

The Role of the ALNCo: A Reflective Journal

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INTRODUCTION



"Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation Programme – GOV.WALES." 2017

community in accordance with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (Welsh Government, 2021).

A fundamental component of the Curriculum for Wales is the inclusion principle, which guarantees that every student, regardless of aptitude, background, or need, has the chance to thrive and engage completely in their education. The Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo), whose duties go beyond compliance to include strategic leadership, cooperation, and advocacy, is at the centre of this inclusive vision. The ALNCo is in charge of managing services for students with ALN, creating and evaluating Individual Development Plans (IDPs), and integrating a person-centred, rights-based approach throughout the school

Combining professional debates, important academic viewpoints, and observations from schools, this insightful journal analyses the ALNCo's numerous responsibilities. In addition to administrative accuracy, the position requires a strong dedication to inclusive teaching, family partnerships, and interagency collaboration. Effective ALNCo leadership encourages early diagnosis, ongoing evaluation, and specialised support that addresses each learner's unique requirements, as stated in the ALN Code for Wales (2021).

More than just a legal mandate, inclusive education is a social and moral duty. According to research by Florian and Spratt (2013), inclusion should not be viewed as a stand-alone policy but rather as an integral part of regular instructional procedures. In a similar vein, Shevlin and Rose (2008) stress the significance of leadership in fostering an environment at school where diversity is actively recognised and accepted. In this regard, the ALNCo serves as a driving force for progress by empowering educators, assisting students, and advancing a shared obligation to promote inclusivity.

THE ALNCo's RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRATEGIC ROLE

In order to successfully identify, meet, and evaluate the needs of all students with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), the ALNCo plays a critical strategic role in spearheading inclusive practices throughout a school. The ALN Code for Wales (Welsh Government, 2021) states that the ALNCo is in charge of staff development, provision coordination, and making sure that person-centred implementation of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) is carried out. According to Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), inclusive education necessitates leadership that encourages staff members to collaborate and engage in reflective practice. Because of this,

the ALNCo's mission is both strategic and administrative, enabling the entire school community to provide an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students.

Reflection: During my two-day placement shadowing an ALNCo, I gained valuable insight into the diverse nature of the role. I observed her facilitating a student voice meeting to help create an IDP for a Year 4 pupil with ADHD, ensuring the child was actively involved in their own learning. I also saw her deliver Universal Design for Learning (UDL) training to staff, promoting inclusive strategies across the curriculum. This reflects Florian and Black-Hawkins’ (2011) view that inclusive pedagogy embraces diversity as a natural part of human development and focuses on extending access for all learners.

ESTYN CASE STUDY INSIGHT: PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS.

The report "Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: A Good Practice Report" by Estyn looks at practical methods for helping ALN students in regular classrooms. In order to provide effective support, the paper highlights the significance of early identification and strong leadership. It showcases effective partnerships, such the one that has improved behaviour and social interaction between Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre and nearby conventional schools. Estyn suggests that schools improve the quality of learning and independence-promoting aims in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and that self-evaluation procedures concentrate more on the development of ALN students.

PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

The ALNCo frequently supported classroom teachers by offering advice on successful adaptive teaching techniques, highlighting the difference between individualisation and differentiation. They frequently cited the work of Booth and Ainscow (2002), who contend that inclusive education entails developing procedures and frameworks that are adaptable enough to accommodate the various requirements of all pupils, those with ALN. Booth and Ainscow define inclusion as modifying instructional strategies, materials, and classroom settings to enable all students to participate in the curriculum in a meaningful way.

For a pupil with autism, a Year 6 teacher needed support. The ALNCo suggested the use of sensory breaks, defined routines, and visual schedules. The student felt more comfortable because of these modifications, which decreased anxiety and increased involvement. The methods also made the classroom atmosphere more relaxed and encouraging for every student.

As opposed to focussing just on students' differences, inclusive pedagogy encourages teachers to consider their common educational needs (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). ALNCos are essential in avoiding the need for later, more intense interventions by assisting teachers in applying universal design for learning. For example, when I was at school, I saw how a student with autism was supported by assistive technologies like social stories apps and visual schedules. By improving the student's understanding of classroom procedures and expectations, these resources increased participation and decreased fear. This strategy is in line with the Department for Education's (2015) recommendations, which support the use of digital tools and resources to give students with a range of needs fair access to education.





Reflection: I learnt from the ALNCo that many inclusive strategies are just good teaching techniques that help all students, not just those with additional learning needs. My confidence has increased as a result of this realisation, and I feel better prepared to use these inclusive teaching strategies in my classroom and make sure every student can succeed.

BARRIES AND CHALLENGES

The limited amount of time an ALNCo has to meet the requirements of their position is one of their biggest obstacles. The ALNCo frequently strikes a balance between helping teachers and pupils and handling administrative duties like documentation and reporting (Thomas and Loxley, 2007). Due to time constraints, the ALNCo may not have the time to actively design inclusive practices or offer regular, comprehensive support to pupils with ALN. This restriction may also hinder the ALNCo's ability to collaborate with other staff members or devote enough time to professional development, which would lower their effectiveness.

Another major obstacle for ALNCos is a lack of money and personnel resources. Armstrong (2010) points out that many schools struggle financially, making it difficult for them to give pupils with ALN the tools, assistive technology, or extra teaching help they need. This lack of funding may make it more difficult for the ALNCo to put the best inclusive education practices into practice. Insufficient resources make it difficult to customise interventions to fit each student's needs, which eventually affects the learning outcomes for students with special needs.

The lack of opportunity for professional advancement is a major drawback of the ALNCo position. According to Farrell (2006), many educational psychologists—and therefore, ALNCos—frequently do not receive sufficient continuing education in subjects like current research, changing tactics, or incorporating new technologies.



Reflection: The extent to which the ALNCo had to work with both internal and external entities in order to serve students impressed me. It emphasised how crucial a collaborative approach is to address the various requirements of kids. This experience made me realise that in order to guarantee that all students receive the assistance they require, successful inclusion requires strong advocacy and constant engagement with a variety of stakeholders outside of the classroom.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH

My knowledge of how schools help pupils with additional learning needs has grown as a result of my insightful experience shadowing the ALNCo. I learnt more about the significance of early intervention, the process of determining requirements, and the creation and evaluation of Individual Development Plans (IDPs). As the ALNCo worked closely with teachers, support staff, families, and other experts to ensure a coordinated approach, I witnessed directly how important teamwork is. Additionally, I discovered how varied tactics are used to adapt support in order to foster inclusion in the classroom. I became more aware of the value of accountability and student voice after seeing how decisions are made based on current laws and how pupils progress is tracked. Overall, this experience reinforced my dedication to inclusive, child-centered practice and brought attention to the ALNCo's function as an advocate.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS AND QTS-ALIGNED TARGETS

This experience has been incredibly significant as I near the end of my Initial Teacher Education and get ready to obtain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in Wales. Even at the early stages of my teaching career, it has not only helped me better understand inclusion, but it has also influenced how I hope to promote and lead inclusive practice.



My professional targets:

- Deepen my understanding of current ALN legislation and guidance
- Embed inclusive teaching strategies consistently across all areas of the curriculum
- Establish a strong professional relationship with ALNCo in my future setting
- Use regular reflection and pupil feedback to evaluate and enhance inclusivity



Final reflection: I learnt from shadowing the ALNCo that genuine inclusion entails appreciating each learner's voice, responding purposefully, and creating lessons that embrace diversity. I am committed to establishing a classroom where each child feels seen, encouraged, and equipped to thrive as I embark on my career as an NQT.

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