Inclusion Practices: The Mainstream Classroom and Support Groups

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ABSTRACT

Legislation now states that all schools must restructure the environment to reduce the learning barriers and prevent discrimination, for students with Special Educational Needs. In order to develop inclusion practices it is important to understand how schools currently implement inclusion and the culture they promote. This study used ethnography to study how one mainstream primary school in Bristol practices inclusion in the classroom and in support groups for students with Special Educational Needs. Participants included students and teachers from two year 2 classes and one year 6 class. The type and severity of need varied between students, allowing for a greater insight into the range of different practices that are implemented. Two observations were carried out in each class, and interviews were conducted with three teachers and one teaching assistant. These were subject to thematic analysis and four main themes were identified: inclusion at the classroom level, the integration of activities for Special Educational Needs, constraints of implementing inclusion, and training and development. It was concluded that how teachers manage the classroom environment is significant in promoting inclusive practice and positive interactions between peers. Furthermore, a strong understanding of individual needs, and strategies that accommodate these needs, were identified as important in developing whole school inclusion. Additionally, the impact that lack of funding has on students is discussed in terms of supporting individual students whilst not impacting others. Strategies developed by teachers to minimise the effect lack of funding has on students is also considered, including intervention groups, peer-scaffolding and interactive lessons. Future studies could observe students outside of the classroom setting, and interview other staff members, such as the SENCO, in order to gain a deeper insight to how inclusion is experienced.

KEY WORDS:	INCLUSION	SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	INTERVENTION GROUPS	INCLUSIVE CULTURE	TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Contents

1. Introduction

Special Educational Needs (SEN) is the term used to describe a broad spectrum of difficulties and disabilities which requires special educational provision (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). Children are considered to have a learning disability if they have greater difficulties with learning compared to other pupils of their age, or have a physical disability preventing them using age appropriate facilities provided in mainstream schools.

1.1 History of Special Educational Needs Policies in the UK

Schools are now required to accommodate all pupils' needs wherever possible. Until 1944, there was no legislation that made it compulsory for children with learning disabilities to be educated. Disabilities included conditions such as epilepsy and diabetes. The *Education Act* (1944) stated that education for children should be based around their 'age, abilities and aptitudes' and that pupils suffering from any disability of mind or body should be educated in special schools. The idea of segregation became extremely popular around this time. Despite positive intentions around segregation and labelling children with SEN, it in fact excluded children from high status occupations and good models of language, communication and social skills, amongst other things (Woolfson, 2011). It was very difficult for children with SEN to achieve highly in school, as it was understood that they were not capable of doing so, and were often labelled as 'ineducable'.

A radical change took place in 1978 with the publication of the Warnock Report. The report was based on the findings of 27 researchers, making 225 recommendations for improving the education of children with SEN. It set out to reduce the stigma against children with SEN by changing labels they were given: 'speech and language disorders', 'visual disability and hearing disability', and 'emotional and behavioural disorders'. Children would no longer be labelled as educationally subnormal, but instead as 'children with learning difficulties'. It also recommended that most children with SEN should be educated in mainstream schools. Warnock (1978) argued that around 20% of pupils will have SEN for at least some part of their educational career but only 2% of pupils have needs too severe to be accommodated by mainstream schools. Warnock (1978) recommended that this 2% should be given a 'statement of SEN' ensuring these children would have access to consistent help and support to suit their needs. This report formed the foundations for the 1981 Education Act.

The Education Act (1981) improved on previous acts, highlighting the need for inclusive schooling, rather than the segregated approach that had been common practice until the publication of the Warnock report. The act also provided parents with much more involvement and legal rights in regards to their child's education. Finally, in 2001 the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) was introduced, preventing schools, colleges and universities from discriminating against pupils with any SEN or disability. SENDA was created to closely link the Disability Discrimination

Act (DDA) (1995) and The Education Act (1981) to further tackle discrimination and ensure disabled people have the same opportunities as mainstream society throughout their lives. Furthermore, the Department for Education and Skills (2001) set out the key principles of inclusive education, stating "all schools, local education authorities (LEA) and others should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation."

1.2 Children with Special Educational Needs in the UK and Barriers to Inclusion

In 2016, 14.4% of pupils in the UK had SEN, equating to approximately 1,228,785 children. Amongst these, 2.8% of pupils (236,805) were given an Educational, Health and Care (EHC) Plan (Department for Education, 2016) detailing adjustments and extra support that schools needs to make to ensure their needs are met. This percentage of pupils with an EHC Plan has remained consistent since 2007. The percentage of pupils with no EHC Plan, but with a SEN diagnosis, has fallen from 18.3% to 11.6% in the past 6 years (Department for Education, 2016). Amongst those needing SEN support with no EHC Plan, the most common types of needs were moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. For students with an EHC plan the most common type of need was Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Findings from the Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) Annual Survey (2015) showed that only 64% of primary-trained NQT's and 76% of secondary-trained NQT's rated their training for teaching pupils with SEN as good or very good (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2015). When compared with training for safeguarding of students being rated by 91% of NQT's as good or very good, it is clear many new teachers do not believe they have adequate training in supporting students with SEN. Considering the broad range of needs that are grouped under the one term "Special Educational Needs", adequate training for teachers in all areas of SEN should be implemented to enable them to provide support to students with a large variation of needs.

A report by *The Independent* found 65% of parents of children with SEN believe their children are receiving a poorer education compared to those without SEN (Garner, 2014). However, parents often are not fully informed and are unaware of interventions that take place to meet their child's needs. Evidence has demonstrated that teachers' lack of knowledge around disabilities and SEN has a significant impact on how effectively inclusion is practised in mainstream schools. Sharma, Forlin and Loreman (2008) argue that teachers need to feel comfortable interacting with individuals with disabilities and embrace the philosophy of inclusion. Individuals with some training in SEN are more likely to have a positive attitude to inclusion in the mainstream classroom.

There are however other factors affecting the successful implementation of inclusion. Ng (2015) conducted interviews with teachers in Singaporean schools. Teachers

stated that practising inclusion was difficult due to the large class sizes and the pressure to produce results for the whole class, rather than having the ability to focus on an individual. This was supported by Arico III (2011)'s findings that class size affects academic achievement for SEN students. These results could assist schools in taking an approach that allows for a lower child-to-teacher ratio in the classroom to create an optimum learning environment for all students (Arico III, 2011).

Additionally, social isolation and physical barriers (for example wheelchair ramps) were identified as being barriers to inclusion (Pivik, McComas & Laflamme, 2002). Being aware of barriers such as these allows for schools to adapt the school environment to reduce the difficulties for students with a disability or SEN, thus allowing individuals participate in all activities, and promoting full inclusion for all students.

1.3 Outcomes of Inclusion in Mainstream Education
The introduction of SENDA (2001) meant that not only was it unlawful to discriminate against pupils, but also that schools had to integrate SEN students into the mainstream classroom, putting in place a system of inclusion. Inclusion in education involves restructuring the cultures and practices in schools to reduce the learning barriers, and promote the full participation of all students (Booth & Ainscow, 2000).

However, there is still some controversy as to whether inclusion is most beneficial for children with SEN. Zigmond et al (1995) found that less than 50% of pupils with SEN showed an improvement in their reading, compared to their typically developing peers, in a fully inclusive classroom (cited by Nye, 2016). A more recent study by McLeskey and Waldron (2012), found that only one-third of students with SEN made significant academic progress when compared with their general education peers, in an inclusive classroom. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2015) states the importance of progress for children with SEN, and specifies appropriate interventions must be put in place so significant progress can be made. These findings suggest that having a fully inclusive classroom would not ensure children with SEN would make the expected progress.

Zigmond and Baker (1996) reviewed placement options for students with SEN in five inclusive primary schools. Two schools adopted a fully inclusive classroom, whereas three schools combined a regular classroom setting for some part, alongside lessons in smaller group settings until they could re-integrate into the classroom full-time. All schools found providing a balance of reducing stigma and adapting tasks difficult. They noted that schools could not successfully provide an opportunity for students to progress when always in a classroom with their typically developing peers. This was due to students not getting "direct or focused intervention to improve each student's capabilities" (Wang, 1989; cited by Zigmond & Baker, 1996) which was outlined to be significant feature of adapting education. Therefore implying that students with SEN need pull out programs to provide more intense and specialised learning, some of the time. They concluded that some inclusion for children with SEN is good, but full

inclusion is not beneficial. Despite this, it must be noted that the way inclusion is practiced today would be different to the techniques utilised in the 1990's. We must also question how one would adopt a partially inclusive school. If an individual is excluded from some aspects of learning with their peers, would this still be considered inclusion?

Besides learning outcomes, several studies have highlighted that full inclusion may negatively impact a child's mental and social well-being. Students with SEN often experience greater difficulties with social participation and have less friends than their classmates (Koster, Pijl, Nakken & Van Houten, 2010) along with being bullied by their peers for working at a lower learning level (Khudorenko, 2011; Cited by Lamport, Graves & Ward, 2012). This highlights the need for all children to be educated to understand the impact of bullying along with learning about SEN (Fink, Deighton, Humphrey & Wolpert, 2015). Ochs, Kremer-Sadlik, Solomon and Sirota (2001) explored the social realities of inclusion in an American school for high functioning children with Autism. They identified two dynamics of inclusion reported to be commonly experienced: 'positive inclusion', where differences (i.e. the disability) between children are minimised, and 'negative inclusion' where the child with the disability is left out and rejected. They observed how differently children experienced inclusion depending on the degree of disclosure to teachers and peers. Children who fully disclosed their diagnosis displayed much more positive social interactions with peers both in and out of the classroom. This suggests that creating an environment where children are educated around SEN would positively impact an individual's experience of inclusion.

The definition of inclusion lacks clarity and varies significantly amongst different schools and professionals (Ekins & Peter, 2009). They suggested the most common views of inclusion were a focus on: disability and SEN, challenging behaviour and vulnerable groups. However, a strong understanding of SEN and strategies that are practiced are important for the development of successful school policies. Sangai (2016) stated that the way inclusion is understood by teachers directly impacts upon practices and development.

Florian and Rouse (2001) carried out a study in UK secondary schools investigating how schools balance the demands of academic achievement, school improvement policies and inclusion of students with SEN. Interviews with teachers suggested that having access to support and a wide range of teaching strategies makes it easier to teach students with SEN. They suggested that emphasising pupil involvement in target setting could help support individual needs of students with SEN, meaning teachers are able to adapt activities without making students aware of this, and therefore an ethos of inclusion can be developed throughout every year group.

Some studies have highlighted the importance of developing a whole school inclusive ethos, yet there is very little information on how successful schools have implemented this. An and Meaney (2015) suggest inclusion practices are built up of three interlinking

factors: the teachers' knowledge and their motivation to develop a deeper understanding of SEN, the children's needs and their learning goals. They argued that working on these three factors would enable successful practice to be implemented by teachers and adapted if necessary. Reynolds (2009) expresses a similar view stating that "it is the knowledge, beliefs and values of the teacher that are brought to bear in creating an effective learning environment for pupils, making the teacher a critical influence in education for inclusion and the development of the inclusive school" (cited by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education). Recognising the combination of factors allowing for successful practices could allow for greater understanding and implementation of inclusion, in other schools. Additionally, these findings could have practical applications for schools by adapting how they use strategies and resources to benefit students with SEN.

1.4 Successful Inclusion Practices in Mainstream Schools

It is important for studies to recognise the need to understand the details of inclusive practices to implement these on a wider level. Bennett, DeLuca and Bruns (1997; cited by McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998) looked at the relationship between teacher confidence and inclusive practices. They found a link between teacher confidence and experience with inclusion, which was found to increase as teachers formed a community that shared their skills and provided motivation to grow on a professional level. Although demonstrating significant findings, the aim of this study was to investigate the role of teacher confidence on inclusion, therefore it may be important to consider other factors to understand inclusion.

Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2002) used ethnographic research to investigate how a secondary school practised inclusion. The school was the designated school in the Southern Part of the LEA for students with disabilities, therefore had appropriate modifications for inclusion. 27 interviews were conducted with teachers, students, parents and other support staff. Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2002) isolated several factors contributing to successful inclusion. On that aspect, teachers, students and parents noted how successful the SEN department were at adapting their environment to accommodate students and ensuring agencies (i.e. psychologists, social services) were kept up to date. Additionally, they noted that different language was used; "students with additional needs" was the phrase used rather than 'SEN', and the SEN department was referred to as Curriculum and Learning Support (CLS). Furthermore, they highlighted the school's ethos "kept [teachers] motivated to increase their efforts" despite not all teachers feeling they had significant training for teaching SEN students. They concluded that there is not a concrete formula allowing for successful inclusion to be practiced universally, yet consists of a number of different elements. If factors of inclusion are inextricably linked, it would be limiting to consider any one in isolation. This highlights the need for more detailed research to be carried out in schools, to understand different elements that contribute to successful inclusion practices.

Duke's (2014) ethnographic case study of one secondary school provided support for these findings. Observations, interviews and work diaries collected over a 12 month

period investigated interactions between students and members of staff at the school to understand inclusion practices. They found that a number of interchangeable factors contributed to a positive school culture of inclusion. Duke (2014) suggested that in schools, current practices need to be challenged and developed regularly to identify shortfalls affecting attitudes towards students with SEN and ways of adapting current practices to support students with SEN. Understanding how several factors contribute to the successful implementation of inclusion is important in developing a culture where students with SEN are included with their peers in school activities, but also have the opportunity to make academic and social development.

1.5 This study

I will be using ethnography to observe three primary school classrooms, each including at least one child with SEN and an EHC Plan, and explore teachers' views about inclusion in that school.

Ethnographic research involves observing activities and behaviours in a naturalistic setting (Reeves, Kuper & Hodges, 2008). Different techniques are adopted to gain a rich and detailed insight into activities and behaviours. Some techniques used include participant observation, contextual interviews, photographs and the analysis of objects that may be used in the context of an activity. These types of observations will allow me to gather information about effective inclusion practices, alongside aspects that could be amended to enhance the experience of SEN students in the classroom.

The analysis will be carried out according to ethnographic methods, thus integrating evidence from both observations and interviews. Interviews will be subject to thematic analysis in order to give a thorough representation of teachers' views and experiences.

2. Method

2.1 Recruitment

I contacted the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) at Bailey's Court Primary School after a member of staff I have a close connection with expressed how the school implemented many different activities and strategies to help with inclusion for SEN students. After an initial meeting, the SENCO selected three classes and their respective teachers that I could observe and interview based on the needs of students in the classroom. A teaching assistant (TA[1]) working across different classes was also selected to be interviewed, to understand wider school practices.

2.2 Participants

Students from two year 2 classes and one year 6 class were selected. The classes were mixed gender and ages of students ranged from 7 to 11 years. Each class had one student diagnosed with SEN and had an EHC Plan. These students formed the basis of my observations. All students with an EHC Plan had one-to-one support from a SEN TA. Other students on the SEN register were in the mainstream classroom unsupported, but took part in numerous interventions to improve their learning, social skills and mental health. Student one had been given a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), student two had been given a diagnosis of attachment disorder, and student three had multiple diagnoses of autism, dyspraxia and speech and language difficulties. The amount of time students spent in the classroom was dependent on their ability to cope.

Four teachers were also interviewed (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Profile of members of staff interviewed

Name[2]	Length of time working at school	Job Role	First teaching job?
Laura	20	Year 2 teacher	Yes
Charlotte	7	Year 6 teacher	Yes
Jessica	2	Year 2 teacher	Yes- but had previously been a supply teacher
Poppy	2	SEN TA	No- had previously

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[1] Teaching assistant will be referred to as TA throughout
[2] Names of teachers were changed for the purpose of this study

			worked in other schools as a TA

2.3 Materials

A standard voice recorder was used during the interview section of the study. A notebook was also used to write field notes from the observations. Consent forms were given to the parents and teachers. An adapted consent form was also given to students.

2.4 Procedure for Gathering Data

The study followed an ethnographic approach including the use of classroom observations and interviews.

2.4.1 Classroom Observations

Consent forms and Participant Information Sheets for parents and children (see appendix 2) were sent out by the school along with a cover note (see appendix 3) written by the SENCO to explain to parents the need for it to be written in a formal manner. This was advised by the school to reduce the risk of parents refusing consent. It was stated that all data would be anonymous.

I arranged to carry out the observations over a period of three days, observing one class each day, to provide minimal disruption to the day-to-day routine. Two observations were carried out per class, along with three observations of a literacy intervention group called Springboard. I was not given a formal introduction in the class as teachers advised this would allow for a more natural setting, however if students approached me I reminded them of the reason I was visiting. I sat at the back of the classroom, where I had a clear view of the whole class and took field notes (see appendix 4) focusing on a) what activities were carried out, b) how activities were adapted for SEN students, c) the interactions between teachers and students, and d) the general dynamic of the classroom. Additionally, I observed two intervention groups that were carried out outside of the classroom with a group of 3-5 low ability and SEN students. Field notes were taken throughout.

2.4.2 Interviews

Four semi-structured interviews were carried out during lunchtimes, after classroom observations. The interviews took place in a classroom, to ensure they were in a familiar and comfortable environment, but also an area free from any distractions. The interviews lasted between 10 minutes and 17 minutes.

The interviews were guided by seven open ended questions (see Table 2 below). Having been carried out after the observations I was also able discuss events that I had just observed, along with following the previous schedule to allow for much more detailed analysis.

Table 2. Interview guide for teachers and TA's

Question Number	Question	Sub-question
1.	Is there a code of practice that Baileys Court follows to aid children with SEN?	
2.	How does the mainstream classroom and intervention groups work to specifically accommodate and help students with SEN?	
3.	Do you think there are any particular strengths of how inclusion is practised at Baileys Court?	
4.	Are there any aspects that you feel could be improved?	- Either at Baileys Court - Or, that need to be improved generally across all schools
5.	What level of training have you received since starting at Baileys Court?	- General SEN training - Or, training for certain individuals
6.	During your teacher training, what kind of training did you receive then to help when working with students with SEN?	
7.	Are there any challenges that you have faced when teaching students with SEN?	- Any specific incidents that you feel may be significant
8.	Has there been any times that your judgement has been different to the code of conduct?	- If yes, could you give some examples?

Consent forms were handed to the teachers and TA after they entered the room (see appendix 5). I began recording and then gave a short introduction priorities to the interview questions.

2.5 Procedures for Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis was open to any content present in the data, both field notes and interviews. However, data were especially investigated in regard of inclusion and the facilitating and hindering factors.

2.5.1 Observations

Observations were analysed to see how different activities within the classroom accommodated students with SEN. The atmosphere of the class was noted along with some interactions between the students and teacher, and between peers.

2.5.2 Transcriptions

Verbatim transcripts (see appendix 6) were produced from relevant sections of every interview. Conversational beginnings and endings unrelated to the theme were not transcribed. Notes were written on relevant parts of the transcript, creating the basis for the initial themes.

2.6 Data Analysis

These themes were then identified and organised in a thematic table with corresponding quotes from the four interview transcripts (see appendix 7). Field notes and interview transcripts were highlighted in four colours to correspond to the themes. The four themes were discussed as separate entities, with some overlap between interview quotes and observations.

3. Results

Contents from the interviews and field notes were summarised under four themes: inclusion at the classroom level, integration of activities for SEN in the mainstream classroom, training and development and constraints on implementing inclusion.

3.1 Inclusion at the classroom level

This section explores how inclusion is implemented and practiced in the classroom, discussing how inclusion is achieved between peers and how lessons are adapted to accommodate children with SEN, so they can access the curriculum.

3.1.1 Acceptance of SEN students by their peers

Students in the classroom had positive interactions with the SEN students. In an interview, Poppy explained how she thinks students experience inclusion.

Poppy, p. 18

14.   No I think [SEN] is massively accepted

15.   I think there is so many children coming through with SEN

16.   needs, it's just normal for children to have classmates who

17.   have extra needs

Poppy expresses her belief that students accept their peers in the classroom as it is common and something they are used to.

I observed students carrying on with set activities despite some students with SEN being disruptive. They did not appear to view having a SEN TA in the classroom as out of the ordinary.

Imitating teacher's responses when praising SEN students was noted in several interactions between peers; including both verbal and non-verbal interactions-highlighted in an interview with a teacher. Teachers believed inclusion was carried out successfully between peers.

Laura, p. 6

5.   Yeah you know they are really good, they always say well

6.   done when [they] get an answer right and they know if they

7.   are calling out they have to go "ok, I know I have my hand

8.   up but I doubt miss is going to ask me because we have to

9.   ask [student] first" so [they] will be ok.

Laura explains how students praise their peer in class discussions and understand why the teacher might pick one student even if they are shouting out.

In my observations, students appeared to be very tolerant in the class and understood that some of their peers have difficulties. Some students provided non-verbal feedback to one child by patting him on the back after answering a question correctly.

> *[Student] puts his hand up to engage in the lesson. Given extra praise – "well done, good boy". Student pats him on back* (observation 1).

Although students generally accepted their peers with extra needs, it was highlighted in an interview that teachers had to work on this to ensure they were accepting of all peers.

Jessica expresses how difficult it had been for one student, who had English as an additional language (EAL), moving to the school part way through an academic year. Students struggled to accept why this child found it difficult to verbalise their ideas and talk to peers.

Jessica, p. 14

10.	one particular child with EAL, she came in a bit later so the
11.	children had already had reception together and a bit in year
12.	one and she came in and I think they found it very difficult
13.	to accept the fact she did find it difficult to verbalise a
14.	lot of her ideas and her vocabulary was very limited
	….
27.	The previous teacher to me had some difficulties with the
28.	children not accepting [the EAL student] as much, so she
29.	put on a TV program in Hungarian so they could understand
30.	exactly what was going on but all the other children were
31.	like "I have no idea what is going on here"… and she said
32.	"you know, this is how it feels for someone to come into
33.	our class when they don't speak very much English".. like
34.	you have no idea what is being said you are so confused you
35.	feel people are talking to you really quickly, it makes them
36.	think "wow that's actually really hard", so for children on
37.	that level it was really good for them to see what it felt
38.	like.

Jessica felt the strategy had a positive impact on students and helped them understand the importance of accepting everyone, and realising how they would feel in that situation. Reports of other teachers attempting impromptu strategies

emphasises how inclusion strategies are communicated between teachers, and their idea of successful practices. It also allowed Jessica to reflect upon the impact of the strategy and potentially build on this.

3.1.2 Strategies for learning activities

Different activities used to help children with SEN were embedded in everyday lesson tasks. Strategies allowing students to engage with the curriculum in a way more appealing to them was observed in lessons.

Several activities were carried out throughout the lesson. Students worked together to complete answers on the whiteboard before someone was selected to write their answer in front of the class.

> *Very interactive part of lesson – range of activities to engage all students* (observation 1).

Some lessons included using mini whiteboards, the interactive whiteboard where students took turns completing questions in front of the class and using talk partners to aid group discussion and peer scaffolding – modelling the problem-solving process and offering support between peers (Brown et al., 1993).

Differentiating tasks for students with SEN is important for their academic development and personal sense of achievement.

> Jessica, p. 16

> 5. There are so many different ways we can adapt the learning
> 6. so they can do what we are asking them to do but in a
> 7. different way and they are really getting something out
> 8. of their learning and they feel a sense of success from it
> 9. as well, that they're not sat there struggling

Jessica highlights the importance of adapting work in the classroom so all students can access the work. Jessica explains how adapting the learning assists in developing the individuals' sense of achievement. In my observation, I noted how SEN students more readily took part in activities if they understood the task.

> "*We are going to do some super sentences, are you ready?*"*- much more comfortable engaging in the group conversation….*

> *…Editing sentences- same as what they are doing in class but simplified and more interactive* (Observation 5)

This was observed in an English intervention conducted by an SEN TA, with a group of five students outside the classroom. Words were written on a board and placed

randomly around a room. Students had to form the correct sentence by actively finding the words and placing them in the correct order.

> *Implementing strategies that [educational psychologist] had suggested: words on whiteboard and placed randomly around room- team working to form sentence* (Observation 5).

An Educational Psychologist visiting the school to provide support for students with SEN suggested this activity. Despite some students appearing to struggle, it allowed them to access the curriculum in an active way, suitable for their needs, as opposed to forming sentences in their book. I noted how this could promote inclusion as students carried out the same task as their peers but in a different format. It also allowed for the students to feel included as it showed their needs were being supported.

Supporting this, every morning students carried out an intervention in the classroom. Tables consisted of approximately six people and each table carried out a different maths, literacy or reading activity. Students communicated with peers to support each other in the activity, while the teacher worked around the classroom to help different groups.

> *Student is sat opposite another SEN student to do reading comprehension- all tables doing different activities (teacher sat on table with group for starter) … Groups seem to be split in levels so everyone on table is working at the same pace- table to left to carry on with own work* (Observation 3).

Students were left to complete the work with peers on their table. This idea of peer scaffolding (Brown et al., 1993), that has previously been discussed, was used in this intervention to encourage communication and provide feedback to assist one another in their learning. This allowed the students that were struggling to develop their understanding with peers, rather than needing constant support from a teacher.

Strategies that allow SEN students to partake in the classroom were dependent on students' in their class and had been discussed prior to implementation.

> Jessica, p. 11

33. So I'll come up with ideas and [parents] can suggest ideas

34. and then we put them together in a format in a similar sort

35. of way.. for example "this is how we are going to do it",

36. different interventions or resources that we might use and

37. then we review it to see how they are getting on.

Jessica explains how they decide which strategies will be implemented. Meetings are held between teachers and parents of SEN students to discuss strategies and

activities that could work for the individual. The idea being that strategies will be more successful due to being discussed by parents who have the best knowledge of their child's needs.

After strategies have been tested, review meetings are set up to consider how successful they have been and whether they need to be adapted or changed altogether. Strategies are discussed with the SEN students and a poster is created with the student (see appendix 8). I noticed these posters were on the wall next to the teacher's desk, in the classroom, which allowed easy access by teachers, and for the student if they wish to read over it. Jessica also stated in the interview that the poster was a tool to help supply teachers understand the needs of these students and provide appropriate support.

According to a teacher, creating the poster with students was supposed to help them feel more at ease in the classroom environment as they understand what has been put in place to help them. Using a child friendly poster helps promote inclusion on the classroom level as students can express their needs and can see their needs are being supported. During my observation, I saw how the posters were being used to help SEN students. One child had specified in the section "how I would like to be supported" that they would like to be praised when they make the right choice, to be told what is happening next and be given clear instructions throughout the day. I noted the TA giving this student a sticker to praise him for being polite-

> *Good boy, very nice manners. I am going to give you a sticker for your lovely manners* (observation 5)

alongside showing him a visual timetable of what activity they were carrying out now, and what activity was following (see appendix 9). This helped minimise the child's anxiety, in turn meaning they could be included in the classroom setting. Using stickers as praise meant that this student had a physical reward for positive behaviour and could be reminded of this. This students SEN TA explained this was a successful method for this student as they often found it difficult accepting praise and this provided reinforcement to continue with these positive behaviours.

Overall, the classroom provided SEN students with a comfortable and friendly environment where they were accepted and listened to by peers and teachers, demonstrated by devices such as the poster created with the student. Different strategies and activities put in place to support SEN students mean they can encourage inclusion and support students without separating them from their peers. Activities such as using the whiteboard to encourage more interactive learning allows students to access the curriculum in a way suitable for them and thus gain a personal sense of achievement, helping to create a positive learning environment. We can see how the teachers help create an inclusive classroom, with planned or impromptu activities, that support the varied needs of all children within the classroom, thus promoting inclusive practice.

3.2 Integration of activities for Special Educational Needs

This section will explore how the SEN TA is used in the classroom to support the whole class. I will also discuss strategies implemented to manage behaviour in the classroom and intervention groups.

3.2.1 How the teaching assistant supports students in the classroom

The amount of support the SEN student receives depends on the severity of their difficulties and their behaviour on that day. In my observations, I saw some TA's could also support other students in the class during the lesson

TA interacts with all students on the table (observation 3)

whereas others must provide their one-to-one student with constant support to stay focused and undisruptive to the classroom environment.

Poppy, p. 18

24.   the casualness of having class TA's and special needs TA's,

25.   and the amount that we do have, I think it has become the

26.   norm for children and I think that really does help and it

27.   means that children don't even notice that someone is having

28.   extra help in the class, especially because our TA's are

29.   quite good at working with the rest of the class [if

30.   possible] and not just sticking to their one-to-one.

Poppy supports the observations of TA's balancing their time between providing their one-to-one with enough support and helping other pupils. Because of this, students seemed to be less aware the TA was supporting an individual and viewed it as class support. According to teachers, this leads to a more positive working environment for students and provided extra support for the class teacher. It was reported that having an SEN TA in class was significant as more students could be helped. However, during my observations I noted that this may not have been the best practice for SEN students as they were sometimes left to complete work independently despite struggling or getting distracted.

Jessica, p. 12

11.   you have probably seen how much difference it makes having

12.   a one-to-one, and having a couple of other children in my

13.   class who benefit so much from that one-to-one adult.

14.   She gets used in a way which isn't always good because she's

15.   supporting one child in particular, but we have a

16.   couple of children who really struggle in the classroom

Jessica discusses how the SEN TA is used to support numerous students in the classroom. She explains how there are consequences to the SEN TA supporting other students, as although they are benefitting some students, less time is spent supporting their one-to-one. In my observation I noted-

TA [was] working around the class to help students with their hands up (observation 4).

During this, I noticed that the TA's one-to-one did not complete as much work compared to when he was being prompted. However, this allowed the student to interact with peers – as other students were doing, making them less aware that the TA was solely supporting one student. In turn this student appeared to be more included in the classroom setting.

3.2.2 Strategies for managing behaviour

During lessons, I observed a maths intervention carried out with a small group of SEN and low ability students, outside of the classroom. The intervention was carried out by a SEN TA, their primary role being to support an individual with an EHC plan. Their task was looking at shape properties, using 3-D shapes to help with visualisation. They all held a shape to help identify different properties, as a method of kinaesthetic learning.

After this intervention, I was informed that all SEN TA's had to carry out interventions throughout the school day, alongside supporting their one-to-one student. The supposed benefit being students in the intervention group would be at a similar level educationally, or having similar needs, so content could be delivered in a more accessible way. During the observation, I noticed that some students copied each other's behaviours. One student began jumping and rolling around the floor, so another student began doing this also. The TA's response was to praise another student who was listening.

TA: "well done you are sat beautifully" – enforced other students to sit properly without directly addressing them" (observation 6).

This strategy advised the students to sit nicely, which they soon did. It was a quick and effective way to manage the group without directly addressing negative behaviours, allowing them to continue the lesson sooner. However, I noticed this behaviour occurring more in the intervention group than the classroom due to the TA supporting numerous students, as opposed to having their child one-to-one. Therefore, less content was taught as time was taken up on behaviour management. Nonetheless, it allowed them to access a more basic form of the curriculum, planned by class teachers (see appendix 10), that would not have been possible in the classroom setting.

Laura, p. 3

11.   *it's how the school have to lay it out and take away from*

12.   *the other children to make that child's day worthwhile but*

13.   *not impact the others*

Laura states how the school must consider the needs of all students.

I observed numerous situations where behaviour management was significant in ensuring the SEN students could be included with their peers. During a discussion with one TA, they explained an important part of their job role.

> *It's the balance of getting student out when being too disruptive but not rewarding them for the negative behaviour* (observation 5).

I observed this when the SEN student became agitated due to not understanding the content of the lesson starter. The TA explained to the student that they could not leave the class immediately but if they completed work for "two turns" of the five-minute timer, they were allowed a cooling off period for five minutes outside of the classroom. The student was able to calmly continue working alongside the rest of the class before their cooling off period. Consequently, the teacher could carry on with the lesson whilst the TA dealt with the behaviour that may have prevented this child from being included. This demonstrated how the teacher and TA effectively worked together to provide minimal disruption to the SEN student and their peers.

I observed students were being selected by TA's working outside of the classroom, to leave the lesson for a short period and carry out an intervention.

> *TA comes into class and takes out one child (for an intervention?)* Observation 1.

Whilst I did not observe these interventions, I was made aware that interventions were carried out for students of all abilities, not just for low ability or SEN students. This is an example of how TA's and teachers work together to support the students. In turn this promotes inclusion, as all students partake in interventions on a day to day basis, therefore no child is segregated for having extra support.

Overall, the role of the TA contributes to integrating SEN activities into the mainstream classroom to help provide support for students- enabling SEN students to access the curriculum and feel a greater sense of achievement compared to being unsupported. However, establishing the balance between providing the SEN student with enough support and being able to support their peers in the classroom is a difficulty that needs to be considered further. Alongside this, we see further difficulties such as managing behaviour in a way that still allows for inclusive practice.

3.3 Constraints of implementing inclusion

In this section I will discuss certain factors that make it difficult to implement inclusion for SEN students in the school.

Despite teachers having a positive view of inclusion, they believed several factors made inclusion more difficult to promote, both within the school and on a wider level.

Charlotte, p. 9

21.	I think the main thing I would say we have always
22.	struggled with as a school is getting extra
23.	support from external services because the waiting lists are
24.	just insane so anyone you want to see.. like a speech and
25.	language therapist for example, the waiting list is just so
26.	long.

Charlotte explains what she thinks the main difficulty the school faces in supporting SEN students. There is a long process before any external support is offered for students that have been identified for needing extra help. Without support from therapists and educational psychologists, teachers say helping students with SEN is considerably more difficult. During discussions with a TA, it became clear how often they attempt strategies and carry out activities suggested by external therapists and psychologists.

> *We carried out that activity because it was suggested by [our] educational psychologist the last time she came in* (observation 5)

However, many activities are carried out in group interventions so may not suit the needs of other members of the group, therefore highlighting the need for external services to visit a greater number of students individually.

Teachers also suggested a similar difficulty in the process of getting students an EHC Plan which enables access to greater support. I found similarities across answers when teachers were asked about the barriers to inclusion.

Laura, p. 2

36.	When we send stuff to the panels to get these EHCPs you have
37.	to tick every single box for at least 2 or 3 years previous
38.	and it is very difficult.

Charlotte, p. 9

28.	For some children to get a diagnosis or to push through

29. You're looking at a 2 year waiting list, which in year 6

30. is very frustrating because you know.. you can't

31. necessarily get these things through before they go to

32. secondary school

Laura and Charlotte highlight the average length of time they must wait for a diagnosis. Teachers appeared to be frustrated by this, possibly as it is a factor completely out of their control. Without a diagnosis or EHC plan, the student cannot benefit from extra support as nothing can be introduced without these. Having an EHC plan or diagnosis directly impacts the amount of funding a school receives and therefore the amount of TA's the school can employ. Consequently, this means that the other SEN TA's are being stretched across numerous students, the implication being the students with an EHC plan are not getting the full time support they are entitled to. An example of this was suggested previously in the intervention lead by a SEN TA. I discussed with the TA the level of support she believed other students needed. In terms of education, they were on a similar level to the student in the group with an EHC plan. Moreover, this student struggled in a classroom environment and thrived when carrying out active learning tasks, like the student with the EHC plan. She believed this student also needed one-to-one support to access the curriculum by some kinaesthetic learning outside of the classroom, but also to be able to maintain some level of inclusion in the classroom.

During my observation, I became aware of students in the classroom who needed more support than they were getting. Some of these students were on the SEN register, however had not been issued an EHC plan.

> *I think there are other students with SEN in class but no EHCP (because they don't have support) – given less one-to-one attention in class* (observation 1).

I feel this puts emphasis on the lack of funding and support from a governmental level. This was one of my initial observations and I was instantly able to identify other students that needed more support than they were receiving. My observation was supported by Jessica's opinion about students currently in her class.

Jessica, p. 12

18. In an ideal world there would probably be a couple of

19. children in my class who have more support than they are

20. getting.

Jessica discusses some other students in her class that are struggling yet can't get the support they need.

In my observations, the only TA in the classroom was the SEN TA providing one-to-one support. It appeared difficult for the teacher to support every student individually, thus supporting Jessica's opinion that some students need more support than they are getting.

> *Teacher on table with group doing literacy intervention- no one else in the classroom to help other students- if they need it* (observation 3).

The interviews suggested that one TA is allocated to the whole year group.

Laura, p. 4

30. We have a TA that we share between both classes,

31. but she can't be working with everyone, like she may be

32. taking the top group out to extend their learning. We have

33. to juggle that, which is hard on a daily basis.

Laura explains how there is one TA between two classes. She mentions the difficulty in having to accommodate all students' needs, and ensuring the classroom is inclusive for high ability students as well as SEN and lower ability students.

Overall, several factors lead to difficulties in practicing inclusion, the main factors being lack of funding and long waiting lists which make getting support for students more difficult. Without this support, teachers are stretched across more students, resulting in less individual support. Students with SEN without an EHC Plan struggle more as they aren't receiving the help they need thus resulting in negative consequences for their academic achievement and sense of success in the classroom. However, several strategies have been put in place, both inside and outside the classroom, to minimise these difficulties and ensure an inclusive atmosphere is maintained.

3.4 Training and Development
This section will explore the level of training members of staff receive in supporting students with SEN and how they develop practices to ensure they are suitable.

According to teachers, the methods of training that teachers received was varied and frequent throughout the year.

Laura, p. 3-4

39. (Question: So it's both external and internal training?)

40. It is, yeah, so external training as well as people coming

41. in to run things as well as our SENCO going on courses and

42. then she runs staff meetings.. So yeah I wouldn't really

1. have a clue how often but it's like drip drip drip all the

2. way through every year.

In lines 1 and 2 Laura discusses how they have regular training in small bursts. Regular training to support those with SEN could allow teachers to better remember strategies and understand specific needs, resulting in a consistently inclusive culture. Laura describes methods of training that are provided, i.e. a combination of external trainers and the SENCO presenting findings and suggestions from training courses she has been on. This helps teachers be equip with enough information to support SEN students with their social, emotional and educational needs.

Teachers claimed they had a lot of training for SEN students in their school. Training they mentioned included training for anxiety, ADHD, ASD, dyslexia and medical needs such as epilepsy or diabetes. Training was relevant to students currently in the school.

Charlotte, p. 9

4. I think what we try and do now is

5. much more relevant in terms of the children that you have in

6. your class.

Jessica, p. 11

13. Our school is quite lucky, our SENCO organises quite a lot

14. of different things. Because we have quite a lot of students

15. in the school with different needs we have a variety of

16. different training.

The teachers explain how the content of training is decided. The needs of students in their class influences the training they receive. Jessica expresses a positive view about the amount of training and the role that the SENCO plays in assisting with this. Viewing training as a constructive aspect of their job role has positive implications, as they are more likely to implement what they have learnt from training in their lessons and view inclusion as a positive aspect of the school community. I observed how staff members used similar techniques to support students' education or social and emotional wellbeing. Some SEN TA's used the sand timer with their one-to-one student, to help them when completing work in the classroom setting

another teacher collects sand timer (observation 6)

suggesting that strategies such as these have been advised during internal meetings lead by the SENCO. This assists in promoting inclusion as students can see peers using similar strategies in the classroom, therefore appears to be normal practice. Alongside internal meetings, teachers meet with other teachers in the local community to share ideas and develop practices.

Charlotte, p. 9

6. So we will have meetings with other schools in our local

7. area to share experiences which then you can take away what

8. you thinks going to work with your children and what is not.

In this extract, Charlotte highlights another method of training and development that the school use to support SEN students. Discussing with teachers from other schools about personal experiences enables new ideas to be circulated around schools meaning teachers can implement strategies that have already been tested on children with similar needs. This could help in developing an inclusive environment as successful methods and areas for development can be discussed from different perspectives.

Overall, the training and development that teachers and TA's received has assisted in understanding the needs of individual children, and enables the regular development of further practice, ensuring SEN students are in an inclusive environment. The different methods of training that are provided mean teachers have a much deeper understanding of different practices that may be appropriate. Additionally, teachers seemed to be satisfied with the amount and type of training they have received since working at the school and believe it contributes to how successfully they practice inclusion in their classroom.

4. General Discussion

Based on information gathered from six observations and views of teachers and TA's at Bailey's Court Primary School this study offers three main findings. Firstly, the classroom environment is crucial for promoting positive interactions between SEN students and their peers and supporting inclusion. The role of the TA and other stakeholders was significant in creating this positive classroom environment. Teachers seem to value the input of parents and external professionals to assist them in creating an environment that all students can thrive in. Our findings build on Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden's (2002) conclusions on a combination of elements required for developing inclusive practices. Meeting with external agencies i.e. psychologists, and parents means teachers can carry out planned activities that will develop learning alongside promoting positive peer interactions. Such strategies including peer scaffolding (Brown et al, 1993) allows students to support each other in the lesson as well as letting SEN students be included with their peers.

Additionally, teachers demonstrated a strong understanding of different needs, and strategies to support this. My findings suggested that this was because of regular training provided to teachers, enabling them to develop practices to further inclusion. This supports the findings of Bennett, DeLuca and Bruns (1997; cited by Mcgregor and Vogelsberg, 1998) as teachers connected with other schools allowing them to develop practices based on personal experience of other teacher.

The second finding suggests that maintaining the balance between supporting SEN students and not impacting their peers can be achieved through managing classroom behaviour. My findings showed that the TA had a crucial role in meeting this balance, by using strategies such as the five minute timer, and regular praise within the classroom. The findings suggested that TA's were aware of individual needs, thus could support other students with their learning, when appropriate. TA's also demonstrated behaviour management techniques could help to include students in the lesson for as long as possible. The amount of time an SEN student spent in the classroom was highly dependent on the severity of their needs, showing students that the classroom is an inclusive community however their needs are also considered. Furthermore, I observed this balance during intervention groups for SEN students due to it managing classroom behaviour and enabling the students to interact positively with learning by using methods more accessible to them. This included small group work and kinaesthetic learning.

The third finding suggests difficulties with practicing inclusion, according to teachers, lie in the lack of funding and long waiting lists, consequently impacting on how much support students with SEN receive. Consequently, teachers are required to increase their work load to minimise the effect it has on students, causing greater expectations and stress for teachers. Nonetheless, strategies suggested by professionals were implemented to reduce the effect of these constraints and help students benefit from inclusion practices and have positive school experiences. Strategies including group

interventions for all students and kinaesthetic learning, promote inclusion and ensure students don't feel singled out for learning differently to their peers. Moreover, teachers and TA's provide support for students who they also believe have SEN but have not yet received a diagnosis, due to waiting lists. This further promotes inclusive practices for students in the classroom.

A clear overlap between these findings has been identified, and all factors need to be considered in unison if inclusion is to be practiced successfully. It is straightforward to suggest inclusion in schools needs to be practiced, however based on my findings teachers and TA's need to go to an extra length to create a solution based on their knowledge, developed through training provided by the school. Despite needing to have a deep understanding of individual needs, schools must appreciate that inclusion for SEN students is about changing school practices to benefit all students, not just adding to existing practice. The advantage of this being that students become more accepting of everyone and learn to work well with their peers. Equally, there are difficulties with developing these solutions as time constraints mean other important roles of a teacher may be compromised, possibly resulting in increasing stress which could have negative consequences.

The current study was limited due to observations and interviews only being carried out across two year groups. To gain a broader view of how inclusion is experienced it would be important to observe a wider range of year groups and SEN. Moreover, this study only looked at how inclusion was experienced for children in the classroom. Although providing us with a great insight to the overall picture, there may be considerable differences to how SEN students experience school outside the classroom, which could be considered in future studies. Additionally, interviewing other members of staff including the head teacher, SENCO and lunch time staff may be beneficial in developing this deeper insight. Furthermore, future studies could use video recordings alongside field notes during observations for another dimension of observation.

Using ethnography allowed me to gain a better understanding of the environment and behaviours displayed within the setting. It also allowed me to gather more detailed data that furthered my understanding of inclusion practices and demonstrates how this mainstream school thrives to promote a fully inclusive setting. These findings could be used to further develop school practices, alongside providing detailed research for future policy making, for the improvement of inclusion in all schools.

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