

Section 1

Scenario –

A single parent has overcome their addictions and has been assessed as being able to care for their child on their own. You notice he stands alone of the playground at home time and other (female) parents look at him but do not invite him to join their talks. He is nervous around teachers and only stays for a short while to talk if needed. Son (Ashley) is doing well but does not have many friends outside of school.

What is inclusive leadership? –

According to Teach Early Years (no date) the definition of inclusion differs with each person, however inclusion within early years setting should mean a sense of belonging, from children to their parents or carers, to staff and multiagency who may be connected to the setting. Early years alliance (2019) states that providing an inclusive practise with equal opportunities to all children during childhood is influential for the child's learning and growing, having an inclusive leader as a practise will enable children to become confident and aspire them through their life. This is also in line with the Curriculum for Wales – Areas of Learning. To ensure settings are being inclusive the setting must be proactive at addressing barriers to inclusion such as stereotyping, unconscious bias and negativity (Early years alliance, 2019). Similarly Bortini *et al* (2016 p.5) explains that inclusive leadership is a leadership style that values variety, encourages and embraces everyone's unique contributions, and promotes full participation in decision-making and reality-shaping processes. Leaders that are inclusive have the fortitude to take deliberate actions to break down the hurdles that those who are on the verge of being excluded from society face. By focusing on diverse groups and individuals, inclusive leadership brings a new dimension to leadership ideals. Individuals at danger of exclusion are addressed by examining their needs, desires, and potential, and encouraging them to fully participate in society.

Inclusive to all parents and carers -

According to long ford childcare (2017) providing strong link with parents will improve links towards inclusion within the setting. Ashley's dad Curtis has overcome an addiction to drugs and alcohol and now has been awarded full custody of Ashley, Curtis is very anxious at the school drop off and collection which has been noticed by a school member of staff. Curtis stands alone and doesn't engage in conversation with other parents, who are mainly mothers at the school. Ashley performs well academically in school however he is quite shy and does not have many friends at the setting resulting in Ashley not being invited to parties or 'play dates' that are organised by other parents. Following the situation the practitioner used their inclusive leadership skills to try and Ashley and Curtis feel a sense of belonging at the school which will result in a positive impact on their wellbeing also ensuring a respectful and welcoming environment for all (Inclusive schools, 2022).

The first step for the setting was to invite Curtis into the school and have a meeting with our staff members, the meeting would give the opportunity to both staff and Curtis to discuss how they can work together in partnership to ensure both Curtis and his son Ashley felt comfortable at the settings. Early Years Careers (2022)

explain how parent to teacher partnership is the key to a successful experience at an early years setting along with a positive development. When a child sees his/her care givers feel comfortable around the staff at the setting it is more likely the child will feel safer and secure within the setting (Early Years Careers, 2016). Estyn (2020) explain how partnerships between the care givers and the setting is vital to the setting's ethos, practitioners who understand that achieve the best possible learning outcome for the child. However, there are barriers when trying to build a parent to carer partnership such as, time, religion or language barriers and practitioners lacking in confidence. (Early Years Careers, 2016). LINC (2020) acknowledges that a strong connection with parents will provide a vital connection between school life and home life, by creating a strong bond between both parties will enable the child's parents to feel valued and recognised by the setting along with providing the opportunity for the parent to be involved in the child's education. To ensure inclusiveness to all children, early year settings must provide support for every child regardless of ethnic background, culture, gender, socio-economic background, or disability. This should be carried out by ensuring all children and their families are treated the same with equal amount of respect (Pacey, 2022).

During the meeting, Ashley was also invited to join his dad and the settings staff to be given the opportunity to use his voice which is in accordance with the UNCRC (no date) article 12 and 13 which states every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them while having the right to their own voice to be listened to. Department for Education (2012) explains how listening to the child's perspectives will also improve the quality of the provision provided within the early years setting. However, a barrier to providing this opportunity would be if the child has a speech impediment or lack of understanding due to a learning difficulty or a language barrier (BBC, 2022). According to Early Years Careers (2017) it will be imperative that practitioners are not stereo typical or judgemental as sometimes this is considered a barrier when allowing the child the right to his or her voice to be heard. According to the NSPCC (2021) providing the child with the opportunity to their own voice will promote the child's overall wellbeing, promoting the mental health of a child will ensure they have positive outcomes into adulthood (Public Health England, 2021 cited in NSPCC, 2021). It is everyone who works with the child responsibility to promote their wellbeing, recognise concerns and to keep the child safe including multi agency working with the child, every Child Matters (2008) state that multi-agency partnerships is an essential link between education and agencies to promote educational achievement. The Government encourage settings to collaborate with one another to achieve the five every child matters outcomes which include maintaining the child's health and well-being.

During the meeting it was suggested by the practitioner that Curtis may like to attend a father's group which involves some fathers from the setting who have created a group for dads to meet up, chat and build friendships. According to Healthy Children (2022) parents who create bonds and friendships will benefit the children and adults' mental health and wellbeing also providing out of school experiences and opportunities between the children will provide positive outcomes and educational goals. The setting plays an important part in supporting their parents, carers, and children throughout a variety of inclusive approaches, the setting works together with

the community providing a better sense of togetherness and enables parents, carers, and children to contribute to values and positive outcomes of the setting (school box, 2022). The setting offers an open-door policy which promotes an effective partnership with parents and carers, by doing this creates the opportunity for improved communication pathways between the setting and care givers, by providing the open-door policy most schools state that it had a positive impact on the children's education as any intervention issues were addressed and early intervention could take place accordingly (Department for Education, 2017). However, the challenges identified with settings who hold an open-door policy was the engagement of families especially in larger mainstream settings showed weaker bonds between the setting and families and also another barrier identified was parent's views on the settings were sometimes negative due to the parents own experience at the setting or the child's behaviour (Department for Education, 2017).

Section 2

According to Early Years Careers (2017) any educational setting or organisation must have policies and procedures in place for children under the age of six. They serve as the foundation for all of the practise that takes place in the setting, as well as ensuring that all of the appropriate regulations are followed. Within the setting it is vital that the leader and practitioners familiarise themselves with policies, procedures, and the curriculum regular to ensure that inclusion is evident at all times throughout the setting between the children, staff, and care giver (Longford County childcare committee, 2017). The New Welsh Curriculum four purposes is based within six areas of learning and experiences encouraging each setting to develop and create its own curriculum which is said by The Welsh Government (2020) to enable their learners to develop towards the four purposes of the curriculum. Welsh Government (2015) states that rather of classifying pupils by age, depicts how the curriculum will assist individuals in progressing through their educational journey. The progression phases that will take the place of standardised age-stage assessments will help to enable inclusive leadership because progression steps are set to the best possible outcome of each child and their individual needs (Welsh Government, 2015). However, there is challenges to consider with the new curriculum such as, knowledge, limited funding, training, and understanding of each professional (Welsh Government, 2015). Another barrier to the reform of the new curriculum for Wales is that settings should engage with pupils, parents, and local communities to define their own curriculum however, no guidance has yet been offered (OECD, 2020b). According to Levin (1999) (cited in Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay, 2013 p.2) common elements of policy include belongingness to an individual or organisation, commitment, status, and specificity. Ferdman (2021 p.9) explains that systems of quality are measured on a multi-level analytic framework such as micro and macro levels, an example of a micro policy would be workplace policies whereas macro policies would include legislation and government policies. Inclusive education differs from 'special education' by emphasizing specialized practices, which tend to marginalize certain groups of learners. In contrast, inclusive education is concerned with the issue of rights and the recognition of responsibility for all pupils within a school community (Nilholm, 2021, cited in Knight *et al*, 2022). Due to the

disproportionate representation of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds and disadvantaged groups in segregated education, it is evident that schools can exacerbate disadvantage and reproduce or reinforce social inequalities (Francis et al., 2017, cited in Knight *et al.*, 2022). In other words, inclusive education is viewed as a system of education that benefits individuals as well as society as a whole (Arduin, 2015, cited in Knight *et al.*, 2022). The education system in Wales, one of the four nations of the UK, is undergoing major reform. There is a renewed focus on inclusive education in the curriculum, as well as in the new system for identifying additional learning needs (ALN). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are critical to creating inclusive learning environments, according to research. It is based on a survey of 253 teachers in Wales (n = 253) exploring their perceptions of inclusive education. In an analysis of open-text responses, teachers stated that while they were able to articulate the 'ideal' of inclusion, these positive ideals were often caveated by both implicit othering of learners with ALN and explicit limitations of behaviour, training, and finances as previously stated above (Knight, *et al.* 2022). The Welsh education system is characterized by the diversity of its learner population, which includes diverse socio-economic status, languages, cultures, races, religions, and additional learning needs (OECD, 2014 cited in Knight, *et al.* 2022). In Wales, there is a high proportion of low performers (OECD, 2017 cited in Knight, *et al.* 2022) as well as a persistent link between socio-economic disadvantage and educational attainment (Power et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2013 cited in Knight *et al.* 2022). The new Curriculum for Wales places emphasis on raising the aspirations for learners, the guidance has been developed to supposedly support schools to design a curriculum that promotes inclusivity and specific needs of each learner (Crick & Golding 2020 cited in Knight, *et al.* 2022). Furthermore, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) provides a legislative framework that aims to 'deliver a fully inclusive education system for learners in Wales' (Welsh Government, 2018 cited in Knight, *et al.* 2022). Yet, despite the importance of teachers' attitudes and perceived efficacy to implement inclusive education, and in the context of major system-level reform, no research to date has investigated teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in Wales. Therefore, the proposed research aims to answer the following questions: How do teachers in Wales perceive and understand inclusive education?

Section 3

Inclusive leadership is an essential part of early years provision, all settings should create an inclusive approach to both children and care givers to ensure the families at the setting feel secure, comfortable and a sense of belonging (Welsh Government, no date). Being an inclusive leader should involve the practitioner to be compassionate, empathetic, and approachable to all (UNESCO, 2018). In the early years the practitioner should be a good listener and be open minded to all situations that may come their way, enabling them to act accordingly to any situations that may arise and offer a positive strategy to improve the wellbeing of the child and family affected (Department of Education, 2016). At early years settings there will be families from all different cultures and backgrounds, to ensure inclusivity is offered to all families, the leader must have a knowledge and understanding of each individual to support their needs and wants, to enhance the knowledge of individuals the practitioner should make time to educate their selves by doing this will improve the leadership quality of the setting (Schuelka, M. 2018) (cited in Gov, 2018). Every practitioner has their own idea on what the term 'inclusive' means, at its broadest inclusion means ensuring everybody has a sense of belonging, from parents to children and staff however due to the broad term of inclusion it sometimes has a consequence and be taken in a different form in different settings (Teach early years, no date). Further, Inclusion is often taken and applied differently with every situation, in some cases inclusiveness is ensuring each child is given the same opportunity regardless of their educational needs, the importance of inclusive practices and equality of opportunity and access to education provision is a matter of in depth consistent discussions between professionals, policy documents on the early years provision for each child and acknowledging the important of inclusion for everybody involved (Teach early years, no date). Implementing inclusive education involves school and classroom practices such as school reviews and plans along with training and supporting all teachers in inclusive practices not just specialised ones and supporting school leadership to enact an inclusive vision for schools. In order to achieve national level implementation, enabling policies must clearly articulate and support inclusive education, having strong systems for data collection and management which offers flexibility in curriculum and coordinating with other aspects of society where inclusive education fits in (Schuelka, M. 2018) (cited in Gov, 2018). According to Collier (2019) inclusion begins with assuring parents that their children will be accepted and that they can succeed in school. While there is not necessarily any inclusive practise legislation, school personnel should ensure that every child is equally treated. Effective communication ensures inclusion is offered to parents and care givers, positive parent-child relationships require effective communication. Active listening and clear, courteous speaking are essential components of effective communication. It is beneficial to children's well-being and development when professionals and parents share their expertise and experience (Raising children, 2022).

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