



CASE STUDY REPORT

IDP Autism Spectrum: Impact on staff, parent/carers, pupil confidence and improved learning outcomes

Stuart Norman

This study was originally published in 2010 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to improve communication-friendly school practices and increase staff confidence in catering for communication needs of pupils with autism spectrum and related difficulties.

Aims: The main aim of this development work was to build staff confidence and skills in order to provide more accessible and successful learning opportunities for pupils with communication needs.

Methods: The participants included headteachers, senior leadership teams, teachers, teaching assistants, local authority staff, SEN staff, and senior management. The methods used included training for all staff in Primary Talk accreditation (I CAN) and Somerset Total Communication, 6 sessions of thirty minutes for teaching assistants, and a whole day training for practical approaches and developing resources.

Findings: The main findings are that the CPD approaches used have had a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organisation and leadership. This was achieved through allocated time for training sessions, use of the IDP Autism Spectrum resource materials, and follow-up training.

Implications: The findings suggest that allocating time for training and reflection, as well as providing resources, can lead to increased confidence and understanding of autism spectrum needs, resulting in improved learning outcomes for pupils.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Junior education; Inclusion

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

Part of the school's commitment to continuously developing as a communication-friendly school.

The school includes a fully integrated Language Resource Base, which presents challenges for mainstream staff in catering for communication needs at wave 1. The school's commitment has included recent training for all staff in Primary Talk accreditation (I CAN) and Somerset Total Communication.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Headteacher
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- Teacher

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- All aspects
- All subjects
- Inclusion

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

Through the building of staff confidence and skills, pupils will benefit from more accessible, and therefore successful, learning opportunities

Through the teaching staff undergoing the IDP training, and therefore being empowered to deliver more accessible lessons for children on the autism spectrum and others with and related difficulties.

What were your success criteria?

- Improvement shown through the pre and post evaluation checklist
- Increase in parent carer/pupil confidence

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Observation outcomes
- Pupil consultation data

Describe the CPD approaches you used

All teachers received training on an in-service day using the IDP ASD materials. The teaching assistants (TAs) received separate 6 sessions of thirty minutes with time allowed for individual reflection and exploration of the IDP materials.

After reviewing IDP materials, staff were familiarised with an overview of the whole pack, but focus was given to the areas which indicated least confidence on the pre-evaluation responses. We looked at all 8 units but skimmed over areas that the staff were obviously aware of, through discussion or pre-training checklist. For instance the high incidence of bullying and ASD takes up quite a deal of space in unit 2, but this was familiar territory through other training and did not need dwelling on. More time was given over to sensory issues for instance as this was 'new information' for some staff.

Active learning opportunities were provided while the staff were led through the IDP and were able to reflect

and discuss the materials in small groups, and make reference to their own experience and situation.

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

Previous training for all staff in Primary Talk accreditation (I CAN) and Somerset Total Communication.

Lead teacher has specialist qualifications and knowledge in communication and autism spectrum needs.

Follow up whole day training in practical approaches and in developing resources has been made available through Somerset ASD advisory teacher and specialist Educational Psychologist - this will focus on issues raised by units 6 and 7 of the IDP (Autism Spectrum) (September 2010)

Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff
- SEN staff
- Senior management

How were you supported?

SMT team agreed to support IDP training and include it in the school development plan.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

My lesson observations have shown classrooms to be very communication friendly, and staff to be aware of the pupil's needs whatever level of severity. Children with communication needs are fully engaged in classroom activities with good levels of independence.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

The school has always had a "can do" approach and commitment to continuing professional development with particular reference to children's additional needs

The tradition of including children on the roll of the language resource base into mainstream classes, and the teacher responsibility for SEN in the classroom (including planning, writing and reviewing IEPs and provision) has been established for over a decade at the school.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Teaching Assistant comments on post-evaluation forms:

"The DVD was good, especially the sound bites from individuals who live with autism. I feel my confidence with autism has increased, although this is in terms of knowledge rather than practical experience, which will happen when I am supporting a child with autism in the future."

"The school and staff share information between themselves to improve all parts of their school life."

"The extra in-house training has given me more confidence in my knowledge of autistic spectrum issues"

Parental contribution on Annual Review form for ASD pupil (June 2010):

As with last year, Mrs C was very pleased with M's current placement and was pleased with how quickly he had adapted to the changes and events in the year. She said that, "...he is so much more confident now - and I can't thank you enough."

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

See below for evidence for a sample pupil. Pupil X is recently diagnosed with co-occurring autism spectrum and Speech & Language Disorder. The Easter 2010 IEP clearly shows the progress achieved in the targeted areas in less than a year, in the time of the IDP training. Also included are the assessments over time for the same child, including this year's NC test results.

Parental comments provide evidence of the impact on their child's progress (below)

What has been the impact on teaching?

The post training data for Teachers and TAs shows that confidence levels are high (see below)

Evidence of greater independence of staff (both teachers and TAs) in creating resources and a classroom environment which make teaching and learning more accessible to children on the autism spectrum and with communication difficulties. There is observable evidence of continued creativity in overcoming barriers for children with social communication difficulties, in terms of tailor-made resources, visual aids, teaching and learning approaches - which used to be suggested by myself, but are now coming from the teachers and TAs themselves. This seems to indicate greater understanding and confidence on the part of non-specialist teaching staff.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

In training discussions it was apparent the staff developed greater empathy with the needs and difficulties of pupils on the autism spectrum, particularly through the personal and parental videos. This was particularly the case for unit 5 (the sensory aspects of ASD) and there was increased empathy with these issues.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Teachers' evaluations of confidence (above) Observations (below)

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

It has reinforced the continuing commitment to ensuring that the school maintains its high standards of inclusion, and will always form a priority for induction of new staff.

The IDP Autism Spectrum DVD will itself form a crucial part of the induction package for new staff.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

School Improvement Plan

Induction checklist for new staff

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Time allocated to the training sessions on the in-service day, and the designated TA training time, which enabled staff to discuss and explore the materials and relate to their own experiences - and plan future provision.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

The IDP Autism Spectrum resource materials.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

The allocated time for teachers was presented in one half day session, covering all units.

It was valuable to have the six dedicated sessions for TA training built into their working week. In this case we explored the first five units in some depth, and gave a briefer overview to units 6, 7 and 8. This was with the knowledge that we would follow up the training with another whole day in looking at individual needs, practical approaches and in developing resources for identified pupils in the school. This follow-up training has been made available through a Somerset Autism Spectrum advisory teacher and specialist Educational Psychologist - this will focus particularly on issues raised by units 6 and 7 of the IDP Autism Spectrum.

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- Cover the units in the sequence presented on the disk (later units refer back to earlier sessions)
- Ensure enough time is allocated for training purposes, with built in opportunities for reflection, exploration, discussion and other active learning relating the materials to their own experience.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

To elicit views of parents to maintain the successful inclusion of ASD children into mainstream schools

To extend transition arrangements to cover the whole of year 7, as necessary

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- 1. Visual cue cards - classroom use
- 2. Visual cue card - non-structured times
- 3. Evening routine
- 4. Morning routine
- 5. Organisation between school and home
- 6. Prompt card (interests)
- 7. Workstation
- 8. Workstation
- 9. Workstation
- Pupil X Summer 09 targets and review
- Pupil X Easter 2010 targets and review

- Pupil X assessments over time
- Evidence of impact from parents
- Post training evaluation of confidence data
- First Inclusive School observation
- Second Inclusive School observation
- Third Inclusive School observation
- School Improvement Plan (SEN)

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This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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