

Start at My Feet

Amelia Harwood

1900806

My placement school has around 228 pupils on roll. The school has a comparatively high number of pupils with additional learning needs which is around 42% across the school. The most recent ESTYN (2017) report reveals that 44% of pupils eligible to receive free school meals. The school shares its site with a Welsh-medium primary school, none of the children within the English-medium school speak Welsh as a first language at home. My placement class is a reception class with children aged 4 and 5. There are a number of additional needs in the classroom including speech and language, socio-economic, medical conditions and sensory deprivation. After completing three bridging days focused on different aspects of community, parental and school links, there are a number of ways that the school is creating positive links that will, in theory, have extensive impacts on the pupils academic and all-round holistic development.

Community Links to School

Since moving to a new school site in 2018, the school struggles with finding adequate space for previously enjoyed community events. Within the Donaldson report (2020), he considers community links as essential to children gaining a sense of Cynefin. The Cynefin framework (Agile42 Insights, 2013) outlines a feeling of belonging and understanding the influences that shape individuals into the people they are. Bronfenbrenner's theory (Exploring your mind, 2019) shows community links within the Macrosystem. These links give children an understanding of how to regulate themselves and of their interpretations of other influences. These theories make it clear that the school will see benefits to focussing on the concept of attaining better community links.

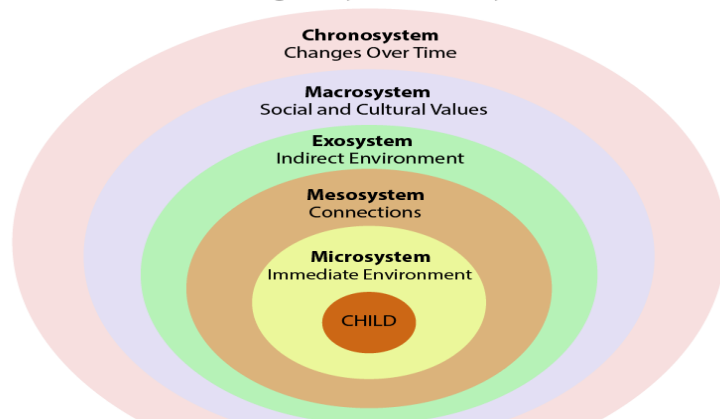
Parental Links to School

Within my placement school, the class dojo system along with end-of-day discussions with parents ensures the link between school and parents is flourishing. The school also hold coffee mornings to give parents an opportunity to make parental connections with one another. However, the school does not currently have a Parent-Teacher Association group. Bronfenbrenner (Exploring your mind, 2019) discusses the Mesosystem, where a child holds great value to adult relationships within this theory. It can be seen as influential to a child's social and emotional development. Sue Roffey (2002) gives the prospect of parents being a resource for learning. The school is currently trying to establish this idea as a possibility.

Inclusion in Primary School

On one bridging day focused on inclusion, it was clear to see that the school holds great priority to being an inclusive environment. This is evident from the high percentage of pupils with ALN. While focusing on a target pupil with ASD tendencies, it became clear to me that the school implements strategies for learning based on individuals needs while considering the impacts on the whole class. For example, using a squared carpet for children who need a set space for learning. Montessori teaching practice (NAMC, 2019) would agree that teachers should find and implement strategies to support the needs of individuals. The Reggio Emilia Approach (Vakil, Freeman, Swim, 2003) explains that an inclusive environment can be positive for both pupils with ALN and their peers.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



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Literacy and homework

Homework and reading programs are strategies that are used within the school. However, when homework is set only a small group within the class will complete the task. Children who do not complete homework are then behind on their learning. Lilian Katz (Education at Illinois, 2011) presents her view that parents and teachers are responsible for provoking children's competent interdependence. Strategies such as homework and home reading will motivate young learners to be interested in future learning. Whalley (2007) researched the involvement of parents within education through set tasks to complete at home. The success of such programs is very reliant on parent's engagement with these tasks. Schools need to ensure children are not be disadvantaged by a lack of parental support..

Poverty and Deprivation in School

The school's high percentage of free school meals reflects the level of poverty and deprivation within the community. An ESTYN report (2014) explains that children affected by deprivation are more likely to be absent from school, have behaviour issues and be excluded. The report also mentions that children from a deprived background can suffer academically due to a lack of learning resources at home. Parents may find it challenging to support their children while being faced with poverty themselves. Lutha and Cicchetti (2000) agree that facing poverty in early childhood without intervention can lead to delays in developmental trajectories. These reports support the school's priority to consider and support pupils social and emotional wellbeing.

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