



CASE STUDY REPORT

Inclusion Development Programme (Autism Spectrum): Making practice more inclusive

Heidi Reitze

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 implement a teaching and learning policy to ensure all children, including those on the autism spectrum, could access the curriculum and be successful in their learning.

Aims: The main aim was to ensure that all children, including those on the autism spectrum, could access the curriculum independently and successfully transition between year groups.

Methods: The participants included middle leaders, senior leadership team, school improvement partner, subject leaders, teachers, local authority staff, and the focus pupil's parents. The methods used included training sessions, self evaluations, learning walks/study visits, observations, periodic teacher assessments, and CPD materials/research/expertise.

Findings: The main findings are that the implementation of the school's teaching and learning policy, combined with the use of the IDP Autism Spectrum DVD, has resulted in improved learning outcomes for all pupils, increased confidence in teaching staff, and a more inclusive environment for pupils on the autism spectrum.

Implications: The findings suggest that implementing the IDP Autism Spectrum DVD and the school's teaching and learning policy can have a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership. It can help staff become more confident in understanding and meeting the needs of children on the autism spectrum.

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

Keywords: Infant education

Introduction

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

We had a child with a statement for special educational needs in Year 1 who was moving up into Year 2. At this time the Year 2 children accessed their learning in a completely different learning style, requiring them to learn around all teacher-led activities or instructions. The current year group, including the child on the autism spectrum, were used to learning in an independent style which required all areas of learning to be accessible to the children. As a school we needed to implement the school's teaching and learning policy recently devised by all staff to take on board this style of learning. Last school year Staff devised a Teaching and Learning Policy over a series of staff training and development sessions. All staff agreed that this was 'Springhead School at its most inclusive'. They understood that the implementation of the policy would ensure that all the children would maintain the access to the curriculum and be successful if this was fully embedded within the school. Having successfully implemented this policy into Lower Key Stage 1, following the school development plan 2008-2009 and the needs of our child on the autism spectrum, these changes needed to be made in Upper Key Stage 1, extending extend staff's knowledge of Autism Spectrum to enable successful transition from Year 1 to Year 2 for the focus pupil.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Middle leader
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Subject leader
- Teacher

Description

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

- All aspects
- All subjects

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

Pupils will be able to access the environment independently to undertake their learning without the needs for adult support. They will be able to select from a range of resources independently to support their learning. Pupils will be able to transfer across year groups without any lost learning time while they settle and adjust to their new class. Pupil on the autism spectrum will be included fully into the year 2 curriculum.

What were your success criteria?

- Pupils using the classroom independently including the statemented child.
- Classrooms in Year 2 fully established for all areas of learning to be independent.
- Staff more confident on Autism Spectrum issues.
- Planning and environment to be based around the teaching and learning policy.

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

- Learning walks / study visits
- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment

- Pupils' work

Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff

How were you supported?

The local authority put on a training session explaining how to use the IDP DVD to support the development of training staff in awareness of children on the autism spectrum. The self evaluations were explained and how to use the DVD exactly to support staff's lack of understanding. It really supported the staff's understandings and discussions. They have also been available to phone and ring at any opportunity we need help in using the IDP DVD.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

The learning outcomes have improved due to increased participation of all 90 pupils in the year group not just the focus pupil on the autism spectrum. The pupil is fully engaged in the whole curriculum and for the whole duration of the day. The pupil can access the learning in the same way as his peers and is fully inclusive in all lessons. His self-esteem has risen dramatically and he has developed much more secure and firm friendships. He is able to take direction from the class teacher and work independently without support for periods of time.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

The focus pupil's parents commented "Different room/environment" when asked about their main worries about the transition into another year group. By ensuring that all Year 2 classrooms have an accessible environment and timetable, children will be able to continue their learning in the way in which they have previously in Year 1. Even parents, (as focus pupil's parents suggest), were feeling that the way in which their child learns changes in Year 2 and they had limited access to the way and style they learnt in before. As a school we want all classrooms to be inclusive for the above reasons but also to maintain the children's perceptions in the way in which they learn and have been taught to learn so far. This learning doesn't stop as they move year groups unless the environment doesn't allow them too. Our Teaching and Learning policy devised by all staff has now allowed all staff to understand and agree this. Staff understanding of what and why they are making changes using the IDP Autism Spectrum DVD has impacted on the success of the environment which has impacted on the overall learning that has gone on.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

"I didn't realise he could do all that on his own." (Class teacher)"I like my new classroom I do, shall I show you round everywhere?" (Focus pupil)"I knew who he was around school, I didn't realise how difficult it was for him all the time." (Class teacher)"All the children are learning and interested in lessons now." (Class teacher)

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Learning walks / study visits
- Observation outcomes

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

The focus pupil has been observed fully integrated into the system and is actively taking part in all lessons. He can now undertake activities independently and this has allowed him to make progress in areas of learning shown in his pupil tracking data. He has made at least a whole level progression in all subject areas. He has particularly made progress in his dispositions and attitudes as he is now able to motivate himself and push himself in his own targets. The environment is a safe and secure place which is fully accessible to him. The evidence for this is clear during learning walks and observations of lessons in Year 2. All other children in Year 2 have met their targets and are all accessing the curriculum in each year group successfully. Children were settled and learning quickly into the autumn term following transition, continuing with a timetable they are familiar with.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teaching has changed significantly with the three Year 2 staff. They now plan for independent learning time and teach groups and activities not necessarily at tables but in the areas of the newly designed classrooms. Learning takes into account opportunities for the pupils to be independent wherever possible and to allow children space and time to evaluate their thinking and learning in the environment. Assessment of how the environment can be updated and used to support learning has changed the nature of the discussion of assessments and future planning. More time is spent now by staff updating and enhancing their learning environment throughout the day.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

"I now know that ASD children all access learning in different ways and how they think about activities differently."- Class teacher
"All the children are more engaged"- Class teacher.
"Every child is on task when I come in the room." Head teacher
"Children are more independent and can do more without me having to be near them."- Class teacher.
"I understand more now how ASD children struggle with making friends, they need time in the environment to find out what makes them feel comfortable in how they learn."- Visiting teacher.
"I mean what we do supports this"- class teacher
"I didn't realise that there were so many misconceptions about ASD."- Class teacher

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Staff are more confident in planning, assessing and evaluating the children's learning according to all areas of learning. More time is now included for children to access teaching in a variety of learning styles and therefore teaching is reaching more children. Staff are more confident in using and applying the teaching and learning policy and are more confident in addressing children on the autism spectrum in their lessons. Staff are identifying in their planning opportunities for all styles of learners which they now realise is inclusive to the nature of learning for all children on the autism spectrum.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

The impact on school has been the realisation of raising staff competences in autism spectrum using the IDP has impacted on the quality of planning teaching and learning environments. The key is to raise staff's competences and awareness. It has confirmed staff's agreement of the whole school teaching and learning policy and taken it

to the next level in ensuring they are clear on their reasons for the policy. The IDP has raised school staff's competency to speak to other members of staff about why they teach in the way they do and to approach situations differently than they would before. It has helped staff realise the impact of the IDP strategies not only on children diagnosed as on the autism spectrum but those not. An evaluation of their knowledge showed increased competency from staff. School are now considering implementing the IDP DVD to the rest of the school to enhance the practice of the school's teaching and learning policy that is already implemented.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

School leadership has now realised the importance of embedding the new teaching and learning policy for new staff and training in the autumn term 2010 is planned for this. Key stage meetings will continue to develop the whole school staff in their competences of the IDP Autism Spectrum DVD and staff will undertake a self analysis of the IDP in the autumn term. Training will take place according to their exact concerns using the units on the IDP. This may be different needs for staff across the two Key Stages Foundation Stage and Key Stage One. School is now running as a whole with the teaching and learning policy running across both Key stages. The evaluation of effectiveness needs to continue and the SLT team will now include the use of the environment within lesson observations to maintain standards.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The crucial thing was the IDP Autism Spectrum DVD which allowed the staff to fully understand the reasoning behind the implementation on the whole school teaching and learning policy. It also raised staff's awareness and understanding of autism and therefore raised their confidence in understanding their ability to meet the needs of children on the autism spectrum. It was specific and precise in supporting staff and easy to use.

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

The key resource was the whole school teaching and learning policy devised by whole school staff, the IDP Autism Spectrum DVD, release time for the Deputy Head to attend meetings, model and train staff. Time allocated to meetings and observations time to look at impact and to study planning.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

The mentoring sessions for staff rearranging their classrooms were useful as it allowed time for staff to make the changes with support. Modelling learning was also particularly useful to allow observations from the staff. The IDP DVD was invaluable in supporting the understanding of the importance of implementing the schools teaching and learning policy and specifically identified staff areas for development. It was easily used in staff meetings and supported the development of staff competences in autism.

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

It would be more beneficial to start with the IDP autism spectrum DVD before trying to change and rearrange the classrooms and planning to fit the school's teaching and learning policy. It would deepen staff's knowledge of autism spectrum quicker and deepen their understanding behind the changes made. Staff would also have benefited from observing good practice in Year 1 before starting to implement the changes in their year group. A whole school approach to the IDP autism spectrum DVD would also be a better starting point as then the three Year 2 staff involved would feel that it was a whole school approach to the IDP training rather than just their year group.

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

Training for the whole school staff in IDP autism spectrum DVD following a whole school self analysis of the IDP. This will raise competencies across the whole school in dealing with children on the autism spectrum. Staff need to observe good practice within the school of classes successfully implementing the schools teaching and learning policy. A SLT approach to changing the performance management observation sheets to include the changes made to support children on the autism spectrum. Continue with further development in the SLT to develop the points on the teaching and learning policy to aid transition across year groups.

About Camtree

Camtree: the Cambridge Teacher Research Exchange is a global platform for close-to-practice research in education. Based at Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, Camtree draws on high-quality research from around the world to support educators to reflect on their practice and carry out inquiries to improve learning in their own classrooms and organisations. You can find out more about Camtree and its digital library at www.camtree.org.

About 'What Works Well'

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. Most 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. This report was awaiting final approval when the National Strategies site was archived.

Licence

This edited version of this case study is published by Camtree as a derivative work of the original under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Licence (CC-BY-NC 4.0). The structured abstract that accompanies it was generated by Camtree in 2023 using the OpenAI GPT-3.5-Turbo Large Language Model.