



**Newingate  
School**



# Learning without Limits & Supporting Students with Autism

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# In this session...

- Re-visit the theory of inclusive education
- Introduce the concept of learning without limits
- Provide an overview of autism and the impact that this can have upon learners, teaching practices and approaches
- Apply the ideas from the session to your own practice to enable all children to learn without limits.



# Inclusion

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- **Inclusion in education is about valuing all children and the environment that best suits their learning equally. This might be best attained within a mainstream school, or a special school. The aim is to increase the participation and reduce the exclusion from the local school communities and the culture that accompanies them.**
- In order to be fully inclusive, schools might need to restructure their teaching and learning practices to accommodate individual learners. Barriers to learning should be reduced and this can benefit the whole school community. Where differences between students exist, they should be viewed as learning opportunities for the whole school and teachers should be fully trained and resourced adequately in order to implement any differentiation required within the classroom.
- There are many definitions of inclusion. [Lynch and Irvine \(2009\)](#) describe ‘authentic inclusion’ as:
- “a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youths as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching, and necessary supports for each student.”

## Additional definitions of inclusion in education from the Index for Inclusion, involve:

- Valuing all students and staff equally.
- Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality.
- Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.
- Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.
- Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.
- Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality.
- Improving schools for staff as well as for students.
- Emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement.
- Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
- Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

# Inclusion Audit



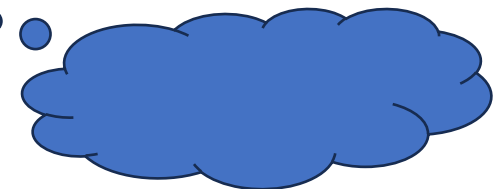
## Inclusion Audit

For a specific group/subject or lesson, think about how you meet the key drivers of the inclusion index. As you do this think about how you do this and what this looks like in practice and within your classroom.

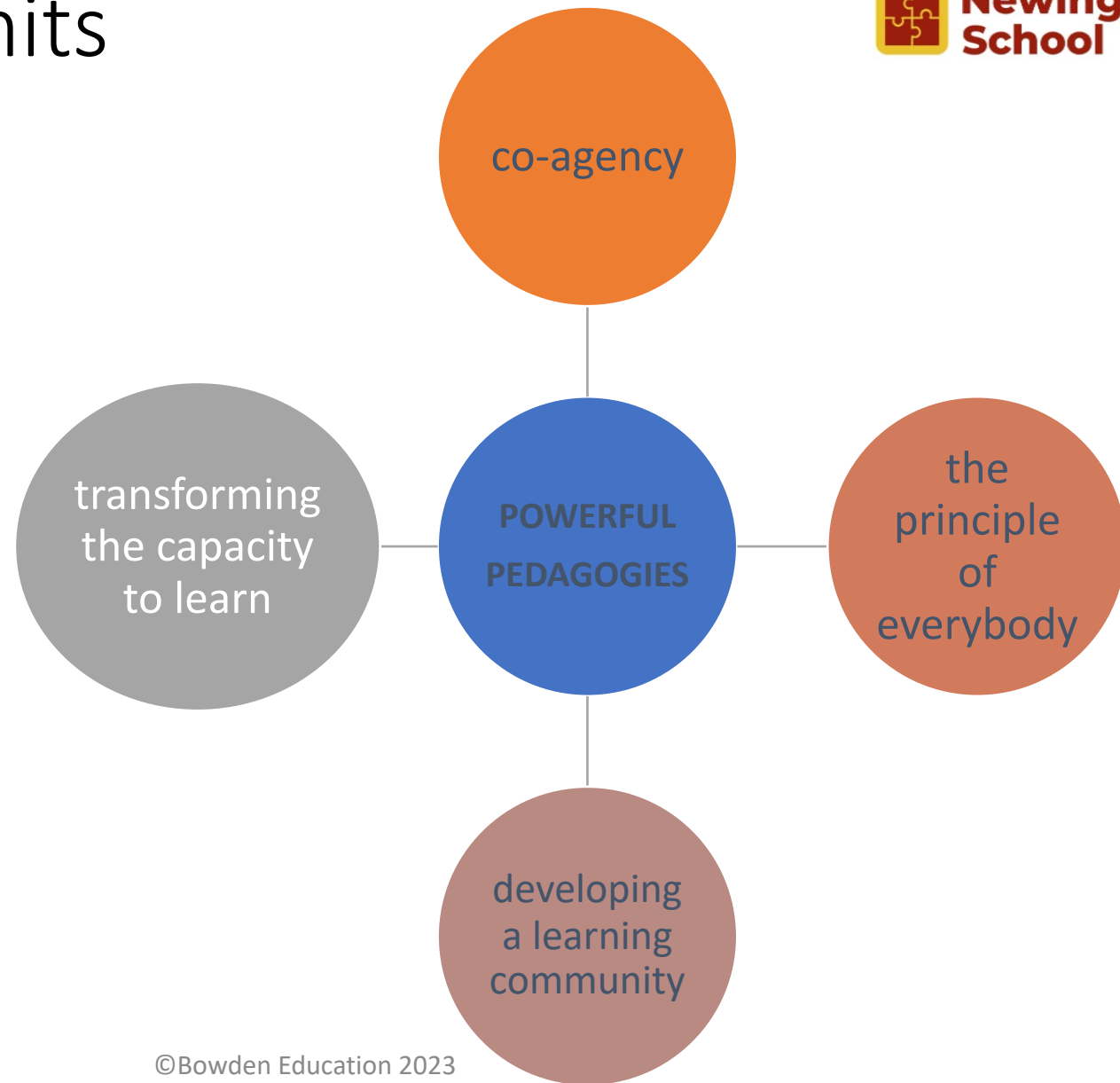
Lesson/Subject/Group:

Inclusion Index	Always	Often	Sometimes/ Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Value all students (and staff) equally					
Increase the participation of students in, and reduce their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula, and community of the classroom.					
Restructure the cultures, rituals, routines, and practices in my classroom to respond to the diversity of my students.					
Reduce barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.					
Learn from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely					
View the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.					
Acknowledge the right of students to an education in my classroom.					
See your role as to build a community and develop values, as well as increase achievement.					
Foster mutually sustaining relationships with your students					

- Take a moment to reflect upon a subject/group/lesson and consider how you apply the inclusion index in your current practice.
- Be honest as this is not a test of who does the best! This is to get you thinking •••



# Learning without Limits



# Moving away from the idea of labelling individuals and groups (Patrick, Learning without Limits)



I've always been more interested in finding ways to make the shared text or object of study available to any and everyone...This is partly survival, but it's also to do with my core belief that anything's accessible, available and interesting if you can find the right way into it...

Students aren't stupid. They will understand that they are being labelled in some way, and all the attempt to say 'This looks just as interesting' won't wash. Students will live up or down to the expectations that people have of them, in particular their class teachers...And the other thing is, of course, that teachers get it wrong...The fallibility of the judgement undermines the whole basis on which the judgement might be made, which is that people can do things that you didn't think they could do, and if you say 'You are this' you will put a lid and a ceiling on their achievement and what is possible for them.

# Learning without limits – quotes from the teachers

they all have their  
different ways to  
go  
(Anne)

thinking as a valuable  
and recognised activity  
in itself – thinking about  
the process; not so  
focused on the product  
(Claire)

asking the children to think  
about how this learning  
can be made manageable  
and enjoyable – leading to  
independence  
(Claire)

structure with  
gaps in  
(Anne)

an open invitation to learn and  
participate  
(Alison)

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the ‘ethic of  
everybody’ and  
the ‘promise of  
tomorrow’  
(Narinder)



## How can you support students to learn without limits?



- Think of 3 ways that you do/could enable children to learn without limits for a specific group/subject/lesson...
- Then you will be scaffolded to learn without limits!

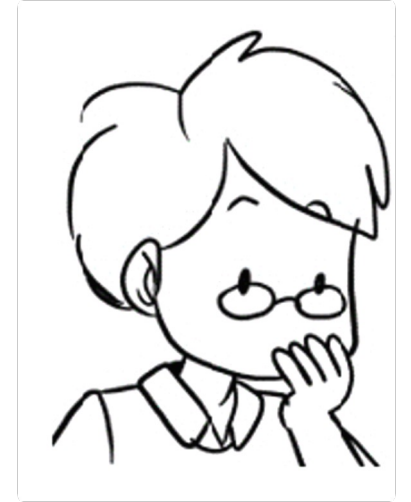




# Now...

Let's apply the concepts of inclusion and learning without limits to students with special needs, specifically autism.





# Pre Reading



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# Definitions – Pre 2013

- In Europe, [Lorna Wing](#) described a triad of deficits in;
  - social communication,
  - social interaction, and
  - social imagination.
- The [American Psychiatric Association](#), however, described a triad of impairments in;
  - social communication,
  - social interaction and
  - the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviours and interests.

# Rally Robin

- What are the strengths of autistic students?



## Autistic Strengths

This is not to suggest that all autistic people have a savant-like super ability (as in the film Rain Man). Rather, some cognitive strengths tend to be more prevalent in the autism community. A worldwide survey of over 200 autism experts identified the following list of autistic strengths:

- Attention to detail
- Strong sense of morality (eg honesty, lack of judgmental attitude, etc)
- A preference to work on repeated or monotonous tasks
- Expertise in a specific area
- Mathematical abilities
- Creative talents (eg look at the world differently)
- Artistic skills (eg music, drawing, visual arts)
- Visual perception
- Intellectual functions
- Technical abilities (computer skills, engineering)
- Trustworthiness
- Loyalty
- Kindness
- Good memory



# NAS SPELL philosophy

- All interventions within NAS Schools are based upon the well established and evidence based NAS SPELL philosophy (evaluated by the Tizzard Centre at the University of Kent). The philosophy was developed through 50 years experience in autism specialist education and is based on ethos of respect for every student and encapsulates best practice and inclusion.
- Structure (to reduce anxiety resulting from rigidity of thought)
- Positivity (recognise autistic intelligence to enhance self esteem)
- Empathy (seeking to recognise the perspective of the autistic people)
- Low arousal (to reduce anxiety related to sensory differences)
- Links (to other intervention and to the wider community)
- Whilst the SPELL philosophy in the classroom may be particularly beneficial for autistic students, it is also likely that everyone in the class will benefit from the SPELL philosophy. It is important to note that adaptations made for specific groups can be universally beneficial for all students.
- Autism Wales has a very useful (and free) set of guides for mainstream secondary schools, for mainstream primary schools and in Early Years settings.

**Maintaining an inclusive learning environment...**

- Layout: seating allows all pupils to see/hear the teacher
- Acoustics: background noise is reduced
- Use of Wall Space: resources and displays are accessible and encourage independent use.

**Multi-sensory Approaches, Including ICT...**

- Use of ICT
- Use of preferred learning approaches, such as auditory or visual
- Use alternative ways of communication e.g. symbols, images...
- Use alternative ways of recording and assessing.

**Working with Additional Adults...**

- Other adults as partners not teachers
- Commitment to pupil independence
- Joint planning and review.

**Managing Peer Relationships...**

- Flexible grouping
- Buddying/peer tutoring
- Circle of friends

**Adult-Pupil Communication...**

- Language used is positive and respectful.
- Careful praise/correction
- Prepared questions for individuals/groups
- Use of preferred communication style.
- Giving time to think.

**Formative Assessment/Assessment for Learning...**

- Choice of objectives/success criteria/peer assessment.
- Expectations/challenges
- Communication issues

**Motivation...**

- Engagement/enjoyment
- Rewards/praise
- Including pupil strengths/interests
- Relevant contexts
- Encouraging learning from mistakes
- Use of ICT for fun
- *Can-do* ethos: readiness to *problem-solve*.

**Memory/Consolidation...**

- Developing use of a range of memory aids.
- Helping pupils devise their own strategies for remembering.

# Application to Practice

Drawing upon what we have discussed, your inclusion audit and ideas to enhance learning without limits, think of a lesson you regularly teach and note practical ways that you will adapt your lesson to enhance inclusion, learning without limits and accessibility for autistic learners.

Use the template

Also, identify areas of good practice that are already present in this lesson.



## Application to Practice

*Pulling together your inclusion audit, the actions around learning without limits and ideas gained to support students with autism, complete this simple plan to trial with a lesson that you teach regularly:*

Subject:

Lesson Topic:

My current good practice regarding inclusion, learning without limits and accessibility for SEN (autistic students):

What will you change to ensure your lesson is more inclusive?



Think about your school.

How many of the 8 principles of good practice for general autism education do you think have been embraced by the school?



## 8 Principles – priority list



What do you feel are the top three principles the school needs to focus on?



What would be the priority for this academic year?



Thinking about your own practice – how will you address this principle in your own work?