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ALN – Part 1 Journal

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AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Targets from previous module	How I have worked on these?	An example can be seen on...
Please check your use of Harvard Referencing, e.g. title of book should be placed in italic.	I have studied the harvard referencing guide and followed it in my work.	In my reference list and in my in text citations.
Look for opportunities where you can use the literature you have read and support your assertions. This will ensure your writing is more robust.	I have read a wide range of literature and used it to support my writing.	Throughout my journal. For example Estyn (2023) state...
Ensure your proof-read for clarity of expression.	I have proof-read my work several times.	I have improved the fluency of my writing.

Theoretical Overview

Inclusive practice refers to the attitudes and methods used to ensure that all students can participate in mainstream education. It involves creating an environment where every learner feels respected and valued, with the support needed to grow and reach their full potential (Education Alliance, 2019). The UDL (Universal Design for Learning) promotes flexible learning environments that accommodate an individual's strengths and needs (CAST, 2024).

In Wales, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act (ALNET), (Welsh Government, 2018) marked a transformation from the traditional Special Educational Needs (SEN) framework to a more inclusive approach (see Figure 1). This legislation introduced Individual Development Plans (IDPs) to replace Statements of SEN, emphasizing a learner-centred, holistic, and collaborative model of support (Welsh Government, 2023). The Act extends the age range for support up to 25, reflecting a commitment to lifelong learning and inclusion.



Figure 1: Illustration of ALNET and the ALN code, Welsh Government (2017).

The ALN Code, effective from September 2021, gives detailed guidance on implementing the Act's provisions. It outlines the responsibilities of schools and local authorities in identifying and meeting the needs of learners with ALN, promoting early intervention, and ensuring that learners and their families are actively involved in the decision-making.

The implementation of the ALN reform has faced challenges; Estyn's second thematic report (2024) highlighted that while many schools have embraced person-centred practices and developed IDPs, there remains variability in staff understanding of their roles in supporting ALN learners. Also, the availability of Welsh-medium resources and the impartiality of post-16 advice for learners in special schools are areas that need

further attention. Furthermore, Estyn (2023) state that some schools and local authorities have struggled with the interpretation of legal definitions and the allocation of resources, leading to variability in the quality of provision across Wales.

The Curriculum for Wales (CfW) promotes itself as “A curriculum accessible to all” (Welsh Government, 2022); where all learners are supported to comprehend the four purposes and raise their aspirations. In addition, the rate at which learners progress through the progression steps may vary, and as part of the CfW (2022), practitioners need to plan for different abilities accordingly.

Legislation such as the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2022) protect children and their rights, there are 54 articles and some particularly highlight the importance of inclusivity. For example, all children have the right to an education (Article 28), the right to non-discrimination (Article 2) and the right for a disabled child to live a full life with dignity (Article 23). UNICEF (2017) stress that if students with disabilities are placed in mainstream classes, this does not infer inclusion, appropriate adaptations need to be put in place to make learning more accessible. Furthermore, the right to an inclusive education for all persons with disabilities is supported through Article 24 “Education” of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2024).

In 2022, as part of the Sustainable Learning Communities Program, Ysgol Gymraeg Gwaun y Nant in Barry received a grant in response to a significant increase in the number of pupils showing signs of ALN, especially children with autism. The money was used to create and provide a specialist ALN resource centre in the school, including increasing the Welsh medium provision (Welsh Government, 2024).

Reflections and Practical understanding

There are many ways to implement inclusivity in the classroom. Cwm Glas Primary School in Swansea has adopted a person-centred approach to embrace the ALN reform. Learners with ALN have benefitted from the implementation of provision, which provides support personalised to children in need of more focused interventions. Staff were trained through professional learning focused on the implementation of the ALN Reform in Wales. A key learning element was that ALN responsibility does not lie with specialists alone, but all school staff (Equal Education Partners, 2023). However, this is not the case for all schools where barriers could be a lack of resources, time constraints (such as for staff training), and policy implementation gaps between schools (Aspire 2Be, 2023). Parkland primary school in Swansea uses technology and differentiation to meet the needs of all learners. To enable students to reach their full potential, early intervention is put in place to identify any ALN (Education Wales 2024).

Visuals

The use of visuals is a key method to deliver instruction to learners. For example, visuals can be used to show what time an activity starts or finishes; a symbol may be used to show it is time for talk, pair, share; or a picture of a table might be used to indicate it is time for learners to return to their tables. Visual checklists can also be used, which are helpful to some children with their daily routines. Boards to understand transitions throughout the day, for example first, next, later will help students to structure their day.

From my experience on PTE1, a student in my class diagnosed with autism was very anxious when unsure about what was happening throughout the day. The child could not cope easily with change, for example if there was a supply teacher. When the child's parent dropped the child off in the morning, the teacher would run through what was happening during the day and would also show the child the visual timetables in the classroom for what the daily plan was. This not only put the child at ease but also gave the child's parent reassurance. The visual timetable had words and pictures so that the rest of the class could use it, hence providing universal provision. I noticed that many other children referred to the timetable throughout the day. Knight et al. (2015) recognises that visual timetables offer good practice that is evidenced based when used for children with autism and are useful for all children, not just those with additional needs. Figure 2 illustrates an example of a visual timetable.



Figure 2: Example of a Visual timetable (Council for Disabled Children 2024).

According to the Council for Disabled Children (2024), limitations for the use of visuals include the inability of younger children in Foundation phase to understand the passing of time e.g. if a task is five minutes, or one hour. The Council for Disabled Children (2024) also posit that visual timetables are only useful if used correctly. From a personal reflection, the practitioner needs to make sure that the visual timetable and resources are kept up to date, so children are not misled or end up being confused about their upcoming day, which could result in further anxiety.

Yoga, mindfulness and relaxation

The mental and emotional well-being of children in the classroom affects the quality of children's learning. According to Welsh Government (2019), for children to engage meaningfully in their education, they need to experience emotional, psychological and social well-being.



Figure 3 Children practicing yoga (Clare, 2021)

Practicing yoga with children (see Figure 3) is likely to increase their well-being and promote positive behaviour (Khunti et al., 2022), helping children to calm both their bodies and minds. According to Khalsa and Butzer's (2016) review, the introduction of yoga in the classroom is enjoyable and cost-effective. Wolff and Stapp (2019) found that the breathing techniques learned whilst practising yoga helped to improve children's attention and their ability to self-regulate. A study by Butzer et al. (2014) illustrated that a yoga intervention for 7–9-year-old children over a 10-week period showed numerous benefits including better social interaction, stress coping, improved mood and confidence.

If the practitioner is not confident with practicing yoga with a class, then mindfulness or relaxation can offer similar benefits. Tatter (2019) suggests that through learning mindfulness techniques to calm the body and mind, it can help to lessen the stress response, enabling pupils to remain engaged and reduce behaviour issues.

Mindfulness, yoga and relaxation will not only benefit children struggling with poor mental health but will enable all learners to increase their sense of well-being and improve their emotional and mental health; thus, increasing their learning potential (Clare, 2021).

Summary of findings and future professional development

In line with Welsh Government (2019) an effective practitioner will consider the physical, social and emotional aspects of learning, to achieve actualisation of the four purposes. In my future professional practice, to achieve an inclusive classroom, I will continue to develop my practice according to the QTS standards in particular Pedagogy Refining: Differentiation - to provide "a curriculum available to all" (Welsh Government, 2022). This could be through adapting the learning activity or the learning environment

and providing suitable resources and visuals. To create high-quality learning experiences, I will consider the children's well-being at the forefront of my future practice in accordance with the QTS standard Pedagogy Influencing: Learning outcomes and well-being - to make sure that learners have the most positive school experience where they feel valued and belong.

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