

CASE STUDY REPORT

Devon Inclusion Award (Autism Spectrum) and IDP training at Ratcliffe Special School

Bryan Webster

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 develop understanding of Autism and implement consistent strategies to better support pupils with Autism in the school.

Aims: The main aim was to increase understanding of Autism and develop strategies to better support pupils with Autism in the school.

Methods: The participants included support staff, headteachers, middle leaders, National Strategies consultants, Senior Leadership Teams, SIPs, subject leaders, teachers, and pupils with Autism. The methods used included initial training day with County Autism Team and SEN advisers, materials to support delivery of the IDP, follow up meetings, whole school audit, staff self-assessments, discussions, and an Autism Action Plan.

Findings: The main findings are that Ratcliffe School has achieved the highest level of the Devon Inclusion Award (Autism) and that staff have increased their understanding and confidence in supporting pupils with Autism. This has led to an overall increase in pupil progress.

Implications: The findings suggest that providing staff with training and resources to support pupils with Autism can lead to increased confidence, understanding, and progress in academic and social development. This can be achieved through whole school involvement and the use of materials such as the Inclusion Development Programme.

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

Keywords: Special education; Behaviour and attendance; Personal, social and emotional development

Introduction

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

Invited to join a pilot of Devon's Inclusion Award - Autism Spectrum. The Award was achieved through following a pilot programme organised by Devon County Autism (CAT) and Special Needs (SEN) Teams. A breakdown of the structure of the award and related documents are contained as attachments and the criteria for securing the Award at the three different levels are also shown in an attachment.

Supporting pupils with Autism had been identified by the school as a focus in this year's school development plan.

Support given by the CAT and SEN advisers in identifying areas for development, using the IDP AS (Inclusion Development Programme, Autism Spectrum) and developing an action plan.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Support staff
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- 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
- Behaviour and attendance
- Personal, social and emotional development

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

Ratcliffe School is a part residential, part day provision for pupils aged 8 to 17 with challenging behaviour. Designated as an SEBD School there is now a majority of pupils diagnosed with Autism. The specialist core of staff trained to support pupils with Autism, based in an area adjacent to the main school buildings, have traditionally undertaken support roles in the main school as more pupils with Autism access curriculum areas such as Art, Science, Design and Technology, Food technology and vocational subjects that demand specialised environments. With the significant increase in the number of pupils with Autism spreading throughout the school it is essential that the whole school should develop its understanding of Autism and implement consistent strategies, interventions and working practice to better support pupils.

- The two major aims of the IDP training and subsequent initiatives were to support the very individual needs of each pupil with Autism, and to develop whole school working practices that help alleviate pupil's anxieties, (caused by sound, light, voice, lack of understanding, change, structure etc) and hence allow pupils to focus on their academic and social learning and development.
- support the very individual needs of each pupil with Autism, and
- to develop whole school working practices that help alleviate pupil's anxieties, (caused by sound,

light, voice, lack of understanding, change, structure etc) and hence allow pupils to focus on their academic and social learning and development.

- Increase whole school understanding of Autism and how to support pupils with Autism.
- To identify areas of practice for development and initiate staff training, at quality-first level.

What were your success criteria?

The success criteria of our project mirrored the success criteria of the Autism Spectrum Award (which is at three levels - a copy of the Award standards are in the introduction page)

- Pupils with Autism have their needs met
- Pupils with Autism make very good progress in line with peers where appropriate (above in some areas)
- Pupils with Autism feel safe, attend well and enjoy school
- Parents demonstrate confidence with the school's provision for pupils with Autism
- Staff who work with pupils with Autism have completed wave 1 training, e.g. Inclusion Development Programme, and demonstrate confidence in meeting their needs; identified teaching assistants/teachers have completed further training and are a source of knowledge and support to other staff in the school
- School makes good use of appropriate external agencies
- School demonstrates inclusiveness and equality of opportunity
- School prepares student well for their future

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

- Logs or interviews
- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupils' work

Describe the CPD approaches you used

During the course of 2008-2009 many meetings occurred between Senior Management, core Autism specialist staff in school, SEN advisors, parents, external agencies and pupils to determine best ways to support different pupils with Autism at Ratcliffe. The overall feeling from many of these meetings was that the school was shifting from a largely SEBD school to a more specialised school for pupils with Autism.

This consequently led to Senior Management and Governors deciding that further training for Autism for the whole school should be a major part of the school's overall training and development strategy, particularly as a priority to help achieve improvement in all of the five areas of Every Child Matters.

The launch of the Inclusion Development Programme (Supporting Pupils on the Autism Spectrum) coincided with the school's development strategy and following the initial IDP introduction day, it was decided that we pursue the IDP as one of the selected pilot schools in Devon.

The initial training day provided the materials and knowledge to implement the IDP in school and several follow up meetings were held so that the selected pilot schools and SEN advisors were able to exchange information and ideas.

A whole school Autism-specific audit was completed to identify existing strengths and areas for development.

The training itself and logistics of delivery were discussed and planned and dates set for whole school training.

The small core of Autism specialist staff completed the IDP DVD training first, discussed the programme and prepared to support delivery to the sixty plus staff on the training day, which composed of:

- Pre and post training self-assessments were completed by each member of staff.
- Staff undertook the ICT based training individually, completing the programme's Reflection Diary and tasks during the course of the day.
- Following this staff were asked to identify their perceptions of strengths and areas for developments within the school.
- Staff were then asked to discuss their views and draw up actions and initiatives that could be used to support pupils with Autism in our school.

The ideas were recorded and in conjunction with the Reflections Diaries, Autism Audit (checklist) and other input from specialists, an Autism Action Plan was created.

Further specific Autism training has been identified as a need, with some already delivered in-house by specialist staff and other training being organised as part of the school's CPD policy

Who provided you with support?

- Other

How were you supported?

- Initial training day with County Autism Team and SEN advisers.
- Materials to support the delivery of the IDP.
- Further half day sessions with other schools and the SEN advisors to plan, implement and reflect upon inclusive Practice.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

The confidence and understanding gained by staff following the IDP training has resulted in the significant development of support strategies for pupils with Autism across the school and hence pupils are less anxious and are receiving consistent support of their individual needs.

This has led to pupils engaging in academic and social development tasks more consistently, thus leading to an overall increase in pupil progress.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

The overall positive impact on learning has resulted from the high quality of the materials used in the IDP and the way the programme encourages participants to engage and reflect upon the different perspectives of its content. This has allowed a greater understanding of Autism and increase in confidence when supporting a very complex and needs led group of pupils.

The second major benefit has been the whole school working together, generating ideas, identifying areas for development, initiating strategies and interventions and collaborative working, witnessed by the SMT as 'enthusiastic and focused'.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

A quote given by a pupil with Autism in response to questions during the IDP award assessment sums up the benefits of the whole school approach as he described Ratcliffe as 'pretty much a perfect school'.

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Logs or interviews
- Observation outcomes
- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Although it is difficult to evaluate at this relatively early stage, evidence exists that:

- Within six months of the IDP training and the implementation of the Action Plan many of the pupils with Autism appear more settled and responsive to tasks and activities within the 'main school'.
- The ability of staff to support pupil's needs is increasing.
- Many log entries have portrayed that potential challenges were de-escalated and positive outcomes were achieved by utilising strategies and interventions from the Action Plan.
- An audit of pupil's perceptions (National Strategies Pupil Questionnaire from the IDP) highlighted an increase in pupils stating that they are happy in school and that adults understand and support them better.
- Pupil progress data has identified more of the pupils with Autism are making better progress following the IDP (pupil profile with NC levels attached)

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teachers and LSAs have a clearer understanding of, and are more confident in, supporting pupils with Autism.

The implementation of new strategies, interventions and working practice have had a positive effect upon Teaching Staff, who are now more frequently reflecting, evaluating and modifying their teaching methods for pupils with Autism.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

There have been many positive comments from staff regarding the IDP and Action Plan, such as:

- 'I really learnt a lot from the training' (DVD)
- 'Putting up a visual timetable in the classroom has helped 7B to know what is happening next'
- 'writing the task on a piece of paper for, has been a great idea'

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Staff have demonstrated a really enthusiastic approach towards the Action Plan and many have requested additional training for very specific areas of supporting pupils with Autism.

Staff have utilised strategies and are more aware of challenges and possible solutions within their teaching areas.

Both of these impacts have been very evident during staff discussions in daily staff meetings.

The analysis of the point scoring of the pre and post training self-evaluation questionnaires from the IDP found that there was an average 34% point increase in 'understanding Autism and how to support pupils with Autism' across the whole staff group following completion of the IDP training. (shown as an attachment below)

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

- The school has achieved the highest level of award (enhanced) on the Devon Inclusion Award (Autism)
- Whole school commitment to developing inclusive practice for ASD pupils was felt by the County Autism Team and SEN advisers to be 'outstanding'.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

The significant improvement in communication channels and exchange of information regarding pupils with Autism is very evident throughout the whole school.

We were very pleased to be awarded the highest 'Enhanced' level of the Devon Inclusion award following our assessment day from CAT and SEN advisers.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Ratcliffe had a clear focus for development work on inclusion for pupils with Autism, and the Devon Inclusion Award demanded that a member of the leadership team should be involved in this work.

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

The key resources are the Inclusion Development Programme (supporting Pupils on the Autism Spectrum) DVD and School Effectiveness (Audit) checklist, Reflections Diaries and Self-evaluations from the IDP resource bank on the DVD found on the National Strategies website.

The foundation for development is the the School Effectiveness Checklist (audit) and the subsequent development of a School Action Plan for Autism.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

The initial IDP meeting with the County Autism and SEN teams and the IDP DVD were particularly useful.

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

The three essential elements for replication of this work are; to watch the IDP DVD, to discuss ideas and the IDP with SEN or Autism advisers and to secure whole School involvement, particularly from Senior management.

Supplementary Materials

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

- Devon Inclusion Award criteria
- Devon SEN Spring Ratcliffe
- matthews passport
- Ratcliffe School ASD Development Plan
- Ratcliffe School Autism and Complex Needs Support Provision
- Support Activity
- What We Could do - staff
- What we do well
- Inclusion Development Programme
- Inclusion ASD Training day timetable
- Action plan
- Reflections diary
- Staff self-evaluation example
- Pupil Questionnaire 1
- Pupil Questionnaire 2
- NC Levels for casestudy
- Pupil profile
- Training data
- Devon Inclusion Award (award letter)

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. 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.

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.