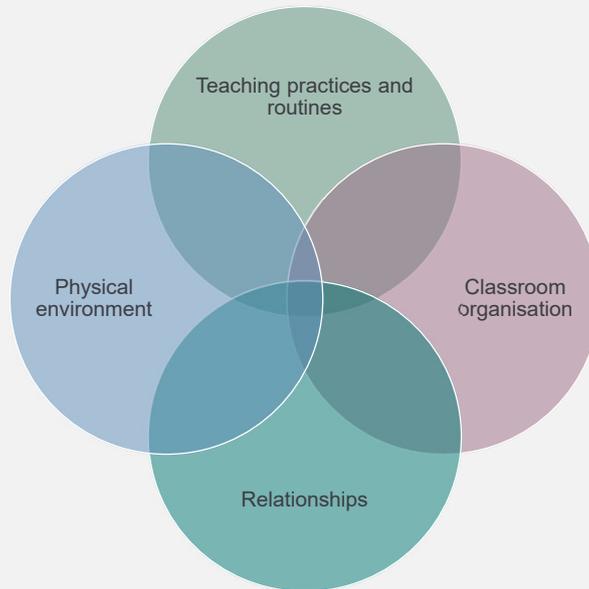


Classroom environment

A permeating theme



Classroom environment



Narrative:

In this slide deck, we will highlight the importance of creating an inclusive environment that enables all learners to access the lesson and progress towards their individual learning targets. Individual targets may be academic, social or emotional, communication based or relate to, for example, fine and gross motor skills.

When reflecting on an inclusive environment, this will include a focus on:

- Our teaching practices and routines
- All relationships in the classroom and wider school community, and the emotional impact of these
- The physical environment, including the resources and displays
- Classroom organisation, including the layout, groupings and access to resources.

The role of the teacher

“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

Haim. G. Ginnett (1993) Teacher and Child

Mentor notes:

Take time to reflect with the trainee(s) on the implications of this statement for them in their role as teachers. What are the implications for the teacher’s role in relation to the classroom environment?

Please note:

We are defining the classroom environment as:

- Relational - language, emotional impact, teaching practice - role of the teacher
- Physical environment (resources, groupings, layout, practical bits...)

Case study

Compare two different school experiences for learners with hearing impairments:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistive technology is used across the school.• Strong, positive teacher-learner relationships ensure that classrooms are calm, purposeful environments.• The curriculum effectively meets the needs of learners. It is designed to encourage personalised learning pathways to meet the needs and aspirations of each learner.• Teachers have high expectations of what can be achieved in lessons and there is the correct amount of challenge to hold learners' interest. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I had to leave my last school. Every day, people would pull off my cochlear implant and throw it on the ground. I would tell the teachers, but this would happen every day. Sometimes they would even throw it in water.• The teachers did not know how to help me learn.• I couldn't learn at my last school. Teachers would do things like teach the class while facing the whiteboard so I could not lip read. |
|--|---|

Mentor notes:

Reflect with the trainee(s) on the two different experiences described. What made the difference to the learners' experiences? What was different in the environments?

In scaffolding the reflections, consider:

- The teaching practices and routines
- Relationships in the classroom and the wider school community
- The physical environment, including the resources and displays
- Classroom organisation, including the layout, groupings and access to resources.

It will be important to stress that even when considering a very short contrasting case study, the impact that changes in the environment made is clear.

Reflect with the trainee(s) on what the implications are for their own practice.

SEN Provision or Quality First Teaching?

Always face the learners when presenting new information

Present new information orally and in writing together at the same time

Provide visuals and word banks

Always check that the learner has understood classroom instructions - avoid yes/ no questions

Choose your language carefully (figurative language)

Be mindful of your facial expressions

pre-teach key language

Visual system is in place for the class (such as a traffic light system) to support all learners to work within appropriate 'noise' levels

Repeat back contributions from other learners. If something funny happens on the other side of the classroom, take the time to explain what happened so that the learner does not feel they are missing out.

Always call a learner's name to gain their attention before asking a question

Mentor notes:

Do these statements capture quality first teaching or additional provision?

Building on the reflections from the last slide, reflect on each of these strategies in the classroom with the trainee(s).

Consider why and how these adjustments would be made in the classroom? Who might they need to be made for? Who would they benefit?

Use this activity to support the trainee to reflect on 'additionality' – do these need to be 'in addition to' normal classroom practice or can they be embedded in all classroom practice?

It is important to note the following consideration (taken from the handbook) when reflecting with trainee(s) about the importance of additionality and the notion of interventions:

Interventions can take place within or outside the mainstream classroom. Micro-interventions that occur within the classroom can include: changing in seating, proximity, buddy support, visual timetables, focused group work, targeted

questioning, independent tasks modified for accessibility. These interventions are often highly effective, however their implementation needs consistency (across teachers/support staff and curriculum areas) for intended impact to be realised. Micro-interventions require engagement in the reflective process around the learner – widening our lens – and having a flexible mindset to enable the process of inclusivity. As an example with behaviour specific praise, to engage in the reflective process teachers first need to gather an understanding of how the learner responds to praise. Does spoken praise in front of peers motivate or disengage the learner? Praise then needs to be given consistently, at a rate of 4-5 positives for each constructive comment, throughout the day. It is only then, after a period of time, that desired impact will be observed.

Inclusive environments

What does inclusion mean to you?

Can you name a film or book that represents inclusion?

Why does it/does it not represent inclusion?

What is the impact of the place, the relationships, the interactions?

Mentor notes:

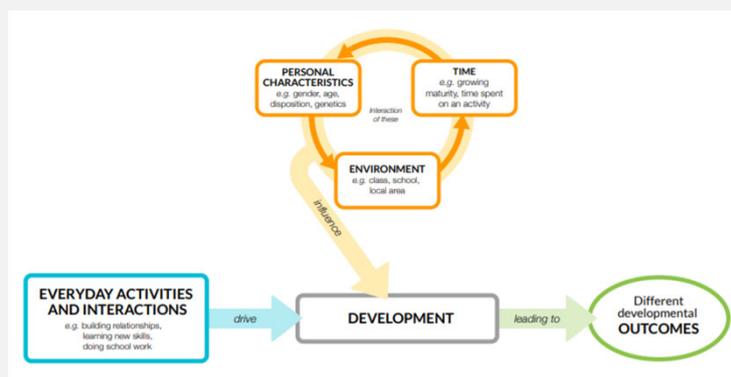
Use this activity to support the trainee to reflect on the following questions:

- Is inclusion static or active?
- Can a classroom be inclusive by design? What is our role as the teacher in this process?
- What impacts inclusion?

The role of the teacher

What is the role as the teacher in this process?

Where would you put the teacher in this diagram?



Bronfenbrenner diagram

Education Endowment Foundation (2020)

Mentor notes:

Building on the information shared alongside slide 5 regarding interventions, it is important to note that there are opportunities for intervention to target the ecosystem rather than the learner – changes to our environment can have significant impact.

Considering aspects of the environment in isolation will not, however, have the same impact as considering the interaction of a range of influences on the learner within their ecosystem that then inform micro- and macro-interventions to support the development of the learner.

In their Special Education Needs in Mainstream Schools Guidance Report (link provided on slide 17), the Education Endowment Foundation details the Bronfenbrenner model (captured in the slide above). In this model there are three influences identified that interactively affect pupils' learning and development:

Time – The development of children and young people is not linear. As they experience and interact with different environments in different ways, they undergo different patterns of development over time. As children and young people age, the complexity of their needs will change. We all change, develop skills, adapt and grow

at all stages throughout our lives. Difficulties which are present in the early years and require additional support throughout primary school may not need on-going support in secondary school. Conversely, cognitive and learning difficulties may require additional support only in secondary school or beyond as a young person matures.

Personal Characteristics – Children and young people have different personal characteristics that lead them to react differently to the same environment. Personal characteristics alone do not determine the presence, type, or complexity of special educational needs. Each learner with a special educational need is an individual. The lived experience of the overlap of multiple vulnerabilities will be equally individual, complex and dynamic. Two of our greatest tools as teachers when meeting the needs of our learners are curiosity and openness. We move away from assumption and move towards aspiration and partnership in the learning journey, by engaging in a process of understanding, getting to know, and learning alongside our learners. However, this can only be done in partnership with the learner and their families. The learner’s voice and their views must always remain central.

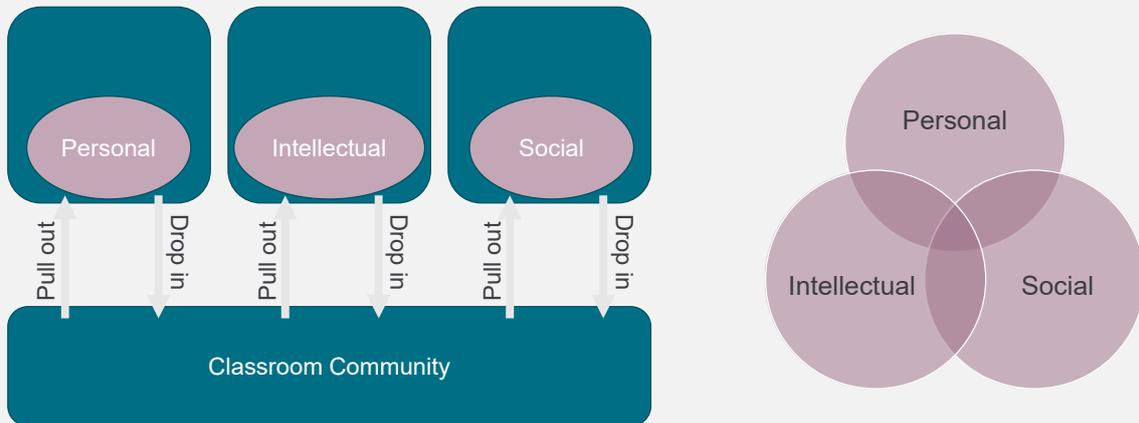
Environment - The needs of children and young people will change as they move through different environments and life experiences. ‘Environment’ does not just mean the physical environment in the school; it refers to:

- our teaching practices and routines
- the relationships in the classroom and wider school community, and the emotional impact of these
- the physical environment, including the resources and displays
- the classroom organisation, including the layout, groupings and access to resources.

Reflective activity: Consider the following questions

- Where would you put the teacher in this diagram?
- Why?
- Should the teacher be in more than one place?
 - If so, what are the implications for your practice?
- How can the teacher interact dynamically with each of the elements and the interrelationship between these elements?
- Reflect on the training that has already taken place on the implementation of the graduated approach, how can we relate this to the graduated approach?

Bolt on vs built in approach



Mentor notes:

Ask trainee(s) to look at the two diagrams and explain which they feel represents the most inclusive model and why. Ask them to consider each of the models from the perspective of the learner. How would they be experiencing each of these models in terms of their daily lived experiences in school? How would this impact their access to a range of opportunities, their self-esteem, their inclusion and also their academic outcomes and opportunities to make progress?

Opportunity for trainee(s) to reflect on the implications for their own practice.

When reflecting on the Venn Diagram it will be important to draw out the following points:

- Intersectionality and interdependency of the 'intellectual' on the personal and social
- The benefits that a focus on the personal and social brings to the intellectual.

Key reflections

- How can our teaching practices and routines include all learners?
- How can the relationships in the classroom and wider school community be a benefit, or a detriment, for learners with SEND?
- How can we adapt our physical environment to enable all learners to access and engage in their learning?
- How can the organisation of the classroom organisation enable all learners to access and engage in their learning?

Reflect on the following statement:

“The environment has to be flexible: it must undergo frequent modification by the children and the teachers to remain up-to-date and responsive to their needs to be protagonists in constructing their knowledge. All the things that surround and are used by people in the school – the objects, materials and structures – are not seen as passive elements but, on the contrary, as elements that condition and are conditioned by the actions of children and adults who are active in it.”

*The Hundred Languages of Children:
The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*

Edwards, Gandini & Forman (2012)

Mentor notes:

The Reggio Emilia approach is an educational philosophy from Italy that is based on the image of a child with strong potentialities for development and a subject with rights, who learns through the hundred languages, and grows in relations with others. One of the key principles of the Reggio Emilia approach is that the environment acts as the third teacher.

Reflect on the following statement:

In the Reggio Emilia approach, learners with special education needs are viewed as learners with special rights. Loris Malaguzzi, its founder, felt that it was important to include learners with special rights in our schools, and that we could improve our pedagogical experience and understanding of all children as a result of this inclusion.

*The Hundred Languages of Children:
The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*

Edwards, Gandini & Forman (2012)

Mentor notes:

As teachers when we view ourselves as learners - adapting our teaching practices and routines and our physical environment as well as reflecting on our classroom organisation and the impact of the relationships within our classrooms - embedding inclusive practice is understood as a learning opportunity that supports us to develop our practice for all learners.

Ask trainee(s) to reflect on this above statement.

- Further explore the concept of 'learners with special rights'
- Support the trainee to reflect on how their observations of complex learners can impact their wider practice. What have they implemented into their wider practice?

Case study: exclusion by inclusion

I am observing three five-year-old children playing with modelling dough. An adult is sitting with them and is allocated to a disabled child who is one of the three. Paula uses a wheelchair but is supported in an especially constructed chair at the table so that she is at the right height. In addition to her physical impairment, Paula has epilepsy and has to be monitored carefully as it is proving difficult to balance her medication. Two of the children are interacting quite a bit - leaning in to each other, pointing, talking about their models constructively and, by invitation, adjusting each other's models. They talk to the adult and the adult talks to them. Paula addresses the adult and the adult addresses her but not once, in half an hour, do the two children interact with Paula; not once does Paula address one of them.

What do you notice in this example about the 'ecosystem' of the classroom?

Which elements are exclusive?

How could this be adapted to support genuine inclusion?

Stobbs (2016)

Mentor notes:

There is a risk that when we 'outwardly' include that we reinforce systems, relationships, dynamics that might in fact not be inclusive but exclusive instead. It is essential to reflect on the impact of the implementation of any strategy.

To give wider context to this slide, below is guidance on the relevant legislation and our role as teachers.

There are four key pieces of legislation to be aware of in this context:

- the Equality Act 2010
- the Children and Families Act 2014
- the SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School 2015.

As teachers, it is important that we have a thorough understanding of our responsibilities, as defined in these four key pieces of legislation. Of particular importance when developing inclusive classroom environments is the guidance set out in the Equality Act on reasonable adjustments:

- Schools have a statutory duty not to discriminate.

- Provision for disabled pupils is closely connected with the regime for children and young people with special educational needs.
- Schools are allowed to treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils, and in some cases are required to do so, by making reasonable adjustments to put them on a more level footing with pupils without disabilities.

Key points for teachers:

The definition of disability in the Equality Act is quite broad and includes more pupils than many of us realise;

- *we need to make reasonable adjustments in our classrooms to remove barriers to learning and to make sure disabled pupils aren't disadvantaged;*
- *we also have an important role in making reasonable adjustments to school policies and practices in every aspect of school life;*
- *the reasonable adjustments duty requires us to think ahead and plan adjustments for disabled pupils before they miss out.*

Clever Classrooms

Clever Classrooms, a 2015 study from Salford University, highlighted the following factors over which teachers have control:

- **Ownership:** Classrooms that had distinct design characteristics, including personalised displays were more likely to provide a sense of ownership.
- **Flexibility:** Well-defined learning zones that facilitate age-appropriate learning options.
- **Stimulation:** Displays can catch the learners' attention, but need to be balanced with a degree of order (to avoid overstimulation).

Barrett et al. (2015)

Mentor notes:

Clever Classrooms, a 2015 study from Salford University, gives interesting guidance on three particular areas: 'naturalness' (light, temperature, air quality), appropriate levels of stimulation (complexity, colour), and opportunity for individualisation (ownership, flexibility). For this study, Professor Peter Barrett and his team studied 153 primary school classrooms in 27 schools to measure school and classroom features in relation to environmental and non-environmental factors.

It is important to note that the implementation does not necessarily require additional funding but can benefit the learning environment for children and young people.

Embracing inclusivity

To create inclusive classrooms, we need to embrace inclusivity.

How can you, working alongside the learners and their families, develop an environment that enables all learners to access and engage in the learning?

Consider this with regard to:

- your teaching practices and routines
- the relationships in the classroom and wider school community, and the emotional impact of these
- the physical environment, including the resources and displays
- the classroom organisation, including the layout, groupings and access to resources.

Final reflections

- What is my role in relationship to creating a conducive environment for learning?
- What are the key components of a classroom environment that can support the learning of all children and young people in my classroom?
- What parts of the classroom environment could be a barrier to learning for some children and young people? How can I adapt the classroom environment to mitigate this so it supports the learning of all children and young people?
- How can we use the graduated approach to support us in identifying appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment?

Links to Handbook

Section 1: Understanding your role

- Your role as the teacher
- The language we use with colleagues

Section 2: Knowledge of the learner

- We learn in interactions with our environment
- Pupil voice

Section 3: Planning inclusive lessons

- Quality inclusive pedagogy
- The language we use with learners
- Working with teaching assistants
- Remote education

Section 4: Creating an inclusive environment

- Barriers to learning and reasonable adjustments
- Supporting learners with sensory needs
- The language learners use
- Transition

Section 5: Subject-specific guidance

- *See subject-specific guidance*

Section 7: Strategies to scaffold learning

- *See primary area of need guidance*

Signposting

Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Guidance Report - Education Endowment Foundation

References:

- Barrett, P.S., Zhang, Y., Davies, F. & Barrett, L.C. (2015) *Clever classrooms: Summary report of the HEAD project*, Salford: University of Salford
- Education Endowment Foundation, *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Guidance Report*. [Online], Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Send/EEF_Special_Educational_Needs_in_Mainstream_Schools_Guidance_Report.pdf [Accessed: 16 Feb 2021]
- Edwards, C. Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (2012) *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*, (3rd edition), Santa Barbara, California: Praeger
- Ginott, H. (1993) *Teacher & Child: A Book for Parents and Teachers*, New York: Collier Books
- Stobbs, P. (2016) *Closely observed interactions*. [Online], Available at: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news-opinion/news/closely-observed-interactions> [Accessed: 5 Mar 2021]



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