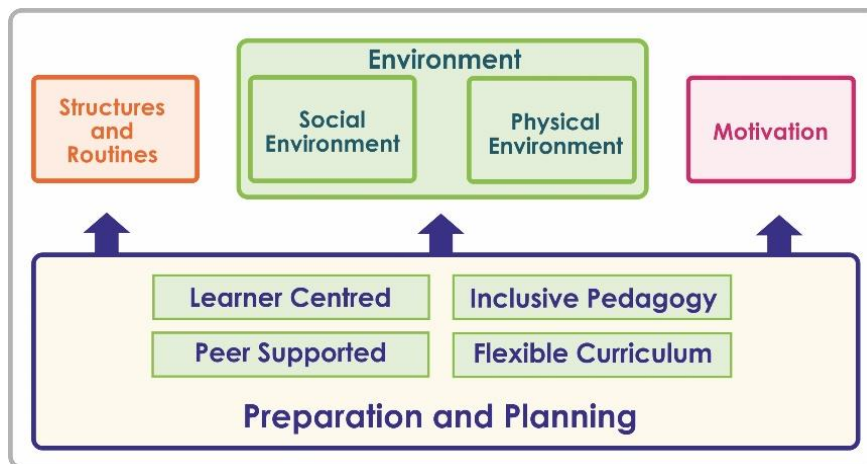




Inclusive Classroom Development Guide



Why is developing an inclusive classroom important?

The supports and strategies which contribute to an inclusive classroom benefit those with identified additional support needs, and also enhance the learning and participation of all learners in the class.

Setting up an inclusive classroom is the first stage in supporting learners with additional support needs to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. An inclusive classroom reduces the extent to which further additional support is required for specific learners and allows the implementation of individual support to be minimally intrusive. This increases learner’s independence and reduces complexity in classroom management.

Teachers, during the development stage of the CIRCLE Framework, talked about a number of key areas when considering the concept of an inclusive classroom. These areas will now be explored.

1. Key areas when considering the concept of an inclusive classroom

Preparation and Planning

The first step to setting up an inclusive classroom is being organised and prepared for each year/term/week/day/lesson.

This includes having a good understanding of the collective (and individual) needs of learners in the class and a knowledge of which learners require specific supports and strategies. Classroom set up/layout, lessons and activities and resources can be planned to account for and address these collective needs.

Preparation and planning also involves considering and planning the role of any Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) assigned to the class. Making time to review learner progress, discuss termly/weekly/daily plans and agree assigned roles with the PSA will help with the effective implementation of supports and strategies.

At times of transition, it is useful to liaise with the previous/future class teacher to ensure that successful supports and strategies are carried forward into the new class/school.

Understanding the needs of specific learners within your class will require reflection on your own knowledge and experience, discussions with colleagues who may have experience in that area and consideration of professional learning requirements.

Preparation and planning are therefore essential prerequisites to setting up a supportive physical and social environment, establishing positive structures and routines and developing approaches to enhance motivation.

The learner-centred approach



This involves individualising activities and feedback according to need, taking account of the different social and cultural circumstances for each learner.

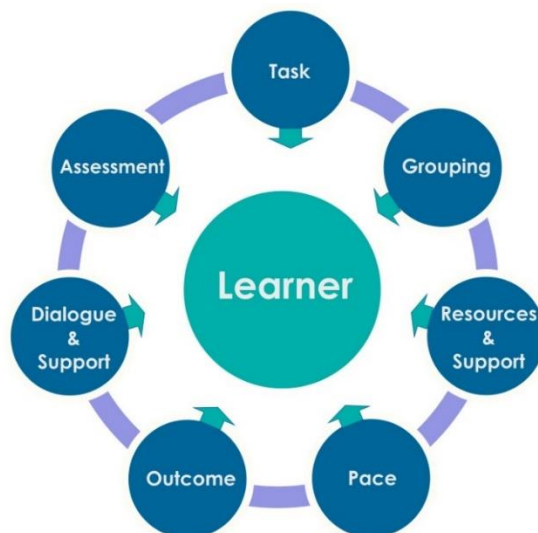
It includes:

- Spending time getting to know learners as individuals and anticipating their needs in the learning environment
- Using the learner's own interests to inform the activities which are chosen
- Asking and considering learners' views
 - Personalising support where possible.

Adopting a learner centred approach is particularly important for engaging the motivation and interest of learners.

Differentiation

The diagram below highlights different approaches to consider when planning effective and meaningful differentiation.



- Ensure appropriate curriculum differentiation is in place for learners who require additional support. Differentiation is a key skill and requirement for all teachers, to ensure the needs of all their learners are met.
- Creating resources, which are accessible for learners with additional support needs, will also support a wide range of learners. The impact of a barrier to learning varies in degree, according to the learning and teaching environment.

A Flexible Curriculum

For each learner, the curriculum should offer challenge and enjoyment; breadth; progression; depth; personalisation and choice; coherence and relevance.

- Select and adapt lessons and resources to ensure that each learner is challenged at the right level (consider content, delivery and outcome).
- Make clear the learning outcomes of each lesson and refer back to these throughout. Review and summarise the learning outcomes at the end of each lesson. Involve learners in setting and reviewing their learning targets to ensure relevance and create an element of personalisation and choice.

Teaching Pedagogy



- Adapt the teaching style to meet the needs of individual learners
- Use structure and routine - for example, a consistent format for the start and end of a lesson

Use strategies that promote active learning, including opportunities for multi-sensory learning and group work.

Peer Supported Approaches



Use other learners to support or facilitate a learner's engagement and participation in curricular activities:

- Identify good working relationships between peers. Consider different groups for different tasks.
- Consider using cooperative and collaborative learning strategies: pair learners to work with a partner to explain concepts or ideas. Consider peer marking or peer assessment of specific tasks.
- Support the implementation of peer mentoring. This involves the use of learners who have been selected to model appropriate behaviour or give support to specific learners or groups of learners.

2. The Circle Framework



The following sections give suggestions of points to consider when:

- optimising the physical and social environments
- putting in place structures and routines to support engagement
- **using** approaches to support motivation

The Physical Environment

The physical environment refers to the physical layout of the classroom (or alternate teaching space) and the resources used within it. Within an inclusive classroom environment, the following aspects should be considered:

The Class Layout



- Ensure the class is organised with everything in its place
- Consider social aspects:
 - Arrange the class to promote good interaction
 - Consider friendships and good working relationships when arranging seating plans.
- Consider learners who may need additional support:
 - Do they need to sit near the door to enable them to manage transitions?
 - Do they need to sit near the teacher to maximise attention and concentration?
 - Is the learner situated so that they can see and hear as clearly as possible?
- Consider potential distractions. Some learners find elements of the physical environment very distracting e.g. peers, lighting levels or noise levels.
- What further adaptations can be made? e.g. additional window blinds, individual work stations or creating 'safe spaces'
- Do visual cues and supports, such as posters and charts on walls, enhance or distract the learners?

Organisation of Resources



- Try to model an organised approach by ensuring that resources are selected and prepared in advance and readily available for the lesson.
- Ensure that resource cupboards/areas are clearly labelled (using words and pictures) and resources consistently positioned.
- When task or helpsheets are used they should be clearly laid out, with page numbers and space for date and name, to support good organisation. Ensure that learners know what to do with the completed task or helpsheet e.g. stick them in their jotter or put them in a specific part of a folder.
- Consider using templates to support learners to structure their work e.g. templates which help learners show their problem solving in logical sequences for number work; or writing templates with headings to support writing.
- Ensure that visual cues and supports are clear, contain key information and are understood by all.
- Some learners may require the use of agreed sensory supports e.g. fidget supports or sit-and-move cushions to enable them to focus.
- Others might use other types of specialist equipment e.g. pencil grips, a sloping board or specialist seating to enable them to access the curriculum or maintain focus. Care should be taken to ensure that these are readily available and used appropriately.
- Ensure the language used in signs and displays around the school and in the classroom reflect the languages used by learners attending that school.

The Social Environment

The social environment is concerned with the attitudes, expectations and actions of those within the class and how these can affect learners either positively or negatively.



The following points should be considered:

- Aim to develop a classroom culture where everyone feels valued and secure, individual differences are respected and diversity is highlighted and celebrated. Multicultural and multilingual signs and displays can help reflect an inclusive ethos.
- We all learn best when we can focus on a task and are not anxious or worried. Reducing negative stress has been shown to improve learning outcomes and is beneficial for general health and wellbeing.
- Some learners can feel anxious about performing in front of the class e.g. being asked to read a passage, answer a question or perform a physical activity in front of peers. Reduce this source of stress by considering each learner's competence and confidence.
- Consider breaking down the task and building from there e.g. a learner presents to a peer then a small group and then perhaps eventually to the class.
- An awareness of peer relationships and interactional dynamics will help when considering seating plans, the structure of groups and peer supports. Consider this in relation to class work and other aspects of the school environment (e.g. break or lunch time).
- Some learners may have difficulty with retaining information, understanding instructions or the complexities of language used. Consider differentiating language and instructions as a routine part of your practice e.g. say less, slow down your rate of speech, stress key words and use visuals to support understanding. Using a variety of teaching approaches and allowing additional thinking/ processing time can be valuable.

Emotional Literacy

- Learners may not have the language or understanding of their emotions to express themselves effectively: this might manifest itself as inappropriate behaviour either in school or at home.
- Try to interpret learner behaviour as an attempt by them to communicate how they feel - be alert to the potential for behaviour to represent an indirect message (e.g. they may display aggressive behaviour when they are actually feeling upset or stressed).
- Reflecting on what underlies specific behaviour may help with managing and improving learner responses. Stress and concerns outside school may impact on learners in school (e.g. moving home or bereavement).
- Teaching learners to recognise, understand and express their emotions has been found to be effective in improving long term outcomes.
- Teachers need to be aware of their own emotional responses and their ability to self-regulate.

[‘The Compassionate and Connected classroom’](#) resource is available on the National Improvement Hub and contains a range of resources to support the emotional wellbeing of learners in upper primary classes.

Social Skills



- Social skills are often learned by observing others. Some learners may not have had a positive experience of this.
- Providing clear and consistent behaviour boundaries (supported by visual cues) and sharing expectations will help learners understand social rules and expectations.
- Teaching and developing social skills via collaborative and cooperative learning activities will support this area.
- Observing adults modelling appropriate emotional and social skills during interactions and responses has been shown to be beneficial.

Education Scotland offer training on nurturing approaches and responses to trauma and adversity. See newsletters for opportunities.

Structures and Routines



Learners benefit from a degree of order and consistency in their lives; for some learners this is mainly achieved in school. Daily routines help learners to know and anticipate what comes next and social routines help them enjoy and interact with others. It may be useful to consider structures and routines in terms of how the day/week is structured; how lessons are delivered; and how rules and roles are implemented. Some learners need visual support to help them recognise predictable routines and additional visual supports to help them understand changes to these routines.

Structure of the Lesson/ Week

- Having a consistent format for the start, middle and end of each lesson can be beneficial.
- Set days for activities such as assembly, physical education (PE) and music will help learners anticipate and come prepared for these activities.
- Prepare learners for a change (e.g. clear notification if another member of staff will be covering the class).
- Simple approaches such as having consistent seating plans can help reduce the risk of anxiety or distraction for some learners.
- Setting regular days for giving out and collecting homework can help learners develop good habits for completing it.
- Building in routine times for movement breaks e.g. used consistently at the end of an activity, can help learners settle and prepare for the next task.

Routines for Lesson Delivery



- Using a consistent format for lesson delivery can help learners know what to expect, so that they can be prepared
- Stating the learning intentions at the start of the lesson, ensuring that these are understood and referring to them regularly, may help focus learner attention.
- Using whole class checklists may help to ensure understanding of the tasks for all.
- Reviewing and summarising learning outcomes will help learners understand if their personal learning targets have been achieved.
- The regular use of active learning and multisensory learning should support engagement.

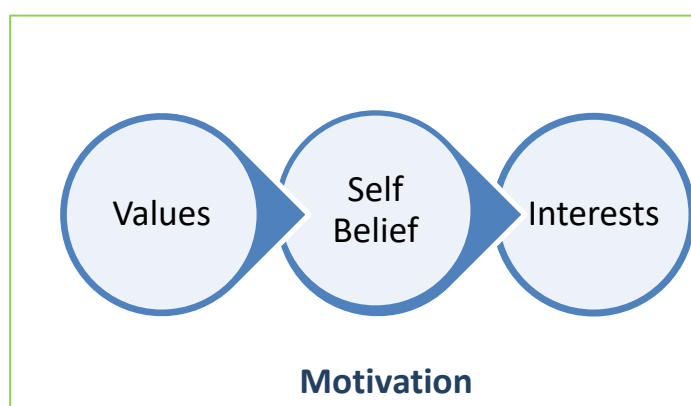
Consistent Expectations and Roles

- Using a consistent approach to expectations and roles for everyone should help learners understand what is and is not acceptable
- Developing a clear and specific class charter in collaboration with the class should help to ensure that rules and roles are agreed and understood by all. This can be linked to 'The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)'.
- Displaying the class charter clearly and referring to it regularly will help to reinforce this understanding.
- Encouraging learners to see themselves as respected and useful members of the class can be promoted by regularly assigning positive roles e.g. group leader or messenger. This can help reduce negative views that some learners may have of themselves.

Motivation



- Motivation gives learners incentive, enthusiasm and interest when engaging with activities and the people around them.
- Learners are motivated by both internal factors (their own feelings, desires, self-esteem, confidence) and external factors (the physical and social environment, pace and content of the curriculum, key relationships).
- Focusing on motivation can be a powerful way of engaging interest in activities and influencing positive behaviour.
- A learner-centred approach is crucial when engaging motivation.
- It can be useful to think of the following overarching themes for encouraging motivation within an inclusive classroom.



Values

This refers to learners' values (what they think of as important and meaningful). This can be positively influenced by:

- Listening to and valuing learners' views, thoughts and ideas
- Involving learners in individual target setting and self-assessment, thus encouraging them to take responsibility for their work and recognise their progress.
- Assisting learners with careful target setting for their personal learning plans so that they can use these to see progress.



Building Self Belief

This refers to how we can influence how a learner feels about themselves and their belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks; this affects their motivation. We know that a sense of achievement can be a powerful motivator, encouraging learners to complete tasks and to try out new activities.

This can be supported by:

- Differentiating work so that goals are realistic and achievable, whilst still providing challenge and enjoyment.
- Using a variety of teaching methods
- Providing constructive feedback framed in a positive way
- Positively affirming learners' abilities, interests, languages and cultures.
- Modelling enthusiasm for tasks; praising effort and process as well as the product; and finding ways of celebrating this and other successes.



Interests



Learners are generally motivated by things that capture their imagination or that they find enjoyable and satisfying. The following can help build on this aspect of motivation:

- Utilising learners' interests, cultures or experiences when designing lessons.
- Allowing learners an element of personalisation and choice when addressing specific tasks.
- Utilising experiential learning, multisensory approaches and/or technology can be motivating for many learners.