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**‘How are primary aged children with an Autistic
Spectrum Diagnosis supported in mainstream
education?’**

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Frontispiece

This is to certify that, except where specific reference is made, the work described in this research project is of the investigation carried out by the student. Neither this research project or part of it has been resented or is currently being submitted in the candidature of any award other than in part for the degree of BA (Hons) in Primary Education with QTS of Trinity Saint David University of Wales. I understand that any work I use without reference constitutes plagiarism, which will lead to the failure of this module.

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Targed/Target 2	Ensure less descriptive summaries and more critical engagement that is supported from research.
Targed/Target 3	Consistently synthesise rather than report what you read
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

This research project aims to allow the researcher to develop a concrete understanding into current support for children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum and how they are supported within a mainstream primary school between the ages of three and eleven. Additional research was investigated before critically utilising the research question, which has been inspired by the report Autism and Education in England where findings have highlighted that *'fewer than 5 in 10 teachers say that they are confident about supporting a child on the autistic spectrum'* (The National Autistic Society, 2017, p. 4).

The researcher aims to gather a variety of reliable research, including first and second-hand sources on the support provided to children on the autistic spectrum in a mainstream primary school. Moreover, the project is to allow the researcher to gain greater and more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the training available to teachers for autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) to support their pupils and to use this to develop the researcher's personal development and professional practice.

The objectives that underpin this research project are to gain an understanding into support needed in a mainstream classroom, to ensure children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum are given appropriate provisions for enhancing and stimulating opportunities. The researcher explores the methods, resources and support that is already in place within the electives school. The aims are to highlight the strengths of provision and make recommendations of areas that show weakness. This was carried out using secondary research to identify what other schools are implementing and training that may be essential to furthering knowledge and understanding.

The rationale for this research is the personal interests of the researcher and to enhance her professional development and teaching. Through the researchers previous experience, studies and research, her knowledge and understanding has developed in Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This passion has increased during teaching practices, focusing on how to support using a variety of methods and resources to progress the individual child through their learning journey. It has become apparent of the importance of getting to know each child individually, including their likes and dislikes and areas of interest, and how the use of this can encourage the children to further themselves.

The researcher's hypothesis for this research project is that teachers in Wales do not have significant training to provide appropriate support, resources and methods suitable for children on the autistic spectrum within mainstream education. As the future of education in Wales is changing with the implementation of the new Donaldson curriculum and the new

ALN Code of Practice, practitioners need to be able to adapt to change and to make the most of learning opportunities (Welsh Government, 2018). Acknowledging that there will now be more class teacher responsibility for children with additional learning needs, this means that the pressure on teachers and facilitators of education need to be prepared to meet these needs in mainstream education (South East Wales Education Achievement Service, 2018). The researcher believes from previous experiences that there is a wide gap for improvement in the education for additional learning needs in particular children on the autistic spectrum, whether this may be extra training for staff, resources to support learning and many more.

The research project undertaken included the following research methods:

- A review of literature, researching current issues and case studies.
- Online questionnaires for teachers.
- Day-to-day observations and field notes.
- Semi-structured interviews with children and members of staff.
- Samples of children's work.

Defining Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

This research project explores the provision for children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum in a Welsh mainstream primary school. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) occurs in '*more than 1 in 100 children and adults*' (The NHS Information Centre, Community and Mental Health Team, Brugha, T. et al., 2012), which is normally detected within the first three years of a child's life.

Prevalence has been identified in the study of Loomes and other researchers, where data analysis has proven that the male to female ratio was nearer 3:1 in terms of young people being diagnosed on the autistic spectrum (Blumberg, S. J. et al., 2013). Expanding on the researchers own research project, in supporting these figures as there was a 3:1 ratio of the number of boys to girls statemented on the autistic spectrum.

This disorder has a triad of impairments and affects social interaction and communication with others, repetitive speech/echolalia/behaviours, obsessions and heightened sensory sensitivity (Wing and Gould, 1979). The terminology used ASD is a broad term used to encompass a variety of subgroups, for example, Asperger syndrome, High Function, low function. More importantly, outside agencies should work together and with the schools to support the child and their family, and these may include Autism Cymru, National Autistic

Society, Welsh Assembly Government, Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA) and others. Also, it has been highlighted the importance of raising awareness of ASD and the characteristics that can be recognised. Teachers report an increase in the numbers of pupils with ASD, especially in mainstream education. Moreover, the Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness Raising online training packages have been created for teachers to complete as part of the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan for Wales, to improve knowledge and understanding of ASD (Redshaw and Smith, 2013; NHS, 2020).

This research project aims to identify what would be the best educational setting to educate a child on the autistic spectrum in, whether it is in a mainstream classroom or a unit. Both of these educational provision options are there to support individual children's needs. It should be where the child learns best, and factors need to be taken into account including the size of the class, noise levels, resources available to them and the teacher if they feel confident, they can provide the appropriate opportunities to progress the child further. An aspect of particular interest to the researcher is once a child with ASD is placed within the unit. What interactions do they have with the mainstream classes, how are they involved with other children that were previously in their class and did this affect their social skills (National Autistic Society, 2018a; Rudy, 2019).

Chapter 2 - Literature review

This research project focuses on the background research into autism in mainstream education and the support that is provided for pupils with ASD. The researcher acknowledges the importance of new legislation due to be implemented in September 2020 as stated on SNAP Cymru (2018). The Welsh Government have published the first set of guidelines for practitioners explaining how the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Wales Act and the Special Educational needs will be changed to Additional Learning needs will be implemented. The guidance focuses on implementing individual development plans (IDPs) for every child with ALN of school age. As statements for children will no longer be, the pressure for teachers to create IDPs is essential in the classroom for every child. Also, the guidelines have stated that special education needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) will now be known as additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCOs). However, with these new guidelines to be implemented in Wales, it adds pressure on teachers to identify the learning needs and what support is needed to be put in place to progress the child through education. In order for this to happen, staff training will need to be provided to ensure all teachers are happy and confident with carrying out the new role of providing every child with an IDPs (Welsh Government, 2018a).

In the Estyn (2013) report, it highlights the importance of supporting and providing those individual children with ALN needs within a mainstream education and not just within a unit. As supported by the independent school standards (Wales) regulations 2003, it implies that all schools must provide the appropriate provision for all pupils, including those with ALN. The number of children with ALN including children on the autistic spectrum is increasing in mainstream education, as a future practitioner, we need to be ready to face the challenges to meet the needs of each child no matter their learning needs (Humphrey and Symes, 2010; Conn, 2014; McGillicuddy and O'Donnell, 2014; Goodall, 2018).

Historical developments

Historically, ASD was recognised by Leo Kanner over fifty years ago, where he described classic signs of the autistic syndrome. This was then developed through a variety of studies and research, which broadened the concept of the autistic spectrum. However, estimations of prevalence have shown an increase in the number of cases of young people on the autistic spectrum. Further developments were then carried out by Kanner in 1943, and his findings became known as the 'Kanner syndrome'. As he first described in his early research that he witnessed a specific pattern of abnormal behaviour, also known as 'early infantile autism'. At this early point in his research, he did not estimate the number of people with

this disorder, as his opinion led to believe him this disorder was rare (Kanner, 1943; National Autistic Society, 2018; Lotter, 1966).

In 1979, Lorna Wing and Judith Gould studied the prevalence of Autism, as outlined by Kanner in his work (Wing and Gould, 1979). Their findings were the prevalence in people with an Intelligence Quota (I.Q.) less than 70, were that nearly 5 per 10,000 have this syndrome, and this concurred with the findings of Lotter (1966). Wing and Gould (1979) broadened their research to include 'Kanner autism', where they identified 15 per 10,000 children who struggled with social interaction, communicating and had a lack of imagination. *'They referred to this as the 'triad' of impairments'* (National Autistic Society, 2018).

However, Kanner explains that the children identified do not fit into the full picture of childhood autism / typical Autism. He suggested that these children were on the borders of the Autistic Spectrum (Kanner, 1943; National Autistic Society). Earlier studies and research identified the signs of children on the borders of the Autistic Spectrum found in Hans Asperger's work (1944) describing that Autism in children also had few learning disabilities and special educational needs. Asperger found new evidence relating his work to Kanner, as he found that the children had similar signs with impairment of social interaction, communication and a narrow sense of imagination. However, these children excelled in grammatical language in the average or superior range, from these findings he named this 'Asperger syndrome' as part of the Autistic Spectrum. Discussions have raised concerns between the similarities of Kanner syndrome and Asperger. However, studies have shown they may have in common the triad of impairments as stated above (Wing, 1981; 1991).

In 1993 Stephan Ehlers and Christopher Gillberg carried out a further study into the prevalence of Asperger syndrome and other areas of the Autistic Spectrum, in order to carry this out they examined children in a mainstream school with an I.Q. of 70 and above. Their findings showed 36 per 10,000 had Asperger syndrome, and 35 per 10,000 had social impairments, from these results, the description of Asperger's has been filtered down. However, the group of children were said to be certainly on the Autistic Spectrum (Ehlers and Gillberg, 1993). Further research was carried out in 1995 by Sula Wolff, where her searches led her down the track of children of high ability who follow the triad of impairments. She emphasises that here work highly crosses-over with Asperger syndrome, but states that these children are gifted and talented and therefore are at the more able end of the Autistic Spectrum (Wolff, 1995). Her work carried on to research how this affects the child's adulthood but leads her to the conclusion that they become independent individuals that lead successful lives.

Wolff (1995) raises the question why should these children be considered on the Autistic Spectrum? Her opinion is that high functioning children often find it difficult in the school environment as they need recognition, understanding and acceptance from the teacher and their parents. It is proven that high functioning children need the same approach to those children diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. In 2005 the prevalence in Great Britain, of young people and children on the Autistic Spectrum had risen to 90 per 10,000 (Green et al., 2005).

Gillian Baird carried research into the Autistic Spectrum. In her report 'Prevalence of disorders of the Autism Spectrum' which involved children diagnosed with ASD or were known to have health or speech and language impairments. *'The results showed a prevalence rate of 38.9 in 10,000 for 'Childhood Autism', and 77.2 in 10,000 for other conditions on the Autism Spectrum, giving an overall figure of 116 in 10,000'* (Baird et al., 2006). Moreover, she questioned the study as only a few children had been identified with Asperger syndrome, as some children in the mainstream school were not statemented for special educational needs would have been missed due to selection criteria.

With regards to the lack recent research in Wales on Autism in mainstream education, the researcher has used many secondary sources of research from England due to it being up to date and recent studies that have been carried out.

Literature Review

Craig Goodall, in his 2019 report into the children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum and their experiences of mainstream education. He states the importance for children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum to have their voice heard to increase inclusion in the mainstream classroom, but also to ensure educational authorities provide them with the appropriate provision to support them through their education. He reports findings showing that not all children with ASD needs are met in mainstream education. Opinions from past students have stated that they experience bullying, isolation and anxiety (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a, 2008b; Browning et al., 2009; Humphrey and Symes, 2011; Hebron and Humphrey, 2014; Poon et al., 2014; Sreckovic et al., 2014; Sproston et al., 2017).

It has been stated by Wing that 'even the most able children with autistic disorders may find mainstream school intolerable' (Wing, 2007, p. 32). As children diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum may be high functioning (Asperger); they are more than capable of completing work. However, other factors will affect children with Asperger in the mainstream classroom including sensory factors, for example, noise, socialising, teachers knowledge about

providing the appropriate resources and environment to enhance the learning opportunities (Eldar, Talmor and Wolf-Zukerman, 2010; Keane et al., 2012). Research has proven that even though the child may be capable of completing their work in confidence, other factors can be seen as overwhelming for the child, which can affect their progression through education (McGregor and Campbell, 2001; Wing, 2007; Sproston et al., 2017).

As demonstrated by Reiter and Vitani, they have shown ways to ensure children on the Autistic Spectrum can be included in mainstream education. They are recommending, that children with ASD are encouraged to take part and fully engage in extracurricular activities and communities to develop their social skills and social behaviour to support their education in the mainstream classroom (Reiter and Vitani, 2007).

Inclusive pedagogical approaches support all learners diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum to learning without limits. It ensures a core, inclusive principle of equality. Inclusion involves facilitators of education to transform the classroom to meet the needs of the individual pupils (Goodall, 2015). Inclusion is essential in how all children are supported in achieving full participation in learning and school life (Ainscow, 2014). Inevitably, mainstream teachers will teach Autistic children within their classroom. They are thus requiring that facilitators of education need to be knowledgeable about providing the appropriate resources and support to those children diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum (Ravet, 2011).

The literature review provided a greater understanding of the Autistic Spectrum Disorder and how young children can be best supported in their early education. Research from secondary sources have been used to supporting primary research collected during electives. Besides, the researchers' previous knowledge and experience of supporting (ASD) pupils on a one to one basis contributed to the writing of the literature review.

In England, there is a Good Practice Guide published in 2018 that identified gaps in teachers knowledge and understanding of Autism in the mainstream classroom, not being able to be stricter with the appropriate support they may need. Through their research, they have recommended that schools identified with high levels of experience working with children on the Autistic Spectrum are to share their knowledge and understanding with other schools in collaboration to meet the needs of the children. It is suggested that collaboration may be done through meetings with the headteacher and specified training for all members of staff (National Autistic Society, 2018a).

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This research project has demonstrated many challenges and barriers that need to be overcome, one of which is ethics. Highlighted within the work of other researchers, they have raised the importance of ethical challenges within their research, and this is regarding the issue of safeguarding and gaining authorisation from others to use their information. This confirms the ethical principles of correct conduct is at the centre of the research project, to ensure procedures are followed to disclosing personal information. Regarding the researcher's role within the project, it is essential to avoid careless errors, negligence, respecting opinions, preferences and their confidentiality (Sanjay, 2012; Mulvey, 2015). Also, before carrying out the research, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants involved throughout the project. The ethics form in appendix 1 exemplifies the signature from a senior member of staff within the elective school, permitting the researcher consent to carry out the research methods within the school environment.

During the research project, the methods used were focusing on the quality, rather than a quantity of the research. The researcher has critically analysed the responses and feedback, ensuring the research collected is quality research. Additionally, this was supported by a variety of researchers who concluded the importance of acknowledging and aiming the research towards a small focus group. Professionals with expert knowledge in research highly recommend small focus groups when gathering quantity research as poor-quality results may result from the analysis from larger focus groups (Hale, Flurey and Rodham, 2015).

Extending on the importance of ethics British Educational Research Association (2011 and 2018) has revised the 2004 document in the publication 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' by refining researchers rights in commissioned research contexts. To ensure the researcher acknowledges all views and opinions to respect them all equally, as a future educator these ethical guidelines offered as a set of principles and advice to support and guide the researcher through the research project.

Moreover, reflecting on the feedback used within the research project, the researcher believes that the methods used were appropriate. Concerning the information that was needed to be collected to investigate deeper, the support provided for children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum in mainstream education. Elaborating on this, the methodology used in the research project included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, observations, field notes and examples of children's work. Smith (2015) supports the importance of carrying out quality research using a variety of methods, to gather evidence for qualitative analysis that supports secondary research.

One of the methodologies used within this research project was semi-structured interviews with the children in the setting. Smeele et al. (2019) regards this method to have both benefits and limitations. The researcher agrees with the views of Smeele et al. (2019) that they allow the researcher to prepare key questions but also allowing the flexibility to research more in-depth into an area that the participant is more knowledgeable in or may have stronger feelings and opinions. As the researcher acknowledged the children's thoughts and feelings, it became apparent that the best results were collected when the children were comfortable in the environment. This allowed the child's voice to be heard article 12 (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989), ensuring the children were asked "where would you feel comfortable to talk?" The child then decided on a place they felt safe, and the researcher carried out the semi-structured interview within the chosen environment.

However, views on semi-structured interviews can also be seen to have their limitation as they can be time-consuming when covering a large group of individuals. In contrast to this, it also suggests when minimising the group being targeted, that semi-structured interviews can be included for qualitative research which makes it applicable for this research project (Hardon, Hodgkin and Fresle, 2004, p. 24; Turner et al. 2013). This method of research has provided some key and valid points in utilising the question 'how are children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum supported in mainstream education?' Many of the responses received from the children were open opinions, and they were able to elaborate on the questions when they thought it was appropriate. For example, the researcher asked: "what positive impacts do you feel you have had by being educated within the unit?" The children felt they were able to express their thoughts and feelings to the researcher, and this may have been difficult if a different methodology was used, for example, a questionnaire.

Equally important as semi-structured interviews, questionnaires were used to collect information and opinions from teachers within the elective school. The researcher carried out in-depth research into the method of questionnaires to gather reliable data targeting a small focus group, ensuring that background reading supports the reasoning behind sending out the online questionnaires. Endorsing, the use of questionnaires throughout the research project, other researchers have similar thoughts on the use of this method, including the need to distribute them via email. Through utilising this online method, the results were stored electronically on a password protected cloud to ensure ethics were followed and also allowed the researcher to access the responses instantly online. A key aspect that supported the researcher using this method of research is the factor of pre-planning and sending out the questionnaires directly to the participants ensured that no time was needed for interviews

and allowed the teachers to respond in a time that best suited them (Woodward and Chambers, 2012; Smith, Morrow and Ross, 2015).

However, there are also limitations stated by other researchers, the fact that not all participants would return the questionnaires, as the researcher encountered this during the project. Other limitations that needed to be considered were that open-ended questions would take the respondent longer to answer but also the researcher of this paper greater time to analyse and process. Finally, the researcher was aware of sensitivities of the question; therefore, the questionnaire needed to cater to participants that were not willing to respond to certain questions asked. Subsequently, ensuring that the online questionnaire allowed each participant to skip any questions, they wished to avoid essential to the project (Carter and Williamson, 1996; Kirakowski, 1997; Milne, No Date).

Concluding on the method of using online questionnaires, the researcher believes that this method was carried out for the right reasons, including a quick response that enables the respondent to respond at a time that was suitable for them, enabling the researcher time to spend on observing and formally interviewing children. On the other hand, the questionnaires provided a limited response, but after analysing the data, the responses provided qualitative information.

Field notes and observations were included as one of the research methods, as proven from a range of other researchers that have trialled and used this method in their work, they have stated this method intends to collect quality feedback from the children and members of staff. This method of research allows first-hand experiences, for the researcher to see things for themselves, making detailed notes within a journal and observations on a day-to-day basis. However, as this method of research is considered as very time consuming only a small number of individuals were observed in detail (AQR, 2018; UKEssays, 2018; Saylordotorg, 2020). The researcher was pleased with the responses and information gathered using this method as they were able to get to know the children and members of staff on a more personal level, which made the children in particular happier and at ease to talk about their feeling and thought.

Another essential method used in the research project were samples of children's work. Reflection on theories and opinions underpinning this method which state the importance of gathering evidence of children's work; as the reasoning behind this is to track the progression of the individual child through their learning journey. This allows us as future practitioners to observe and identify where the child is at and what they need to do to progress further as an assessment for learning strategy. Also, identifying using appropriate resources and interventions that may be required. Other suggestions are that this method of

keeping children's work is creating a narrative of their progression through their education. Emphasising, assessment of children's learning takes place in every learning opportunity that essentially needs to be recorded to be analysed in order to define the next step for the child. The researcher chose this method of research as it enables evidence to support observations made throughout the research project. Observations are used in establishing the progress of the child in a mainstream classroom comparing with their progression in the unit (Katz and Chard, 1996; Johnston, 2008; Aussie Childcare Network, 2016; Neaum, 2016, p. 146).

To summarise methodology, the importance of background research was carried out before starting the research project using a variety of journals, books, websites, and published documents. Ensuring the methods used supported the researcher to focus on gathering quality data using the most appropriate and effective methods for the project. Focusing on the benefits and limitations of each method and knowing which ones were best suited to the participants and the school environment. (Queen and Squires, 2011; Biggam, 2011).

Chapter 4 – Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher of this project will be analysing and discussing the results from their findings from their analytical themes. The research project was both quantitative and qualitative; however, the focus on qualitative research was highly focused on. During the early stages for this research project, the researcher felt it was necessary to gain experience and to widen their understanding into the different environment of a unit in the electives school. Subsequently to this, the researcher has only experienced mainstream classrooms prior to this experience and felt that first-hand experience was needed (Brown, 2015). The importance of the initial analysis procedure outlined in the previous methodology section, the subordinate categories and analytical themes were used and organised into a visual network. They work in relationships to one another, to explore the links connecting them together (Kelle, 2004).

Statistics

In order for the researcher to compare support provided in mainstream classes to the support provided in the unit, questionnaires were distributed via online. These were sent out to all teachers, including the teacher in the unit to gather information on how confident teachers feel to support children on the autistic spectrum in a mainstream class (appendix 2). When asked the question “Do you feel you have sufficient training in Autistic Spectrum Disorders to teach children with autism?” After analysing the data, only 50% of the teachers believed they had sufficient training to teach children on the autistic spectrum in the mainstream classroom. This has been supported by the Nation Autistic Society (2017) in identifying that more than 5 in 10 teachers do not feel they have sufficient training.

Moreover, it has been recognised from the questionnaire that all members of staff had completed the online autistic awareness course and had access to in house training via the ALENCo. However, the researcher has asked this question to herself. As a future facilitator of education, it is our duty to recognise the increase of autism in the mainstream classroom and we as facilitators need to be able to provide the appropriate resources and opportunities to cater to the individual needs of the children as supported by a range of researchers (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a; Rice et al., 2012; Kostiukow et al., 2019).

Initial teacher training (ITT) provides newly qualified teachers (NQT) with the essential skills for good practice in the classroom. However, showing an awareness of the lack of knowledge in teaching children with special educational needs, the Government published

a teacher training framework in 2016 that all NQT's will have to cover provision and support provided to ALN especially children diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum (Welsh Government, 2016). Acknowledging this development in education, the researcher of this paper sets their opinion as an NQT of 2020 feels that the ITT needs to focus and implement further training courses aiming at providing appropriate support for children on the Autistic Spectrum. This does not mean that all teachers need to be experts in Autism but to have fundamental knowledge in adjusting their teaching to provide provision for those with ALN, essentially those on the ASD. This can be taking extra time in preparing children on the Autistic Spectrum or any changes in their daily routine in school or even having a separate space they can retreat to when they need to isolate themselves (*National Autistic Society, 2018b*).

Autism Education Trust (AET) (2020) have presented school training programs and resource packs to support teacher's professional development and education settings. ATE is a programme recommended to develop knowledge and understanding of Autism and how best to support a child diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum. The courses that are offered run from half a day to a full day course. All these courses develop a basic awareness of Autism; how to use resources provided in the classroom setting not only for children with ASD, but how these resources can support all children in the classroom. They offer strategies help to facilitate progression and achievement; guidance on how to use the framework they have provided to set learning goal and to track progress. Lastly, looking at what is good autism practice in other schools that show a sound understanding of provision for children with ASD. The six training courses they offer are:

- 'Making sense of Autism
- Good Autism Practice
- Extending good Autism Practice
- Complex Needs and Participation
- Progression Framework
- Leading Good Autism Practise'

(Autism Education Trust, 2020)

Additionally, all participants responded with 'depends on the child's individual needs' to the question "In your personal opinion, do you feel children on the autistic spectrum should be in a mainstream classroom?" Elaborating on this, synthesising views of other researchers they have come across the same question. They have agreed with the researcher's findings as children diagnosed on the autistic spectrum all have individual learning needs. Different

factors can affect a child in different ways; for example, a big and loud classroom can affect a child severely. They will find it frustrating and will not know how to handle it in the environment, whereas some are able to cope in this environment in the mainstream classroom. Goodall has suggested in his research that mainstream education offers many more inclusion and rights-based perspectives. However, this may not be the appropriate learning environment for the child as their needs may better be met in a unit (Goodall, 2018b; Frederickson et al, 2010). This will be elaborated on in the semi-structured interviews in the findings section, where it discussed the views of the children and how they feel. Intrigued to find out what support was provided to parents at home, the researcher asked the question 'Do you provide support for parents? If so, what support? Answers were all very similar from the participants throughout the electives school including annual reviews and regular meetings to work in collaboration with parents, carers, ALENCo, class teacher and any outside agencies that may be recommended due to the child's circumstances. However, one respondent stated, 'Perhaps we could offer more support for home if they feel it is necessary or would be helpful.' Recognising that the future of education is changing, we as educators need to be able to adapt and change to the pupil's needs, including supporting parents/ carers with routines and extra support in the home environment. Schools have also proven to benefit from working with parents in collaboration to support the child through the transitions for home to school environment and vice versa. The researcher has experienced the school's resources of picture cards that have been created for the non-verbal children with ASD to communicate with members of staff and also use to use in the home environment. This resource has been shown to create a positive effect on the child's communication and Behavior in both environments (National Autistic Society, 2019).

Proven by other schools working in collaboration with parents, they have communicated effectively to work out what is best for the child both in the school and home environments ensuring they keep to a schedule/ routine of their day-to-day activities including, meals, school and bedtime. It has also been trailed that a reward system that complies within the school setting reinforces the child for good behaviour and therefore are rewarded with praise or something they are highly interested with. These are all ways in which other schools are developing the education of Autistic children by involving the parents in reinforcing what is being done in school in the home environment which will support parents in keeping a routine that provided positive results (Help Guide, 2019).

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were held shown in appendix 3, to gather information from the children ensuring consent was given before this method of research was carried out

(UNCRC, 1989). The researcher ensured the three participants diagnosed on the autistic spectrum choose the environment in which the interviews were held. The reasoning was to ensure the environment where the interview was held was a safe and relaxing space for the child. Proven by research when a child feels comfortable in the environment, they will be happier and open about their opinion and feelings (UNCRC, 1989; Shoval, 2017).

During the interview with the researcher, all the participants prefer the unit over previously being in the main classroom's environment. This was due to many factors in which they were happy to explain to the researcher. All three children explained that they feel more comfortable asking for help in the unit than asking a teacher for help in the mainstream classroom. They told the researcher that they felt isolated, anxious and worried and it was easier to sit there quietly than to ask for help, as they did not want to stand out in front of the class. During two studies that were carried out, where interviews were undertaken with children diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum who went through mainstream education, their responses were very similar to the emotions the researcher got through her findings. Highlighting the similar responses in that they do not feel they got the appropriate provision in the mainstream class, compared to the support they have been provided within the specialised unit. However, this is not to say every child with ASD is affected in the same way, as many children with ASD have a positive education experiences, depending on their individual needs (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008; Craig, 2019). This can be supported by the researcher's observations as the children in the unit were relaxed in the environment, and happy to ask for help whenever they felt further explanation was needed and they felt like they could discuss their opinions through debate in the class. Opposite to this, the researcher has observed in previous placements children on the Autistic Spectrum, where their needs have been met in the mainstream classroom using strategies and method that worked for them. Although these children were on the high functioning side of the spectrum, it could be a possibility to review these methods to suit the needs of other autistic children through the mainstream education.

However, child C identified that they miss their friends from the mainstream class during class time, as they stated the only chances, they mixed with the mainstream class was during breaks, lunch, assembly's, swimming, committees and extracurricular activities. Education and Children's Services (2020) have cited that autistic children are not getting the appropriate educational experiences they need to grow and develop through education. Children with ASD need to be given the same opportunities, whether they are in a unit or the mainstream classroom environment, as it all comes down to equality for all. On the other hand, it stated in the policy of the elective school (Appendix 4) that they ensure all children with ALN including those with ASD have the opportunities to socialise and mix with

mainstream classes. Moreover, to have access to the same opportunities and experiences, ensuring the unit is an inclusive setting (Eldar, Talmor, & Wolf-Zukerman, 2010). It has been identified by other researchers for inclusion to be successful, and principles are needed to be followed by schools to embrace the success and achievement of all students (Horicks, White & Roberts, 2008).

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Throughout this research project, the researcher has identified the lack of research and developments in Wales regarding training all teachers to provide the appropriate provision for children diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum. Comparing to English developments where they have identified this area and the need for extra training. Recommending that Wales follows England's footsteps in their developments and research into this area to adapt and change to the new curriculum for Wales.

As found by many researchers throughout this paper, the number of children with ASD being educated in mainstream classes is continually rising. Subsequently, many teachers show high interests in furthering their knowledge in this area and can identify characteristics associated with Autism within children. However, for those that have not had significant training in the area of ASD will fall at being able to identify these characteristics to provide the appropriate provision the child will need to grow and progress through education. Stated by Osborne and Reed (2011) there are three essential factors for improving the qualified teacher's personal development in the classroom and the process of children with ASD. These three factors are attitudes, training and support.

The research has been carried out by a year three student to gain knowledge and understanding in their interests of ASD. The researcher has worked in a variety of schools in the Swansea area and has observed and worked with children identifies with ASD and receiving the support they need, to successfully integrated into mainstream education. However, sadly this is not always the case. Therefore, to continue her professional development, the researcher hopes to work with young children with ALN in particular ASD, to continue exploring how best their needs are met.

(6,406 words)

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