

Engagement and Participation with Parent Carers,
Children and Young People (Version 4 - April 2014)
Appendix 5 - Participation Works 'How to Support
Inclusive Groups in schools and Other Educational
Settings'

How to Support Inclusive Groups in Schools and Other Educational Settings

This *How To* Guide provides guidelines and practical suggestions on how to support the on-going work of schools and other educational settings, seeking to achieve inclusive participation for children and young people in schools.

Most schools are already involved with policy making and good practice in tackling the issue of inclusion. This Guide is to help school settings develop and build on an area of school life to which they are already committed. It explains different ideas and approaches to promote pupil participation in making inclusion work to its full potential and offers some best practice advice and tips on how to achieve this.

School staff will be familiar with the issue of inclusion through knowledge of the school's statutory obligations when teaching special needs children, from working alongside the SENCO in a school setting, INSET training, the use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and the role of learning support assistants (LSAs).

What are inclusive groups?

Inclusive groups are groups that enable disabled and non-disabled children and young people to participate on an equal basis. Being inclusive means creating and maintaining a space where everyone's needs are met so that all children and young people can take part, difference is celebrated, and everyone is valued and given a voice.

Inclusive groups reflect the diverse nature of society and enable the power and decision-making processes to be shared equally between everyone. Any group can work towards becoming an inclusive group by making changes to procedures, policies and attitudes.

Inclusion in a school setting ensures that children and young people with disabilities have the same opportunities and support to take part in all aspects of pupil participation in school, i.e. school leadership, management and structures. It ensures that disabled children and young people have the same

rights as other pupils in having a say in decisions that affect them. When talking about developing inclusive practice in schools it is important to look at the policies of integration and full inclusion in school activities and ensure that these have been enacted to promote the independence and



social participation of pupils with disabilities. Inclusion is not just about encouraging the participation of disabled pupils; it is about addressing the issues of equality and is concerned with quality provision for everyone.

Inclusive education has been defined as being able to help:

'...all students to fully participate in any mainstream early year's provision, school, college or university. Inclusive education provision has training and resources aimed at fostering every student's equality and participation in all aspects of the life of the learning community.'

(Reiser, Chapman & Skitteral, 2002.)

Why have inclusive participation in school?

Inclusive participation provides opportunities to disabled children for socialising and friendships with their peers. It helps build and strengthen peer relationships in school and promotes understanding and respect amongst all children and young people.

Inclusive approaches help school staff and non-disabled children and young people benefit from the change in attitude that familiarity and acceptance can bring: they learn to look beyond the disability to each unique and valuable person. An inclusive approach enables difference to be celebrated and embraced, strengthening the sense of identity for the individual as well as the group.

Creating inclusive opportunities encourages disabled children and young people to participate and become positive role models in their school and community.

The following principles provide a good basis for developing inclusive participation in a school setting:

Social model of disability

This recognises that although some individuals have physical or psychological differences, which affect their lives, it is society's reaction to these differences that disables people through physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers. It is these barriers that result in people being excluded. For example, a wheelchair-user would not be disabled if a shop had a ramp and staff with a positive attitude. The social model separates a person's impairment from the barriers they face.

In a school setting this means recognising the needs of pupils with disabilities and providing them with the support they need to participate. It is not about focusing on the pupil's disability, but about changing the attitudes of others around the child, i.e. other staff and students. It means addressing all the barriers that hinder or prevent them from taking part in school activities and creating a barrier-free environment.

Communication is more than speech

Communication is the exchange of thoughts, feelings, information and ideas between people. Language is one method by which people communicate, but it is by no means the only one. Fundamental to this work is our belief that every disabled child can communicate and the onus is on us as the adults to facilitate this process, by discovering and developing ways of communicating with each individual child. This will mean using a range of different techniques of communication and adapting them according to the needs of the individual child.

Child-focused approach

It is important to remind ourselves that adults generally wield considerable power when working with children and young people. This power imbalance can be exacerbated when working with disabled children and young people. Disabled children are subject to a higher degree of adult intervention than other

children. Parents and practitioners are more likely to regard themselves as advocates for disabled children, especially when the children have specific communication needs. It is vital that disabled children and young people are given an equal chance to participate. Assumptions should not be made about their ability to participate.

Legislative and Policy Framework

Legislation and policies in support of the establishment of inclusive groups

The UK Government has made a commitment to the 2009 ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which supports the drive towards inclusion, in particular Article 7, which states that disabled children and young people have the same rights and freedoms as other children and young people, and Article 30, which enshrines the rights of disabled people to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport.

Article 2 states that the rights given in the Convention apply to all children equally, irrespective of their race, sex, religion, disability, opinion or family background. Article 23 further protects the rights of disabled children, stating that they should enjoy conditions which promote independence and enable them to participate actively in the community.

Although the Equality Act 2010 replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a new positive duty on public authorities to promote disability equality. The Disability Equality Duty requires public authorities, including local authorities and mainstream and special schools, to develop a Disability Equality Scheme to show how they are going to promote disability equality. Inclusive groups provide a good example for promoting equality for disabled people as they should, if working properly, create an environment where disabled and non-disabled people are equal.

The DDA (2005) builds on the existing DDA duties and requires schools to have in place:

- A Disability Equality Scheme (DES)
- An Action Plan
- An Impact Assessment form.

Supporting research and reports from third sector organisations

Include Me TOO has produced a Charter of Rights for disabled children and young people which promotes inclusion in society and provides key principles for creating an inclusive environment. A number of key organisations, including all the main political parties and several government departments, have given their support to this Charter.

Source

Extending Inclusion – Access for disabled children and young people to extended schools and children's centres: 2008 a development manual by Philippa Stobbs Council for Disabled Children (CDC) commissioned by Sure Start, Early Support and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Getting started

Whether starting work from scratch or adjusting an existing project to make it inclusive, it is important to be aware of the barriers that prevent disabled children and young people from participation. These barriers can be physical, organisational or attitudinal, and need to be taken into account at every point in developing inclusive practice.

Research into inclusive play with disabled children and young people has shown that bullying or fear of bullying stops them accessing inclusive activities like going out in the playground and interacting with other children. Negative attitudes from children and staff prevent their participation in activities outside the classroom.

Where to begin?

Consultation

The first step to promote inclusive practice in school is to consult with disabled children and young people about the barriers they face in pupil participation. It is about understanding the

barriers to participation from their perspective, and finding out from them about how they would like to be supported in the process.

Raising Awareness and Understanding

Raising awareness in classrooms and schools about disability and challenging stereotypes is the first step in developing inclusive participation work. All children need to understand the feelings of disabled people and to know how to include them. Able bodied children need to know that though disabled people may (or may not) look different on the outside; they usually feel just the same as they do on the inside. There is also a need to create an understanding of the issues and empathy amongst pupils and school staff, which would help address any barriers. One way to do this is to have open discussions and debates in the classroom on this issue. Teachers could use stories, short documentaries, interviews and sound bites to initiate a discussion on almost any aspect of disability. Teachers looking for materials to use in promoting discussion around this issue will find a wealth of ideas in a joint publication by

the British Film Institute and Disability Equality in Education Disabling Imagery. Resources are listed at the end of this *Guide* to help teachers to raise awareness and promote positive images of disabled children and young people.

Challenging perceptions and developing relationships

In a diverse group it is likely that many of the children and young people will not have met others from a different background. The non-disabled children and young people may have preconceptions about those who are disabled and vice versa. Do not assume that disabled children and young people will not have preconceptions about those who are non-disabled or disabled. Members of the group will need time to get to know each other, and when starting a new group it is a good idea to split it into smaller groups where people don't know one another. Here are some ideas to help get you started:

- Set ground rules with the children and young people at the outset. Let the children and young people take the lead in defining a working agreement or group contract and looking at how the group will work together may enhance the cohesion of the group
- Starting with ice-breakers and social getting-to-know you activities may help to challenge perceptions
- Training, formal and non-formal, on equality issues and the effect of preconceptions may be useful
- Focus on what people have in common, not what separates them.

If the group is a pre-existing one where disabled children and young people are being included for the first time, it is essential that the new members are made to feel part of

the group. Their inclusion provides a great opportunity to revise and review the group's working agreement and the way the group works. Involvement and participation will take different forms depending on the different needs of the children and young people, and one of the first steps is to raise awareness with disabled children and young people of the importance of taking an active role in making choices and decisions about their own lives. They need to be encouraged and motivated to take part.

Inclusive participation is about encouraging the involvement of disabled children and young people in all areas and activities of school life with their peers. These include:

- School governance – school councils, class councils, staff selection and other related activities
- Classroom learning and curriculum
- Playground and leisure activities
- Extended schools
- Community work.

Accessible information and communication

Providing information that is accessible to everyone is essential to ensure that genuine participation can take place.

Here are some things to think about to ensure this happens before, during and after meetings:

- Consult the disabled pupil before the event/activity to assess their needs. If the child or young person has little or no verbal communication, find out from those who know them best (parents, carers) about how they communicate
- Use simple language. Keep the information brief. Avoid jargon and

- too many long words
- Provide the information in different formats. Use visuals, images and creative ways to share information
- Some children and young people with disabilities do not communicate using formal communication, such as speech. Some use symbols, signing and pictures, while others rely on gesture, facial expressions and eye movements to communicate with those around them. Provide a range of communication formats so that everyone gets a chance to communicate in some way. For example, drawing, photos, cards etc. In some cases the material will need to be prepared in advance by the teachers or support staff
- Allow plenty of time for establishing communication in the participation group/activity. Make other children and adults involved in the meeting aware of the communication needs of the child to ensure that the pace of the entire group is slow and interaction is at the child or young person's pace
- Use reflective listening skills: constantly check with the young person, repeat what they have communicated back to them and confirm that you have understood exactly what they are telling you. This would be the role for the facilitator of the activity or meeting or a buddy if they are providing peer support. They would need to check that disabled child or young person is engaged and understands what is happening. Pay attention to the environment: minimise possible distractions, such as loud noises, ensure the child or young person is physically comfortable and in a position that allows them to communicate freely
- If there is use of photography in meetings, events and assemblies then be aware of the use of flash photography as this can cause seizures and/or disruption to many disabled pupils.
- If the group working is predominantly comprised of hearing students then arrange for an interpreter or palantypist for deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people.

Taking Time

Inclusion takes time. In order to sustain an inclusive approach you need to build more time into every part of your work. It is likely that there will be a need for extra time during the development and planning stages of running inclusive groups as this is the point where many of the adjustments or solutions will need to be developed. It is good practice to involve children and young people at the outset of the project i.e. when thinking and planning about the work. These processes should equally include disabled children and young people, and this often requires more time. For example, in order to involve disabled children and young people in some activities staff may need preparation sessions, a longer time to process information, more time in sessions to express themselves and shorter sessions or more breaks. For the staff, even if a particular part of a process does not directly involve children and young people, the increased number of factors that need to be considered means that preparations are likely to take longer. For example, arranging an accessible venue or transportation will take time.

Training

Training is crucial as it ensures everyone has appropriate knowledge that can be translated into practice. It can also help to establish the culture of the group by giving staff and volunteers the tools to model inclusive behaviour. Most schools will provide training for staff as part of the DES (Disability Equality Scheme).

Training (not necessarily formal) is particularly important for all the children and young people involved in the classroom. As it is possible that many have not been in a diverse group before, there is a scope for stereotyping, preconceptions and questions that will affect the group's working.

Both disabled and able-bodied children need help in recognising disabilities, both physical and mental, and learning how to treat people with disabilities. We need to help children to understand:

- That there are different kinds of disability
- What they think it feels like to be disabled
- What they can do to help people who are disabled
- How they can show empathy for disabled people
- How to interact with children who are disabled.

Through discussion, involvement and practical activities, able-bodied children can be made more aware of the needs and feelings of people who are disabled.

Depending on what the group is trying to achieve, you may also want to provide the group members with empowerment and decision-making development opportunities as many children and young people will not have had the chance to develop these skills before.

Depending on what stage the group is at, it might be a beneficial process to have the group members or potential members provide training for new and current staff and volunteers on certain issues, for example, what inclusion means to the group or the ethos of the group and the reasons for that ethos. Disabled children and young people and their parents/carers may also provide informal training to staff and students on how to support them.

Accessible Venues

In the context of the school setting where you hold your group meetings the venue needs to be accessible.

Most schools now have disabled access, but it may be necessary to look at other areas of the building to decide if alterations need to be made or whether disabled children can be catered for in certain areas. The DDA Act clearly states that all schools must now publish an accessibility plan and strategies. These strategies and plans are designed to show how the school will:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum
- Improve the physical environment of schools for the purposes of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated services
- Improve the delivery to disabled pupils, within a reasonable time and in ways which are determined after taking account of their disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents/carers.

Access also covers sound levels and the environment of the room:

- Do you have access to a quiet room?
- Are there options for lighting levels?
- Are there lots of objects in the room that could create visual or physical obstructions, such as pillars?
- Is there a working hearing loop system available?
- Are there chairs available in the room if it is not a formal table setup?
- Is there clear signage?

Support

When creating inclusive groups, one of the key issues is finding out what support disabled children and young people need in order to be included. This may seem intimidating, but in fact it is quite simple to ask the children and young people and their families. You do not need to have any specific knowledge of impairments as everybody is unique regardless of what labels they may have. Focus on what they need and when they need it rather than what they can't do or their impairment.

It is very important to gather as much information as possible about the child's specific support, communication, mobility and dietary requirements prior to starting any group work as this will aid decisions about the level of support that is needed.

You can also consider the following ways to support a disabled child or young person:

- Buddy support from another child or young person either from the same class or a different class for the participation activity
- Peer support from the class for participation
- Select champions from the class to support all children on a weekly basis.

This will give every child in the class a chance to take responsibility and will also help increase their understanding about the needs of disabled children.

Practical tips for inclusive participation

During participation in school governance, disabled children and young people will be involved in various formal meetings such as annual school reviews, transition-planning meetings or other meetings where decisions are made about a young person's life.

Below are some ideas which, if put into practice before, during and after, can make meetings a more positive experience for disabled children and young people.

Before a meeting

- Involve the child or young person in setting up the meeting room and arrange for them to be there first; it can be very daunting to walk into a room full of adults sitting around a table. Give them the chance to decide where they want to be seated
- Offer support if it's a new or challenging experience for the young people, for example a 'buddy' could accompany the young people throughout the meeting
- Give the child the opportunity to agree a 'time out' signal beforehand, which they can use if the meeting is getting too much or they need a break
- Have ground rules set by all involved at the outset of the meeting to ensure that everyone introduces themselves and clearly explains their role.

During a meeting

- Ensure the young person gets the opportunity to have their say. This could be part of the ground rules for everyone involved in the meeting. Give the child or young person the choice of how they want to participate if they do not use speech, or don't yet have the confidence to speak within a larger group. For example, it may be a good idea to have a PowerPoint presentation already prepared, with their views, feelings, choices and questions on it
- Encourage everyone present to use clear and accessible language, avoiding jargon at all times
- Ensure questions are pitched at the right level for the young person's needs and that choices offered are realistic and meaningful
- Allow time for the young person to process information, consider their views and respond to discussions at their own pace
- Discuss and agree with the child or young person at the outset how they will indicate if they don't understand a question or if they haven't got an answer to a question they have asked. Find out if they would prefer ongoing support with this issue during the meeting. The buddy could offer this support if they wish.

After a meeting

- Check that the young person is clear about what will happen next or what the outcome of the meeting is
- Provide the child or young person with a summary of the meeting soon after it happens, either verbally, in writing or using pictures or symbols
- If a decision has been made, which the young person does not agree with, or is not happy with, make sure time is taken to explain why and that they are given the opportunity and support to make a complaint if they wish to.



The following case studies are examples of how disabled children and young people have been involved in inclusive work in different settings.

Clarendon School

Clarendon is a special school for pupils aged 7 to 16 with moderate learning difficulties and is responsible for an offsite unit for pupils aged 7 to 11 with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The school has been consulting pupils for the last ten years.

Due to the age range, varying ability and needs of the pupils, consultation and participation strategies are undertaken in a variety of ways to ensure that all pupils can take part. For example, questionnaires are in a text and non-text format. Below is a summary of the ways in which the school involves pupils.

School Level

School Development Plan

Over the years pupils' views for the school development plan have been gathered in a variety of ways through questionnaires, focus groups, circle-time, and the school council. Past consultations for the school development plan have looked at which lessons were pupils' favourites, preferred teaching and learning styles, and the school grounds.

School policies

Pupils have been involved in determining the content of the school's teaching and learning policy and behaviour policy. For the teaching and learning policy, pupils were asked how and where they felt they learned best and most. The results highlighted that visits out of school and activity/focus weeks were really stimulating.

Classroom Level

School council

The school council has been an active driver of change in the school. Each class elects one student councillor. As the age range of school council members spans from 7 to 16, the meetings and decision-making process needs to be managed carefully so that everyone feels able to take part.

A senior teacher is responsible for chairing the meetings and supports pupils in pulling together an agenda and minutes of meetings based on what the pupils raise. Pupils discuss age-related issues at classroom level through circle-time, and they bring whole school issues to school council meetings. Student councillors feedback to their classes on decisions and outcomes of their meetings. Teachers help with the feedback if support is needed, so for example support is needed for pupils whose language is assisted by signing.

The school council has direct contact with the governors and head teacher. Governors have consulted the school council about journeys to school, extended school, and out of school activities. The school council have been involved in:

- Recruiting a new head teacher
- Looking at involving more girls in sports
- The need for relaxation techniques for pupils
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the 'Stop and Think' playground behaviour management strategy
- Improving the recycling system in school.

Individual level

All pupils are asked individually about their preferred learning styles and teachers use this information when planning lessons. Pupils are also involved in setting their own targets, which are reviewed on an on-going basis. All of the pupils in the school have statements of special educational needs, which mean that they all have annual reviews.

Pupils do a self-review prior to the meeting and come with their own report of their progress. In the self review, students ask themselves: Where they think they have done well? What they could do better? If they have any targets, and what their view of the school is? Younger pupils have someone to scribe for them when writing their report.

Impact

Consultations on the school's behaviour policy have resulted in the pupils deciding the incentives for positive behaviour. They designed a merit system where pupils can exchange their merits for items in the merit shop (footballs, jewellery, accessories etc). Classes that receive no unauthorised absences at the end of a term now have the reward of a school trip.

Benefits to Clarendon School

The school operates an open process for all students to get involved in the school aside from the school council. There is currently a group of pupils who are passionate about cricket and are looking into buying better equipment. The pupils will be responsible for making an application to a charitable trust.

Time 4 Change, The Children's Society PACT project, York

Time 4 Change is a scheme for schools led by a group of disabled young people designed to help schools comply with their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

How did Time 4 Change help schools to do this? The scheme offers mainstream schools the chance to be inspected by disabled young people. The young people pick out areas of best practice and identify how the school could better meet its duties. Head teachers and special educational needs co-ordinators are given feedback and are offered recommendations to improve their schemes.

The PACT project in York supports disabled children and young people by helping them to stand up for their rights. PACT does what it says on the tin – it stands for Participation, Advocacy, Consultancy and Training. They do all of this to make sure that the young people they work with feel empowered, self-confident and happy.

PACT use a variety of different methods to help the young people achieve this. From using their innovative and award winning 'I'll Go First' CD-ROM, providing a 'student befrienders' scheme or getting young people into work experience, all their work is entirely child-centred.

The PACT 'I'll Go First' CD-ROM, trains professionals to have the skills, confidence and knowledge to communicate with disabled children and young people who have communication impairments. The tool helps children and young people to express their feeling about the care and education they receive in a fun and creative way – especially children with high communication needs who use non-verbal methods of communication. It helps them to be included in decisions about their future and their path to increasing independence.

Time 4 Change has created a DVD to show how schools should approach collaborative working. To request a copy, call 01904 639056.

Making It Happen – A Children's Society Project

Making It Happen began in April 2009 and completed in March 2011.

It is a joint project that is delivered by three Children's Society project offices:

- Solihull Shared Care
- PACT, York
- DAP, London.

The overall aims of the project are to increase the opportunities for disabled children and young people to be involved in the shaping and development of the services they use and to be able to make themselves heard on issues that affect their lives.

The other main objective of the project is to work with local authorities and other organisations to support them in their participation work and to provide workshops/training where appropriate.

The project promoted two web-based resources:

1. *Askability* www.askability.org.uk – a unique website, which displays a wide range of information in symbol format. This is aimed at disabled children and young people who do not use text as their primary means of communication
2. *The Disability Toolkit* www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk – a website for professionals and parents where they can access lots of resources and information about participation.

Local authorities are able to use *Askability* to improve their capacity to engage and inform disabled children and young people in their local area by subscribing to the website. By subscribing to *Askability*, the local authority is given its own local pages on which to display information about news and events in that area. They also get the benefit of a dedicated Children's Society link worker who has expertise in transcribing that information into symbol format and uploading it to the website.

Askability will be launching a new and exciting feature, '*Chatability*', which is a social networking function that operates completely in symbol format. This will bring opportunities for meeting and chatting online in a safe environment. Once again, this is the first of its kind in the world.

How are children and young people involved?

Young people have been involved in the project in a variety of ways. Each of the three project offices has established an advisory group. The groups are made up of disabled young people and provide opportunities for the group to set and discuss issues that are important to them, and comment and feedback to other organisations about services they provide. The advisory groups have also contributed to producing a variety of resources, which are useful/helpful for other young people and/or professionals. There is also a strong social and learning aspect to these groups.

Young people have also been involved in helping to shape *Askability* and in providing content for the site. The project also runs a bi-weekly web club at a local school in Solihull where young people get involved in using the web and multimedia arts activities. Again, this gives them a valuable opportunity to gather young people's opinions about the website.

Young people have also taken part in creating and delivering workshops, training and presentations to a variety of audiences at both local and national events.

What has been achieved so far?

The project successfully recruited three disabled young people's champions, one in each of the project offices. These positions are paid, part-time roles in which the champion is involved in project delivery, actively promoting the benefits of participation and acting as a role model to other disabled young people.

They have worked with many local authorities across England, learning about and sharing their good practice in participation and also identifying whether they need support to grow their participation work and training delivery as and where appropriate. As a result of this work, eight local authorities have subscribed to *Askability*. This means that many young people in those localities have benefited from their own localised accessible information available to them through the website.

'Making It Happen' has been promoted at a number of national conferences, often involving disabled young people in these presentations.

Although the project has completed, the two web resources will continue to grow and develop, which will mean there is a lasting legacy of good practice in participation amongst both the young people and the local authorities and professionals working with them.

Ashcroft High School, Luton

Ashcroft High School is an average sized comprehensive school with an ethnic demographic of 67% White British, 12% Asian or Asian British students from Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Indian backgrounds and 9% Black or Black British students from Caribbean or African backgrounds. There are a significant minority of students at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the number with a statement of special educational need is average for a school of this size.

What they do

School Level

Whole school 'Antidote' project: Staff and pupils were invited to contribute equally to a number of surveys, workshops and presentations, examining the general well-being of the school community, identifying areas for improvement from both staff and student perspectives in relation to quality of teaching and learning, the school ethos and behaviour. Workshops were aimed at groups of staff, groups of students as well as mixed groups of staff and students. The results were collated by the providers and feedback was given to staff and students.

School Council: Elected representatives from each vertical tutor group/year group meet every two weeks in Houses. The Meetings are minuted and feedback is given to students via tutor groups and to staff via the school's Managed Learning Environment (MLE) platform. There are also School Council representatives who meet with Governors to present ideas and feedback to students

Classroom Level

Students as Learning Partners: Students attend Faculty Meetings for the different subjects to represent students' views about lessons (content, timetabling, teaching and learning styles, assessment). Issues are discussed, implications are considered and changes are made accordingly.

New Teacher Interviews: Students meet interviewees, show them around the school and give feedback to the interviewing panel. Students involved with the demonstration lessons also give feedback to the interviewing panel

New Support Staff Interviews: New potential support staff (Teaching Assistants) visit the Golden Curriculum (classes of 12 particularly vulnerable students with a range of needs) and work with them during a lesson. The students are consulted before the final decision is made.

Governors: The Special Educational Needs Governor came to meet with the Dyslexia Specialist Teacher as well as a group of Dyslexic students. He interviewed the students and used their feedback to report back to the full Governors' meeting. He also met with a group of vulnerable students with a range of Special Educational Needs. No teaching or support staff were present, which allowed the students to talk candidly about their experiences of school. Their comments were also fed back to the full Governors' meeting as well as inclusion staff.

The Black Pupils' Achievement Programme (BPAP): focuses on the school's black students and gives extra support and enrichment activities designed to empower the students to take a pride in their heritage, celebrate and share their culture and to improve their academic grades. The BPAP group as well as other volunteers take part in community projects including organising a Christmas concert and gifts for the local elderly population.

Individual Level

Creative Partners: This group has involved students taking less academic subjects using more creative ways to learn. Training and workshops were given to staff and students. Staff were encouraged to use creative arts as a method of teaching and large group creative projects were encouraged. Practical projects off-site have also taken place.

Behaviour Panel: The behaviour panel was formed by students to address issues such as low level disruption in lessons. Students monitored behaviour in lessons (anonymously) and repeat offenders were notified about their behaviour (as were parents). If low level disruption persisted, the students involved would be invited to appear before the panel (of peers). Their behaviour would be discussed and ways forward would be suggested.

Benefit to Ashcroft High

Students and staff have a sense of belonging and community. Teaching staff have been able to improve the quality of Teaching and Learning as well as Assessment for Learning by taking on board the students' requests. Students' behaviour has improved (low level disruption has been reduced) so that lessons have become more focussed. Both students and staff are learning to listen to each other and compromise on issues. Teamwork and equal ownership of decisions has been developing. The whole school is also developing a more healthy understanding and respect for different needs, cultures and beliefs. Through the formal meetings processes, students are learning to value the importance of discussion, good communication and are realising that they can affect change.

Impact

The Local Community: One of the local schools for children with profound and multiple learning needs has benefitted from an outdoor centre, which was constructed by the Creative Partners' group.

Embedded Participation: Ofsted recently commented very favourably on the range of opportunities for students to become active participants within the school. They praised the range of forums and the uptake of interest amongst the students. Over time, regular meetings, followed by effective feedback and promotion (meetings, notice boards, assemblies, staff briefings etc), have improved communication and raised the profile of pupil participation. This has taken time, organisation and consistency as well as a true belief that everyone's contributions are valued.



Find out more

Below are some other publications and organisations that offer useful information, tools and experience in creating and running inclusive groups within schools:

Voice is a support network for families involved with communication aids and welcomes children and young people, professionals, families and anyone interested in alternative or augmentative communication (AAC). Further information is available from www.1voice.info

The **Alliance for Inclusive Education (Allfie)** is a leading disabled people's organisation which campaigns for inclusive education. They have a number of resources and publications looking at inclusion and young disabled people's leadership. Further information is available from www.allfie.org.uk

A Teaching Guide to Disability and Moving Image Media. A secondary teachers' guide www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/secondary.html

The **Council for Disabled Children (CDC)** has a number of resources looking at including and involving disabled children and young people. These include resources from the Making Ourselves Heard project. This project promotes the active participation of disabled children and young people in all decisions and issues that affect them. For further information visit http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc_moh18

The **Disability Toolkit** is a website established by the Children's Society to support professionals in involving disabled children and young people in participation and decision-making. The website has a database of resources and practice examples. For more information visit www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk

How to Involve Children and Young People with Communication Impairments in Decision-making.

Go to www.participationworks.org.uk/resources for more information.

Triangle provides training, consultancy and direct services for disabled children and young people. Log onto www.triangle.org.uk for more information.

Include Me TOO works locally, regionally and nationally promoting the inclusion of disabled children and young people in society. Include Me TOO is particularly knowledgeable around the inclusion of disabled children and young people from black and other minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds. It has published an inclusion charter of rights for, and developed by, disabled children and young people. www.includemetoo.org.uk features more information.

Kids is a national charity providing a wide range of services for disabled children, young people and their families. They have led a number of projects looking at inclusive play and accessible activities. Find more information at www.kids.org.uk

Leaps and Bounds is a toolkit for developing inclusive youth activities developed by the Children's Society and is available from www.childrenssociety.org.uk

So What Is Inclusion? is a CD resource available from UK Youth looking at the development of inclusive practice for young disabled and non-disabled people in youth work. For more information go to www.ukyouth.org

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) – Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools (Revised May 2011) www.csie.org.uk

World of Inclusion has information and resources on inclusive practice and disability rights. Find out more at www.worldofinclusion.com

References

Choices and Voices: Advocacy and Participation for Disabled Children and Young People – Ideas and Key Messages. Go to www.actionforadvocacy.org.uk for more info.

Dickens, M. Emerson, S and Smith P (2004) *Starting with Choice Inclusive Strategies for Consulting Young Children*, Save the Children

Reiser, R, Chapman, M and Skitteral, J (2002) *Inclusion in Early Years: Disability Equality in Education Course Book*

Lewis, M and Howarth, R (2002) 'Will it Ever get Sorted?' Report of consultation with disabled children and young people, Save the Children

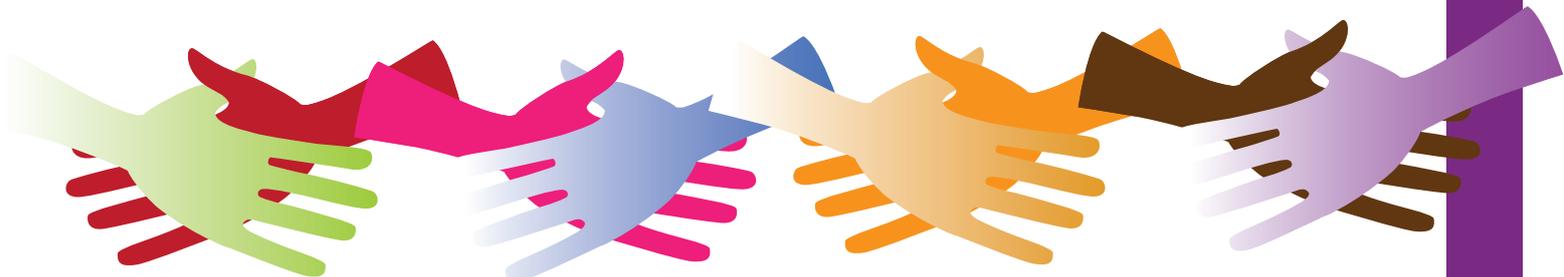
Listening to Parents of Disabled Children, a report for the London Development Agency by the Daycare Trust (2007)

How to Support Inclusive Groups in Schools and Other Educational Settings

Joseph Rowntree Foundation report (2006),
Inclusion of Disabled Children in Primary
School Playgrounds

Stobbs, P (2008) Extending Inclusion: Access
for Disabled Children and Young People to
Extended Schools and Children's Centres:
a Development Manual. Department for
Children, Schools and Families, 2008

The Children's Society has created a resource
for teachers about disability awareness, which
is available at www.childrenssociety.org.uk/research. Time 4 Change has created a
DVD to show how schools should approach
collaborative working. To request a copy, call
01904 639056.



Participation Works enables organisations to effectively involve children and young people in the development, delivery and evaluation of services, which affect their lives.

The Participation Works *How To* guides are a series of booklets that provide practical information, useful tips and case studies of good participation practice. Each one provides an introduction to a different element of participation to help organisations enhance their work with children and young people.

The Participation Works Online Gateway enables you to explore the latest developments and resources in participation. Visit www.participationworks.org.uk

Participation Works

8 Wakley St, London, EC1V 7QE
www.participationworks.org.uk
Enquiry line: 020 7833 6815
Email: enquiries@participationworks.org.uk

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Authors: Radhika Howarth and Becky Wieczorek

Researcher: Radhika Howarth

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Su-Yin Pelham, Treviglas Community College
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