

What strategies can inclusion practitioners use to support the development of positive reading attitudes in children attending an inclusion base?

Heather Smith, Acting Principal teacher of Inclusion, West & Stewartry Inclusion Service

What did you plan to do and why?

The focus of my enquiry was the reading attitudes of children attending an inclusion base. **Anecdotal evidence** from our practice suggests that many children attending an inclusion base placement have negative reading attitudes. Inclusion practitioners can play an important role in teaching Literacy, modelling reading habits and raising the profile of reading.

As a **first step**, I planned to gather data on inclusion practitioners' own reading habits, their perceptions of children's reading and the strategies they use to promote positive reading attitudes. I developed an interview schedule using a semi-structured approach and interviewed colleagues during term 3.

The National Literacy Survey (2020) found that the **gender reading gap** in terms of both reading enjoyment and daily reading habit increased during the first lockdown

Within my setting most pupils attending are male. All pupils attending have an IEP and every pupil attending during session 2019-2020 was participating in a **Literacy/Reading intervention**. Morgan & Fuchs (2007) suggest **struggling readers** can lack motivation and become less engaged, which impairs comprehension and limits capacity to develop effective reading strategies. McGeown et al. (2015) advocate that teachers should focus on developing positive attitudes towards reading and **building confidence** in reading skills in addition to supporting the development of word reading skills.

How did Covid-19 affect your plan?

Initially, my research plan had included exploring pupils' reading attitudes upon entry/exit to the inclusion base and introducing changes practice based upon discussions with groups of children, in the form of pupil voice groups. The impact of these changes would then be evaluated and would form part of my findings.

However, both primary inclusion bases within Dumfries and Galloway were **closed** between March 2020 and April 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions so this proved impossible. The **extended closure** was due to the increased risk of Covid-19 spread within our setting due to pupils mixing from different schools. I was **redeployed** into a mainstream school and given a structured remit focussed on behaviour and education recovery.

Instead, I decided to approach colleagues from both bases in order to gather their **values** surrounding children's reading, information on their own reading habits and what **strategies/interventions** they use to support Literacy and reading development with their pupils. Again, due to redeployment and restrictions on movement, information had to be gathered via electronic means (Microsoft Teams) rather than by conducting face to face interviews.



What has happened and what are your next steps?

My question hasn't been fully answered yet, I need more information in order to further improve practice. This may be generated through more reading around the subject, looking further afield at other settings and further applying **and assessing impact of changes** made within my practice.

I have learned that my colleagues apply a range of strategies to promote reading attitudes and some **common themes** have emerged through the process of interviewing my colleagues. These are summarized opposite. I was surprised that there were so many similarities across staff at the two inclusion bases which I focused on and that so many colleagues were willing to give up their time in order to be interviewed. I expected colleagues to have the view that younger children have more positive reading attitudes but that hasn't been the case, there has been a consensus that it can vary widely. Most colleagues pointed out the clear **gender gap** in terms of children attending the inclusion base and attributed equal value to digital and print reading material. Several expressed concern at amount of **screen time** that children appear to receive at home (and in school) and cited reasons such as reduction of quality family time and increasing **reliance** upon 'instant gratification'.

I believe this practitioner enquiry has impacted upon practice in both inclusion bases, particularly in terms of colleagues really examining what they do and identifying what could be improved further within both bases. Within my own setting, I have created a reading area, added new reading material to the library, reorganized the library to ensure children can see what is available more easily and inserted a designated reading session to the timetable.



Previously, books were organized in a manner which made it difficult for children to find reading material.



Book selection has been modernized and reorganized so that children can select reading material more easily.



Development of a designated reading area

What are the implications?

Practitioner enquiry has greatly informed my practice moving forward. Firstly, it has really made my colleagues and I think about what we do to promote positive reading attitudes in our students, many of whom tend to have negative viewpoints on reading. I am making steps to promote reading within my setting by further developing a reading area, improving quantity and diversity of reading materials available and by asking colleagues to model their reading attitudes - by sharing what they are reading and scheduling a reading time within the base.

Implications of this learning may lead to the development of a system where practitioners are able to promote reading to children attending and hopefully help these children to improve their confidence reading, develop more positive attitudes towards reading and develop a reading habit/routine. Reading can be seen as a gateway to learning and so by experiencing success at reading and gaining pleasure from reading, children can widen their view of the world, gain knowledge, develop creativity and imaginative skills and enjoy doing so. The development of positive reading habits within the inclusion base may filter back into the children's mainstream classrooms and positively impact upon other children.

How has this impacted on your leadership learning?

I have developed my understanding of how reading attitudes develop and what strategies practitioners can use to promote positive reading habits. Being able to develop and undertake interviews has been a rewarding and interesting experience. I have been surprised at how similar my colleagues' ideas around reading attitudes were and my interviews revealed a real passion for ensuring we provide the best for our pupils. I don't know if my understanding of the term 'teacher leadership' has changed during my participation but I am definitely more empowered and more motivated than I have ever been in my teacher career.

My aim initially had been to measure the impact of various reading interventions upon pupil's attainment and attitudes but this became undoable due to Covid-19 so I think this could be something to take further next session, now that I have examined practitioner attitudes and strategies.

There has been an impact upon professional practice within my setting with changes to timetable to include regularly scheduled reading for pleasure times, incorporation of HOTS questioning within set reading books and development of a reading corner. Recently, I have also applied to undertake further research in association with the EIS which I wouldn't have considered prior to participation in this programme.

References

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Contact Details

Heather Smith
Email: gw09smithheather12@ea.dumgal.sch.uk
Twitter: @hezsmi
Blog: [Heather Smith TLP | Just another blogs.glowscotland.org.uk - Glow Blogs site](https://heather-smith-tlp-just-another-blogs.glowscotland.org.uk)