking with friends. Samuels father has no contact with him and no involvement in the upbringing of Samuel.

The school consider Samuels mother to be an unreachable parent. She doesn't attend parent evenings and rarely answers phone calls from the school. The school have concerns that if early interventions are not put in place soon for Samuel then his physical, social, emotional and cognitive development may suffer considerably. However for the school to execute a successful intervention for Samuel it is important for the school to work with Samuels mother.

Inclusive leadership and the child

Due to Samuel coming from a low-income household, the Welsh Government (2016) believe that it is more likely that Samuel experiences the risk factors of poor attendance, poor behaviour, and exclusion associated with the need for additional support. This may be due to a lack of resources, such as a home computer or a quiet space to work, as well as a lack of parental support due to parents'/caregivers' own lack of skills or their poor attitudes of education as a result of negative school experiences. The first step for inclusive leaders to reducing the effects of disadvantage and vulnerability is being aware of the problem and impact poverty has on children.

Similarly Ryan (2006) explains that not all children succeed in the education system, and not everyone benefits equally in their community. This inequality does not occur at random or by chance; rather, it follows definite patterns. These patterns focus around distinguishing factors such as ethnicity, race, social status, gender, language, and so on. These factors contribute to these people being more likely to drop out before completing school and are less likely to pursue higher education. These children rely on an inclusive leader to allow them the opportunity to be seen, valued and heard. An inclusive leader should give children who face inequality every chance of success as every other child in the school.

An Inclusive leader could support Samuel by offering more enriched experiences and opportunities in and outside the classroom. These could be experiences and opportunities Samuel may not get to experience in his home environment. The children's society (2023) states that children living in poverty may feel unequal to their friends and peers as they are not able to have the same opportunities and experiences as them. For example Samuel may not be able to go swimming after

school like all his friends due his Mother not being able to afford the bus to the swimming centre, or the fees for swimming lessons. Therefore an inclusive leader may arrange trips and activities such as swimming lessons allow all children to develop life skills such as swimming and to offer all children the same opportunities.

However the child poverty action group (2022) express their concerns by stating that, these activities and experiences can be costly, and when school budgets are not expanded to support the necessary resources, schools may feel compelled to pass the expense on to families. Which may be a barrier as although it may be cheaper to do these experiences at school rather than at home some families still may not have the budget to pay for these experiences. This could lead to children feeling excluded and will result in them not having the same opportunities as their peers.

To overcome this barrier inclusive leaders may focus their attention on offering experiences and opportunities inside the classroom. For example providing plenty of books and resources such as iPads for the classroom. Which will allow opportunities for practitioners to read a story to Samuel or allow him time to play on the electronics, which will offer him enriching experiences he may not be able to experience at home.

Inclusive leadership and the Family

Samuels Mother is a young single parent and due to her history with mental health issues it would be good practice for an inclusive leader to have good communication with the family to ensure that Samuel and his Mother are receiving the support and help they may need.

NSPCC (no date) explains how parenting has many hurdles, which might be amplified if you suffer from mental health issues. Although not all children who live with someone who has mental health difficulties will experience abuse or be negatively affected, it can have an impact on how well they're able to cope with family life. As a result, it is critical that parents and carers can get help when they need it. Parents who suffer from mental health issues are more likely to experience mood swings, have difficulty recognising their children's needs, or struggle with routines such as mealtimes, bedtimes, and taking their children to school.

If an inclusive leader builds a strong relationship where communication is effective. This ensure that the inclusive leader is able to have non-judgemental conversations which provide support to ensure that Samuels needs are priority. Therefore if Samuel has not had breakfast one morning, his mother can tell the inclusive leader without feeling ashamed or judged and the school will then be able to provide Samuel with breakfast. This is essential for Samuel as food is a basic need and as Maslow

believes without food and other basic needs children are unable to develop which restricts them from thriving and reaching their full potential (Aubrey and Riley, 2019).

To support Samuels mother further an inclusive leader could deliver a parent support group which may take place one evening a week and could help parents to support their children while also making friends with other parents in the local community. Evangelou (2013) states how workshops to support parents can be extremely beneficial for young parents. The "core activities" of the workshop could be singing, speaking and listening and playing, all of which would be modelled by a practitioner. This highlights how parents can support children in five developmental areas. which are; spoken language, self-concept, reading, writing, and numeracy. It encourages parents to act as their child's first and most important educators.

A workshop for parents could even help Samuels mother meet other mothers who could offer her advice on toilet training and parenting tips in general.

Furthermore Pen Green Centre organise a similar workshop in their setting as they provide sensible emotional support as well as useful guidance to families dealing with both temporary and permanent difficulties. Pen Green believe in valuing and celebrating ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity and offering services that are considerate of the unique variances between parents and children. In addition to the child's education, they also take the requirements of the family into account. They provide adult community education and parent education programmes at the Centre (Pen Green Centre, 2022). The inclusive leader may want consider offering these services in the parent workshop which may support Samuels mother.

Building trustworthy relationships with families who experience difficulties or have had unpleasant experiences with health or education services in the past might be a barrier to conducting a parent workshop. Another common difficulty that practitioners have is speaking about childrens learning goals in a way that parents can comprehend (Murphy, *et al.*, 2021).

Inclusive leadership and the staff

It can be extremely difficult for staff to truly understand Samuels situation and how to support him. This may be due to positionality and the fact that most teachers in Wales are middle class and can not relate to poverty and deprivation. Therefore a large portion of the manager's duties surrounding inclusive practise should be focused on keeping focus on conduct, attitudes, and processes in addition to helping adults as well as children comprehend the value of inclusivity and how it may be attained. In order for everyone to understand that inclusive practise is an essential component of the

setting's vision rather than "just another policy," managers must manage inclusive practise by setting an example and reflecting on their own actions (Newstead and Isles-Buck, 2019a).

In order for an inclusive leader to promote inclusive practice it requires good communication skills with all staff in the setting. To effectively communicate, an inclusive leader must take into account their audience, the information they wish to convey, the environment in which they are speaking, and the manner in which they will deliver their message. Even when there are just two participants in a conversation, it is still vital to take precautions to prevent misinterpretation. During a meeting, the likelihood of this occurring greatly increases (O'Sullivan, 2015)

It may sometimes be mentally and emotionally challenging for practitioners working with Samuel regarding his struggles and frustrations. It is essential for Practitioners working with Samuel to feel supported by the manager and the staff. Early Years Alliance (no date) explains how early years settings offer a secure space where parents, teachers, and children can value the similarities and differences in one another as well as develop empathy and respect for one another. Therefore when an inclusive leaders successfully promotes inclusive practices in the setting then staff will support one another through empathy and respect and work together to ensure that all staff feel listened to, valued and part of the team.

Staff who do not feel supported and valued at work may experience severe anxiety as a result of workload concerns, role uncertainty, and fear of personal consequences if they do not support children like Samuel correctly. Staff need inclusive leaders to ensure that the correct training and support is in place for staff to be able to successfully support children from all diverse backgrounds as stated by Aubrey (2011).

Inclusive leadership and the community

Schools are an integral part of a network of governmental, private, and nonprofit entities that provide services to the community as a whole. Through forming community connections, educational institutions may be able to access a valuable resource that will help them grow.

First of all communities can help schools, by assisting them in removing obstacles that prevent families from participating, they also may strengthen their efforts to involve families. They have the extra benefit of being somewhat removed from the school and can contribute their knowledge of family participation, contacts, and comprehension of certain target groups as explained by the Welsh Government (2015).

Multi-agencies can work with families and the school to ensure that children are given the best opportunities in life. Inclusive leaders could help Samuels mother in ensuring that she has all the

information she needs to apply for help from food banks as the Trussel Trust (2023) states that Samuels Mother falls under the category where her likelihood of experiencing food insecurity and the need to use a food bank in the Trussell Trust network is increased as she is cut off or alone from their friends and family. Trussel trust also explains how children who live in households with just one adult also exhibit this trend. In Wales, 2% of people are single adults with children under their care. Nonetheless, they account for 19% of individuals referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network in Wales, and 7% of those who are food insecure in Wales. This will ensure that Samuel will not arrive at school hungry and will allow him to have the same equal opportunities to develop as all his peers due to his basic needs being met.

Similarly another Multi-agency support that could help Samuel and his mother greatly is the school essentials grant the Welsh Government (no date) explains how If a child already receives Free School Meals, the School Essentials Grant may provide further financial assistance.

The funding can assist with necessities such as school uniforms and equipment to ensure your child is prepared for the school day.

This includes money for school uniforms, coats, and footwear, as well as money for extracurricular activities like wellies for outdoor learning or a sports kit for physical development. This help would allow Samuel to be comfortable and warm in the correct clothing that fits him. It would also help Samuel to feel a sense of belonging and valued as part of the school as he would have the same clothing as everyone else in his school.

Section 2

Inclusive policy provides a sense of belonging, commitment, status, and specificity. Inclusive policies guarantee that the policy's characteristics are clear and that the policy's intended beneficiaries are obvious. Policy is crucial because it requires individuals to consider what goals they are attempting to reach, as well as why and how they are accomplishing them (Baldcock, Fitzgerald and Kay, 2013). Inclusive policies are essential in education as having a policy in principle will remind people in power that exclusion, discrimination and inequality will not be accepted.

More than ever it is essential for inclusive policies to be in place to support early learning provisions. This is due to the new curriculum for Wales now putting more focus on inclusive practice. Knight and Crick (2021) explains that the new Welsh curriculum is competency-based, emphasising a progressive, experience approach to teaching and learning. Furthermore, it strives to provide practitioners the autonomy and agency to change their material and method of presentation in order

to provide the differentiation required to establish an inclusive classroom, with the ability to build truly inclusive teaching practises across the curriculum. As a result, as part of these reforms, there is the prospect of developing a well-rounded inclusive system in which individual needs are met within a truly inclusive national curriculum.

Policies that support inclusive leadership in early learning provisions are policies under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Welsh Government's objective is for all children to be able to exercise their rights under the UNCRC. The Welsh Government is committed to using the UNCRC as the foundation for all of its work involving children and young people in Wales. The Welsh Government's commitment is outlined in the *Rights of Children and Young People (Wales) Measure 2011*.

One of the UNCRC's guiding principles is Article 12 - every child has the right to say what they think should happen when adults make decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions considered as stated by the Welsh Government (2016a). When inclusive leaders support Article 12 and allow children the right to their own opinion on matters that involve them, it allows the child to feel heard, valued and respected in the learning environment. Ferdman, Prime and Riggio (2021a) supports this by saying that the essence of inclusion is how much people feel accepted, valued, safe and respected; this gives individuals the confidence to be able to contribute fully to their education, workplace or other setting. Although a barrier to Article 12 may be that most adults believe in the misconception that adults are always right rather than the child. This could lead to children's opinions being disregarded and overlooked.

Another UNCRC article that supports inclusive leadership is Article 24, which is the right to inclusive education. UNICEF (2017) explains how all children have the right to an education. Article 24 specifies that children with disabilities must be entitled to attend school without prejudice and on the same basis as other children. The aim of Article 24 should be to encourage the full development of all abilities and potential in children with disabilities, to enable their full participation in society, and to equip them with an awareness of human rights, diversity, tolerance, and environmental respect.

A disabled learner who is discriminated against in a learning environment encounters particular obstacles that put them at danger of being rejected from education, future employment possibilities, and enjoying a normal social life (Welsh Government, 2018). This statement provides confirmation that if leaders, teachers and staff are not inclusive and catering in the learning environment, disabled children are deprived of the same equal opportunities that other children experience. An example may be that a disabled child who is a wheelchair user does not have access to a particular area of

the schools due to the school not installing a wheelchair ramp. This could cause the child to feel isolated, excluded and singled out due to every other child who is not a wheelchair user having easy access throughout the school while they do not.

An inclusive leader would support Article 24 by ensuring that each individual and unique child was catered for throughout the school and ensured that each child no matter their disabilities or capabilities was given the same equal opportunities and felt valued as a member of the school.

Mark Drakeford, the First Minister of Wales, announced the Welsh Government's intentions for an Early Childhood Education and Care strategy on October 24, 2019. The ultimate goal is to develop a unified, high-quality, child-centred approach to early childhood education and care. The foundation of its mission is to provide high-quality, captivating learning and care experiences for children in any education and care setting they attend, whether in Welsh, English, or bilingually. It makes no difference where they go as long as they are supported and nurtured as they require (Pacey, 2019).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a policy that promotes productivity and equality of opportunity. Dallimore (2019) states that one of the services offered in Wales through ECEC is Flying Start and Families First. They are based on ideals that support a more comprehensive approach to early childhood education. These programmes, which are aimed at the most disadvantaged areas, use intervention to mitigate the consequences of past or ingrained disadvantage. As a result, the emphasis is on empowering parents to better support their child's development and create a better "home learning environment" so that they don't start school at a disadvantage.

Child-centred environments are characterised by a culture formed by leaders in collaboration with governors, children, educators, teachers, parents, and others. Inclusive processes and practises are ingrained in this culture, curriculum, and services to assist all children in reaching their full potential. The leader of a setting such as flying start or families first should establish a concept of equality and social justice, develops an inclusive attitude and culture with staff, and provides suitable developmental practise to meet the needs of individual children as stated by Hallet (2016).

Section 3

An Inclusive Christmas in an early years setting

The Christmas season in an early years setting can be a stressful time for an inclusive leader. Finding a balance where Children can celebrate the magic of Christmas while also ensuring that the children and staff who do not celebrate Christmas feel valued, respected and included. Early years settings are blended with cultural and religious diversity and it is crucial for an inclusive leader to work and communicate with the children, families, staff and multi-agency to guarantee Christmas celebrations that is inclusive to everyone. Although executing this practice successfully may be challenging if communication with all parties involves fails.

Jackson (2022) believes that although inclusive leaders may be apprehensive about offending or excluding families by adhering to religious traditions like Christmas it is not discriminatory to enjoy customs associated with a specific faith in settings. This can lead to benefits such as children becoming more diverse and culturally aware and, may encourage discussions amongst children and staff on different religions that their parents at home may not be able to answer if they themselves do not follow that religion. However Jackson follows on to state that it is best practice to notify the parents and families involved in the setting of any plans and efforts to celebrate interfaith holidays throughout the year.

Furthermore Murphy (2022) supports communication with parents and families by explaining that partnership with parents is essential for inclusion, as is being open and honest, asking questions about their views, feelings, and beliefs about the festive season, and respecting their responses. Additionally by having open, honest and non-judgemental conversations, Murphy found that parents were more open-minded of their children learning about other religions and culture and some parents even encouraged and supported the children's learning at home too.

However a barrier to celebrating interfaith holidays like Christmas throughout a setting is that some parents may not be as open as others and may be more reluctant for their child to participate in interfaith holidays. Theoharis and Scanlan (2020) explain how this may be due to people typically having strong opinions regarding their religious beliefs since they are very personal and are influenced by both their upbringing and their own decisions.

To overcome this barrier an inclusive leader may establish informal opportunities to share information about holidays and festivals associated with a multitude of religions and worldviews, organise coffee mornings and discussions with parents. Groups from both religious and nonreligious backgrounds might be brought together from the larger community to promote compassion as well

as appreciation of differences. This broadens awareness and comprehension of variances in perceptions of faiths and beliefs. The goal of learning about different religious festivals is to build harmony and a sense of respect among community members. Families play a significant role in festival celebrations as each family celebrates different festival in their own unique ways that focus on their own values and beliefs, therefore by getting families involved allows children a more unique and rich experience (Devarakonda, 2020).

In Conclusion it is clear that communication is key to the success of celebrating interfaith holidays such as Christmas in the early years. An inclusive leader must ensure that honesty, openness and respect is at the heart of communicating with staff, children and parents when discussing such personally topics like religion.

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