



Belonging in School



**Part 1: An Introduction to School-level Approaches
for Developing Inclusive Policy**



Belonging in School

Part 1: An Introduction to School-level Approaches for Developing Inclusive Policy

Alyssa M. Alcorn, Natalia Zdorovtsova, & Duncan E. Astle

With thanks to Sian Lewis, and the participants who shared their insights and feedback as part of the Diverse Trajectories to Good Developmental Outcomes Workshop (2022) and the Delivering Inclusive Education Workshop (2023)

<https://inclusion.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/>

Who is this resource for?

Belonging in School is written for all education professionals working in schools, not only senior leaders or classroom teachers. *All* staff members play important roles in creating and maintaining inclusive environments.

This resource offers planning strategies and policy suggestions to make schools more inclusive for pupils with neurodevelopmental differences, and for everyone. Acting on these ideas to create positive change needs local knowledge of schools and their communities—in other words, you!

The resource will likely be most relevant for mainstream primary schools in the UK's school systems, but its planning strategies could be adapted and implemented in almost any educational setting.

Version 1.0, September 2023



MRC Cognition
and Brain
Sciences Unit



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Text ©2023 The Belonging in School team. Alyssa Alcorn, Natalia Zdorovtsova and Duncan Astle assert their right to be identified as the authors of this resource.

Illustrations ©2023 Kristyna Baczynski

Contributors

This resource includes contributions from the participants in the Diverse Trajectories to Good Developmental Outcomes Workshop (University of Cambridge, December 2022), the participants in the Delivering Inclusive Education Workshop (ITAKOM conference, Edinburgh, March 2023), and Dr Sian Lewis. See Section 7 'About the Belonging in School project' for details.

Technical credits

Illustrations and action cycle figure by [Kristyna Baczynski](#)
Graphic design by Simon Strangeways

Contact information

Project website: <https://inclusion.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/>
Please begin with our website if you are seeking more information. For other enquiries, you can contact the project team by e-mailing diversetrajectories@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk

Citation information

Please cite this document as follows:
Alcorn, A.M., Zdorovtsova, N., & Astle, D.E. (2023). *Belonging in School Part 1: An Introduction to School-level Approaches for Developing Inclusive Policy*. Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge. DOI?

Funder information

Development and release of the Belonging in School resource was made possible with funding from the Medical Research Council (MC-A0606-5PQ41) and by a donation from the Templeton World Charitable Foundation, as part of their Global Conference on the Science of Human Flourishing.

Licensing and terms of use

The Belonging in School resource and associated materials are published under a Creative Commons [CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 license](#):

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International.

- **You may** freely print, photocopy, and share the Belonging in School resource, so long as you do not sell it.
- **You may** adapt the resource for use within your own school or classroom, including translation into another language, but distributing adapted versions (e.g. by sharing with other schools or posting these online) violates the terms of use.
- **You may not** use these materials, including the illustrations, for any commercial purposes.

Please see the [Creative Commons webpage for the CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 license](#) for more information on what types of use are/are not permissible.

Contents

About the Belonging in School resource	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Background	8
Educational inclusion and neurodivergent learners	8
What counts as inclusion?	10
Where does inclusion happen? Individuals versus systems	11
3. Developing inclusive school policy	12
What do we mean by policy, inclusion policies, and inclusive policies?	12
Characteristics of inclusive school policies	13
Belonging in School's tools for inclusive policy	14
4. Policy development as a cycle: Four planning approaches	15
Introducing the action cycle	15
Introducing the four approaches	17
5. Twelve Changes that could make your school more inclusive	27
Ideas to build on	28
Sensory issues and environment	31
Daily demands on learners	32
Supporting staff to support learners	33
6. Conclusion	34
7. About the Belonging in School project	35
Initial workshop	35
Policy briefing and feedback	35
From Policy to Belonging in School	35
8. References	37





About the Belonging in School resource

Part 1: An Introduction to School-level Approaches for Developing Inclusive Policy

The Belonging in School resource focuses on developing policies for educational inclusion in mainstream schools, for learners with neurodevelopmental differences. These learners *may be* labelled as having Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND; England and Northern Ireland), Additional Support Needs (ASN; Scotland), or Additional Learning Needs (ALN; Wales). While the resource and its planning tools could be applied across any level of education, it will be most relevant to primary schools.

In Part 1 of this resource, we consider general characteristics of inclusive policies, then briefly introduce **Four Planning Approaches** schools could use for policy development. All approaches are structured around an **action cycle**, with reflective questions guiding each stage. We also highlight **Twelve Suggested Changes** schools could make in the short and medium-term, as an alternative or precursor to a more comprehensive planning process.

Part 2 of Belonging in School (available as a separate document) is a practical guide to inclusive policy planning, giving step-by-step guidance about the action cycle and each of the Four Planning Approaches, and detailed advice about measuring the impacts of your policy changes. Get Part 2 here: <https://inclusion.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/>

Developing this content

The content in the Belonging in School resource builds on contributions from over 100 experienced stakeholders from schools, third-sector organisations, and academia. Over 80 people participated in the *Diverse Trajectories to Good Developmental Outcomes Workshop* (December 2022) where school inclusion was a major topic, as part of the [Global Conference on the Science of Human Flourishing](#). More stakeholders gave feedback as part of the *Delivering Inclusive Education Workshop* at the [It Takes All Kinds of Minds \(ITAKOM\) neurodiversity conference](#) (March 2023). A final stage in summer 2023 revised and extended the earlier content for policymakers into this planning-focused resource for schools and educators. *Read more in section 7, 'About the Belonging in School project'.*



1. Introduction

“Inclusion” in education is not monolithic, but a patchwork of practices, policies, values, goals, and experiences. The term does not always mean the same thing across contexts, or to different stakeholders. Issues surrounding inclusion in education are often complex, contested, and high-cost. The topic is also a deeply personal one: in every article that cites statistics about a rise in neurodevelopmental diagnoses or the cost of providing supports, each number represents a real child or young person. Behind every one, there are educators struggling to understand and meet their needs under supremely difficult funding and staffing circumstances.

It’s widely agreed that inclusion, as it currently operates in the UK’s school systems, is not working for far too many learners and their families—or for increasingly overstretched educators. The current costs are huge, both in terms of finance and for children’s and young people’s lives. There is much less agreement about how to improve the inclusion situation. While dramatically increasing school and local authority funding is clearly necessary, this alone is not sufficient to get every child and young person what they need to thrive in school, or to help educators do their jobs.

Some changes, like education funding allocation or major policy shifts, are only possible at a national level. However, every day, school-level policies massively impact learners’ and staff members’ lives, and it can be possible to change them far more rapidly and responsively.

A strong message from the Diverse Trajectories and ITAKOM workshops was the belief that **school-level change is possible**, and that **relatively modest changes can have significant impacts** on whether learners can access the curriculum, be safe in school spaces, and feel part of their school communities. Changes do not necessarily have large price tags—for example shifting *when* inclusion planning happens and who is involved in it, or promoting inclusive and accepting *attitudes* among pupils and staff.

The Belonging in School resource focuses on **developing school-level policies to support educational inclusion in mainstream schools, for learners with neurodevelopmental differences.** Planning inclusive policies at a whole-classroom or whole-school level does represent an investment of time and resources, but with the potential to save resources and widely benefit learners in the long term.



The Belonging in School resource focuses on developing school-level policies to support educational inclusion in mainstream schools, for learners with neurodevelopmental differences.





This resource could help you and your school to...

- Look at inclusion from multiple angles, and consider different visions or goals for what an inclusive school could be like
- Break down “inclusion” into smaller steps or identify targets for change, using the action cycle
- Shift the focus of inclusion planning from individuals to system level (classrooms or whole school)
- Identify specific changes that your school could make now or in the near future
- Plan how to measure the effects of changes you make

Please note, this resource does not...

- Review inclusion policies or legal requirements across the UK nations
- Give a precis of current inclusive education practices
- Tell schools exactly what to do!

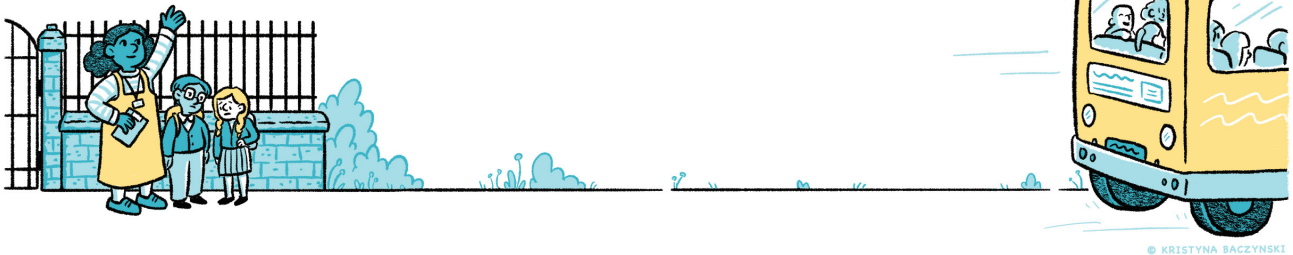




2. Background

2.1 Educational inclusion and neurodivergent learners

Conversations about inclusion within the UK nations frequently focus on children and young people who differ from the majority of the population in terms of their cognition, emotions, and sensory processing. Their differences are rooted in **neurodevelopment**. When families seek official recognition and support, these children and young people may—eventually—be assessed for **diagnoses** such as ADHD, dyslexia, autism, Tourette's, dyspraxia (DCD) or developmental language disorder (DLD).¹ Depending on the school, children's diagnoses may be a major determinant of which supports they are eligible for, or are offered. Complicating the picture, recent neuroscience research is increasingly questioning current diagnostic labels as clear and unique descriptors of children's cognitive profiles, or their strengths and difficulties in education.²



With regard to policy, neurodivergent children with the types of diagnoses listed above (or identified but undiagnosed neurodevelopmental differences) might be described as having **special educational needs** (SEN/SEND, England and NI), **additional support needs** (ASN, Scotland), or **additional learning needs** (ALN, Wales). Legislation varies across UK school systems as to whether children must have an official diagnosis or other documentation³ in order to be counted in these categories or entitled to support at school.

¹ Unfortunately, assessments and diagnoses—and supports that might be linked to these diagnoses—are unequally accessible to people across the UK nations, based on their location, gender, and ethnic background (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, & Street, 2019). Higher-income parents who can afford assessments for their children through private practitioners have an advantage over their less-well-off peers, whose children face long waiting lists for a needs assessment in the public health service (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2008).

² Read more about this research as part of Suggested Change 2 in Section 5 of this document, and in our Action Cycle Guidance document.

³ For example, an education, health and care plan [EHCP] in England.



Throughout the *Belonging in School* resources, we may also interchangeably refer to learners with neurodevelopmental differences as **neurodivergent**, meaning that their brains process information in ways that significantly differ from the majority (neurotypical people, i.e. with processing that is *typical* of their group). Information processing systems include things like attention, memory, and sensory perception, but also language processing, knowing our body's location in space and far more. Thus, neurodivergent people may have very different experiences from neurotypical people—and, importantly, from one another.⁴ Unsurprisingly, education systems and school buildings tend to be designed for the neurotypical majority, and can be disabling environments for neurodivergent learners and educators.

Some neurodivergent people *may* have neurodevelopmental diagnoses such as ADHD or autism, but neurodivergence is not about diagnosis, and not a “list of diagnoses”. **Neurodivergence is also not a direct synonym for categories like SEND, ASN, or ALN.** Neurodivergent learners *can* fall within these categories, but they also include learners who need support for other reasons. Many neurodivergent children and young people won't have formal diagnoses or educational plans – and may not know that they have neurodevelopmental differences at all. They may or may not be counted within these categories (but not always), or not counted *yet*. Some neurodivergent children's needs *are* met in mainstream classrooms now, and they may be thriving in school—though as academic and social demands change with age, their needs may change too.



Exact numbers and labels aside, pupils with neurodevelopmental differences are a sizeable minority of all mainstream pupils.



Estimating based on government education data, the number of school pupils who could be considered neurodivergent is approximately 15-20% (e.g. Scottish Government, 2021; Special educational needs statistics team, 2022). These data sources are likely to be a substantial undercount, as they will exclude many children, such as those on assessment waiting lists. Exact numbers and labels aside, pupils with neurodevelopmental differences are a sizeable minority of all mainstream pupils. This is also a highly *heterogeneous* group, representing many different support needs which may sometimes come into conflict.

⁴ See more details and definitions about neurodiversity in the box on page 18 of this document.



2.2 What counts as inclusion?

Even once we narrow our focus to neurodivergent pupils in mainstream schools, the meaning of “inclusion” is still murky. Current policies, education research and classroom practice reveal varied ways of thinking about educational inclusion, and what outcomes or practices would “count” as pupils being included, or excluded. The sidebar briefly introduces four common views on inclusion that appear in education sources.

Four ways of thinking about inclusion

1. Inclusion as the **absence of school exclusion**; as being **present and attending a school**.

Increasingly, online education is acknowledged as a type of attendance. Presence is often seen as an essential pre-requisite for all other types of learning and interaction.

2. Inclusion as **education in mainstream classrooms** for pupils with SEND, ASN, or ALN, versus “segregated” education in specialist provision. For example, see the “presumption of mainstreaming” in Scottish education legislation (Scottish Government, 2019)⁵.

3. Inclusion as **participation in the curriculum and school activities**, often closely linked with discussions of **providing supports** necessary for individuals to access learning and activities. As in 1, inclusion may be positioned as “non-exclusion” from learning and activities.

4. Inclusion as personal experience: **do pupils feel included, and like they belong at school?** Learners could be present and participating—but not be included if they felt left out, “separate”, unsafe, or unwelcome. *We refer to this view as “inclusion as belonging”, and discuss it in detail as part of Planning Approach 1.*

As our title signals, we focus on discussing and facilitating inclusion in terms of **pupils’ sense of belonging**, which is to say learners’ subjective sense of whether or not they are part of their school community, safe, and valued. This connects to a larger research on understanding **school belonging**, and how it impacts pupils. As discussed in more detail under Approach 1 in the Planning Guidance document, this body of research suggests that it may be an important *contributor* to pupils’ participation and achievement, rather than following from these later.

Focusing on inclusion-as-belonging emphasises the importance of school *experiences*, and positions the people in the school community as choice-makers and change-makers. All aspects of school policy matter for inclusion, not “inclusion policies” alone. School culture matters. Neurodivergent children and young people don’t exist in a vacuum, but are strongly affected by the knowledge, beliefs, and choices of those around them. For these many reasons, concepts related to belonging were at the heart of many of the original contributions at the 2022 workshop, and central to priorities for change.

⁵ This states that children should be educated with peers unless “it would not be suited to the ability and aptitude of the child [or] would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom the child would be educated or would result in unreasonable public expenditure being incurred” (Scottish Government, 2019, p14).



2.3 Where does inclusion happen? Individuals versus systems

Regardless of how inclusion is conceptualised, current practice and policy for including neurodivergent learners has strongly focused on **adaptations and supports at the level of the individual**. For example, a pupil with a dyslexia diagnosis getting tailored reading instruction, or providing written activity instructions for children with working memory difficulties. Planning and implementing support is often reactive, and focused on “fixing” perceived “problems” (though schools, children, and families may not agree about what is a problem, or what to do). On one hand, this individual-level focus sounds like a logical way to secure the corresponding supports for people’s challenges. On the other hand, this strategy is increasingly unsustainable in the current context, when each classroom will have *multiple* pupils with neurodevelopmental differences, and multiple sets of mandated supports that may be difficult or impossible to deliver concurrently within existing resources.

Approaching the cognitive, social, and sensory needs of this pupil group in terms of “accommodations” “adjustments” and “exceptions” also unhelpfully obscures the fact that *all* learners have needs at school. Mainstream education successfully *meets* the needs of many learners, much of the time. However, “education as usual” isn’t immutable; it represents certain values and choices. Making different choices about teaching and school environments could support a *different* set of needs as standard, not as exceptions—and hopefully meet *more* learners’ needs overall. Workshop contributors were strongly in agreement that implementing approaches that meet a wider range of needs *can benefit all learners*.

In this resource, our goal has been to provide tools and strategies by which schools can reflect on their choices, policies and values around inclusion, and plan towards—we hope—a version of “education as usual” that manageably and sustainably meets the needs of more learners, including neurodivergent learners.

Key questions in the Belonging in School resource

Rather than asking why the number of pupils in SEND, ASN, or ALN categories are growing, we ask:

“Why are our school systems and ‘usual’ ways of delivering teaching and support not meeting the needs of so many learners?”

And then, *“How could we change our planning and our daily practice, so that mainstream schools are meeting more learners’ needs, as standard?”*





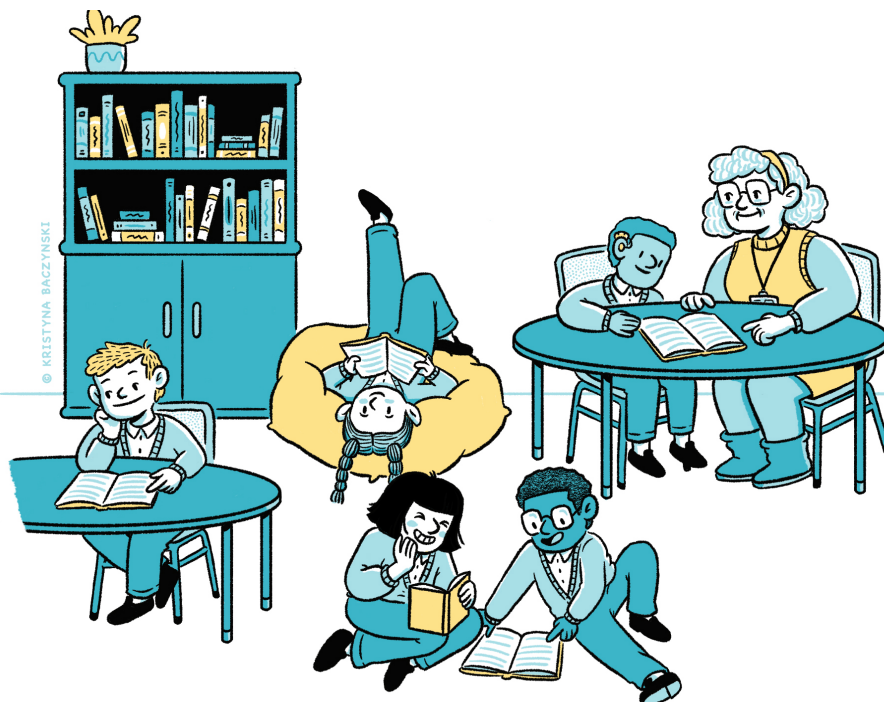
3. Developing inclusive school policies

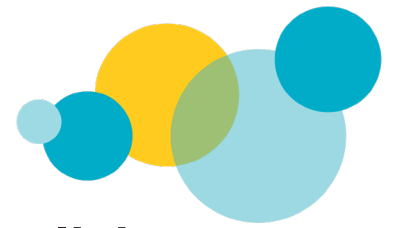
3.1 What do we mean by policy, inclusion policies, and inclusive policies?

Policies are agreed plans and objectives, used as a basis for decision-making. They are principles or courses of action set out by individuals or organisations, that guide how they will act in a certain situation. *Policy development* is then the process of creating these plans: what should people *do* in order to achieve the agreed objectives?

In the *Belonging in School* resource, we talk both about *inclusion policies* and *inclusive school policies*, but not interchangeably. *Inclusion policies* would be dedicated policies addressing inclusion for particular groups of pupils, often in response to legal requirements related to educating children with SEND, ASN, or ALN. *Inclusive school policies* refer to policies in any area that are designed so as to facilitate accessibility and pupil inclusion. For example, the school could have an inclusive policy on uniforms, seating, or computer use in class.

We see policy development as a “living process” and are most concerned in this resource with policies as they are *enacted*, rather than as they are officially recorded. A written policy can be a tool and a powerful statement of values and intent, but it’s what people actually *do* that has the greatest effect—thus our emphasis in the Action Cycle on measuring whether and how policies work in practice. Sometimes they may not, or at least not *yet!* It is a *cycle* of changes and reflections, rather than a one-and-done overhaul that results in An Inclusive Policy.





3.2 Characteristics of inclusive school policies

Workshop contributors highlighted possible characteristics of effective inclusive policies at school level, with many ideas recurring across different presentations and discussions. **Based on that starting point, we propose that highly inclusive school policies would do as many as possible of the following:**

- **Clearly identify their goals and values**
 - Have a defined vision for what they are trying to achieve regarding inclusion. They can answer, “What does inclusion mean to us, and what would ‘good’ inclusion look like at our school?”
 - Reflect the circumstances, needs, and values of their school communities.
- **Conceptualise inclusion holistically**, including how pupils *feel* about being part of their school, and their relationships to others.
- **Engage in an ongoing process of planning and evaluation**
 - Treat policies as living documents, and development as an ongoing cycle. This means the goal is cultivating positive changes over time, not a single dramatic overhaul of school practice.
 - Go beyond individual learners to address system-level issues, plans, and accessibility issues wherever possible.
- **Think broadly about which people and policies can create an inclusive school**
 - Consider inclusion and access implications across all the school’s policies and practices, rather than treating “inclusion issues” in isolation.
 - Go beyond classrooms and teachers, to consider the roles of all school staff, and a wide range of school spaces and activities.

These descriptors focus on **goals, scope, and process**—not specific “things” that schools should (or should not) do in relation to their staff and learners. They are high-level, requiring interpretation to turn them into concrete actions at the local level.

The focus on process and values poses a challenge for schools and professionals: there isn’t a single winning formula about how to “do inclusion” in mainstream education. It’s up to individual schools and teams to put in the work on reflection and planning. This focus is also an *opportunity*, because it signals that all solutions will be local and provisional, unique to the school’s circumstances and evolving over time. Especially where resources are constrained and individuals’ needs can conflict, creating and maintaining inclusive environments requires ongoing negotiation and decision-making.

A key purpose of the *Belonging in School* resource is to offer tools that can help schools translate these high-level principles into measurable goals and concrete actions, meeting local needs.



3.3 Belonging in School's tools for inclusive policy

We offer an **action cycle** for planning inclusive policies, as a bridging, “middle layer” of structure between principles and action. The cycle moves through preparation, mapping current circumstances, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This document briefly introduces it in Section 4, and gives detailed stage-by-stage advice in Part 2 of Belonging in School (Planning Guidance document).

We also describe **four approaches to planning** (also Section 4). You might imagine these as four useful routes around the action cycle. Each of them offers a different lens on working towards improved inclusion of pupils with neurodevelopmental differences—and all pupils. Each approach represents different goals and values around inclusion, so requires different information and points of reflection throughout the action cycle. Different approaches may fit more or less well with your school's existing practices and goals.

We encourage all schools to engage in system-level, inclusive policy planning if they possibly can—even beginning with one only area of policy at a time. However, we realise that engaging in cycles of inclusion planning and reflection may be a longer-term goal for some schools. Our Twelve Changes offer relatively accessible opportunities for change, now.

The **Twelve Changes** are discrete alterations to practice or policy that could support neurodivergent pupils in belonging and participating at school (Section 5). They are a menu of possible changes that schools *could* make, not a tick-list of steps. Contributors to the Diverse Trajectories workshop identified these actions as widely relevant across schools and likely to benefit pupils—though not every action will fit the needs of every school, and you may have implemented some of these already.

We encourage you to **share the Belonging in School resource with your colleagues**, and to reflect on where your school can best start.

Are you ready to get your teeth into a planning cycle, or is it more achievable to start with some of our Twelve Suggested Changes?



4. Policy development as a cycle: Four planning approaches

Our report features **Four Approaches to revising (or creating) school-level inclusion policies**, all structured around an action cycle. *This document gives a brief summary of each approach, with full details available in Part 2, the Planning Guidance Document.*

4.1 Introducing the action cycle

Action cycles are used across many fields and settings, with variable terms but the same big ideas of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Most critically, *they represent a repeating cycle over time*, not a single process with a definite endpoint. Becoming a more inclusive school is a living and changing process, which makes the ongoing action cycle an appropriate fit. The goal is not to completely overhaul policies in practices in one go, but to plan, test, and build on changes.

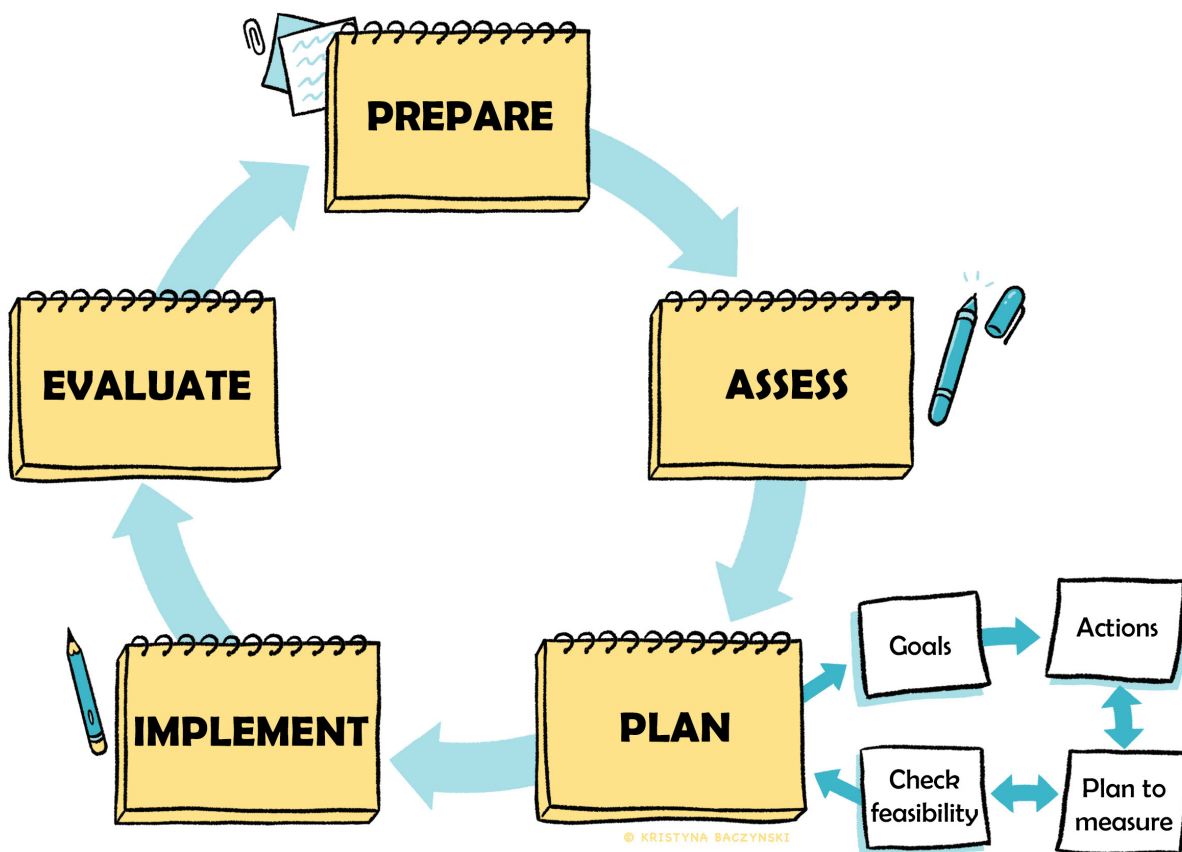


Figure 1. A five-step action cycle for inclusive policy development. Planning includes a sub-cycle, and may take some iteration to make sure your plan is feasible before going on.



Figure 1 shows our version of the action cycle, with the following five steps:

1. **PREPARE to engage in the planning process.**
2. **ASSESS your current situation and resources.**
3. **PLAN goals, actions, and measurement.** Planning is a ‘sub-cycle’ that may require iteration, in order to agree the changes you want to make in this cycle (i.e. your goals), the actions you will take to get there—and ensure these are both measurable and feasible for your staff.
4. **IMPLEMENT your planning, and begin measuring.**
5. **EVALUATE and reflect on your changes.**

Your findings in step 5 will help you to set up for the next iteration of your cycle. Have your planned changes worked? Why? What aspects of policy and practice might your school want to work on next?

Find out more about the Action Cycle steps in Sections 1.1-1.3 of the Planning Guidance Document.

The focus on process and planning is an opportunity: it asks for ongoing progress, not perfection. It *doesn't* demand that schools scrap everything and start over, and also doesn't automatically demand investment in expensive infrastructure or programmes. It gives permission to test out changes and ways of working, and to let inclusion policies be “living documents” that grow and evolve over time.

Engaging with an action cycle to develop policy is useful tool in itself, and supports a proactive, systems-level approach to inclusion. While pursuing a full planning cycle is a time investment, it's “spending to save” on time and resources later.





4.2 Introducing the four approaches

Find out more about the Four Approaches in Section 2 of the Planning Guidance document.

Each approach to planning inclusive policy encapsulates different values and different goals. They are different angles on inclusion, and **poses different questions** for your school to address at each stage of the action cycle. The approaches can be used alone, or combined—meaning you would look at multiple, complementary goals and questions at each stage of the cycle.

In this introduction we highlight key elements of each approach:

- Core ideas and values—what is it all about?
- The approach’s vision for school inclusion
- Example reflective questions that you might use as you get started with your action cycle
- Pointers about the approach, e.g. where it might work well.

The Planning Guidance (Part 2) document gives **more details about the rationale for each approach, a set of reflective questions for each stage in the action cycle, and further references.** It also gives **general guidance about monitoring and evaluation.** What data might you want to collect, and how can you make it manageable and useful? *We strongly encourage you to consult the Planning Guidance document, if you are interested in using any of these approaches in your school.*

The four approaches are:

1. Committing to “inclusion-as-belonging”
2. Participatory policy design
3. Inclusion by design
4. Committing to be a neurodiversity-affirmative school

The Belonging in School resource gives guidance on a process, not a step-by-step recipe for creating a certain results. Two schools could choose the same approach—but have practices that look very different at the end of their planning cycle, because their resources and their community’s priorities are quite different.





What is neurodiversity?

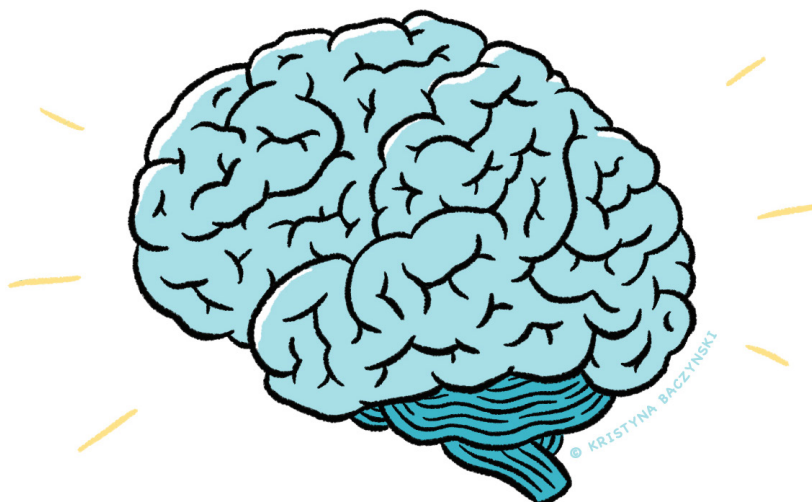
Neurodiversity is the fact that all human beings vary in the way our brains take in and process information. Thus, across any group of people we will have different experiences and behave in different ways. Information processing systems include things like attention, memory, and sensory perception, but also perceiving pressure, knowing our body's location in space, and so much more!

Neurotypical people have information processing that are in the majority, for the group they are in; i.e. are typical of that group. **Neurodivergent** people have information processing that significantly differ from the majority. There may be many different types of neurodivergence present in the same group. Some neurodivergent people *may* have neurodevelopmental diagnoses such as ADHD or autism, but neurodivergence is not about diagnosis, and not a “list of diagnoses”.

Like other types of human diversity, “neurodiversity” is a characteristic of a *group*. **One individual cannot be neurodiverse**, but a group of people may be neurodiverse if the members of the group have different characteristics.

The **neurodiversity paradigm** is a position or perspective on the biological fact of human diversity. Approach 4, “Committing to be a neurodiversity-affirmative school” is about explicitly adopting this paradigm and using it to drive policy.

For more information on terminology and the neurodiversity paradigm, we recommend beginning with Dr Nick Walker’s work (2014, 2021).



Approach 1: Committing to “inclusion as belonging”





Approach 1: Committing to “inclusion-as-belonging”

Core ideas and values

- An essential component of inclusion is whether or not pupils *feel* like they belong and are part of their school community. Pupils can be present and participating, but may not feel like they belong.
- Belonging is an ‘umbrella’ concept, that can include acceptance, community, feeling respected, safety, positive relationships, and pupils feeling “part of” their school.
- Seeking to facilitate pupils’ belonging is beneficial and meaningful in itself, but research suggests it can also support other goals and positive outcomes, like participation and attainment.

The vision for inclusion

Pupils are included if they feel like they belong. School communities use policies and actions to facilitate or increase pupils’ sense of belonging. These will be different across schools, because how people understand ‘belonging’ will differ too.

Get started by asking...

- What does ‘belonging’ mean to different members of our school community? When do they feel like they do/don’t belong at school, and why?
- How do our policies and practices conceptualise ‘inclusion’ now? Why is that? Is belonging in the picture?

Top things to know

There is extensive research on school belongingness, and multiple existing measures for this construct which can help you measure change in this area. This strategy is also a good way to try out participatory policy development (see below) by directly consulting the community about what belonging means to them, and why. See Goodenow (1993) for a foundational paper in this area, and Slaten and colleagues (2016) for a useful review.

Find more about this approach in Section 2.1 of the Planning Guidance Document.

Approach 2: Participatory policy development





Approach 2: Participatory policy development

Core ideas and values

- School policies are developed and evaluated *with* the wider school community (pupils, families, and staff), in contrast to processes that may be led by senior leaders or a single person only.
- Policies developed through school community participation can better promote inclusion because they will better reflect the diverse needs, goals, and values of the people involved.
- Schools seek to make policy involvement accessible and feasible for different parts of their communities. School leaders will be honest, and choose *not* to seek community participation if they lack time, resources, or willingness to act on community input.

The vision for inclusion

The school community is actively and meaningfully involved in reviewing, developing, and evaluating school policies, and their needs, values, and ideas are reflected in those policies. Policies and practices will become more inclusive over time, by including a wider range of people in making them.

Get started by asking...

- What issue or type of policy should we start with first, and what people or groups should participate in developing it?
- *How* might we productively work together with these people or groups? What will their roles be? Any planned process needs to be practical and feasible for participants, but may also need to consider issues around accessibility of information or meetings, power and trust (or a record of mistrust), scheduling/timeline...
- If we already have elements of pupil and family participation in our policymaking (feedback, consultation, councils or working groups), can we build on these and make them accessible to more people?

Top things to know

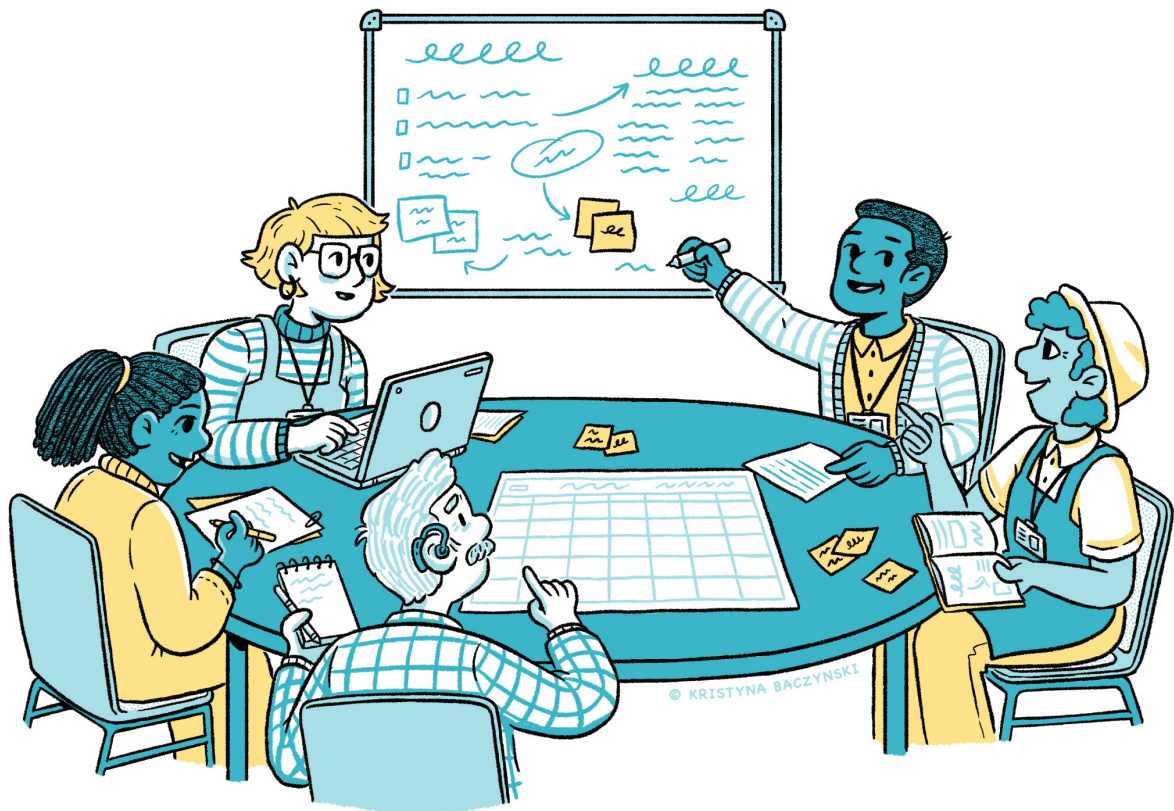
Broadening participation in policymaking is always valuable, if you are committed to truly hearing people. It can start modestly in terms of feedback and consultation on existing policies or possible changes, but would ideally move toward full co-creation of policy, with shared ownership and decision-making. This would be a “gold standard”, but is a complex undertaking, and will be a longer-term goal in most settings.

[Aspiration in Whitley](#) is an example of an education-related participatory project from England with school, family, and community partners. It has a detailed, free online report (The Whitley Researchers, 2018).

Looking for more examples or how-tos? Books and papers on **children’s interaction design** include many examples across different age groups and levels of involvement. Don’t be deterred because many are about designing technologies—they have practical lessons you can use for designing and testing policies! Druin (2002) is a classic on involving children in design.

Find more about this approach in Section 2.2 of the Planning Guidance Document.

Approach 3: Inclusion by design





Approach 3: Inclusion by design

Core ideas and values

- Overall, inclusion-related planning moves towards proactive, school- or system-level approaches, rather than reactive planning focused on individuals.
- A goal is to shift attitudes, beliefs, and teaching practices away from approaches that try to correct “deficits” in individuals towards universal approaches that facilitate access to learning for all students.
- Instead of focusing on “additional” support for certain children, the intention is to change the mainstream offer and make more choices and supports available to everyone *as standard*. This *does not* mean that specialised support for pupils will never be necessary or appropriate.
- Inclusive design and policy won’t produce a system that *always* works for everyone (for example, conflicting needs in class)—but can help ensure the flexibility required to adapt and change accordingly.

The vision for inclusion

Schools improve their inclusiveness by changing “education as usual” to make teaching and environments more universally accessible to all pupils, offer choices, and build in the flexibility to adapt to individual needs on the ground. In their planning, schools move away from reactive accommodations for individuals, toward proactive, system-level “inclusion by design”.

Get started by asking...

- How (and when) do we approach inclusion now? To what extent do we address needs “reactively”, versus proactively planning for accessibility, support, and inclusion at a system level?
- Are there any known pain points for pupils or staff that might be good targets for trying systemic changes?

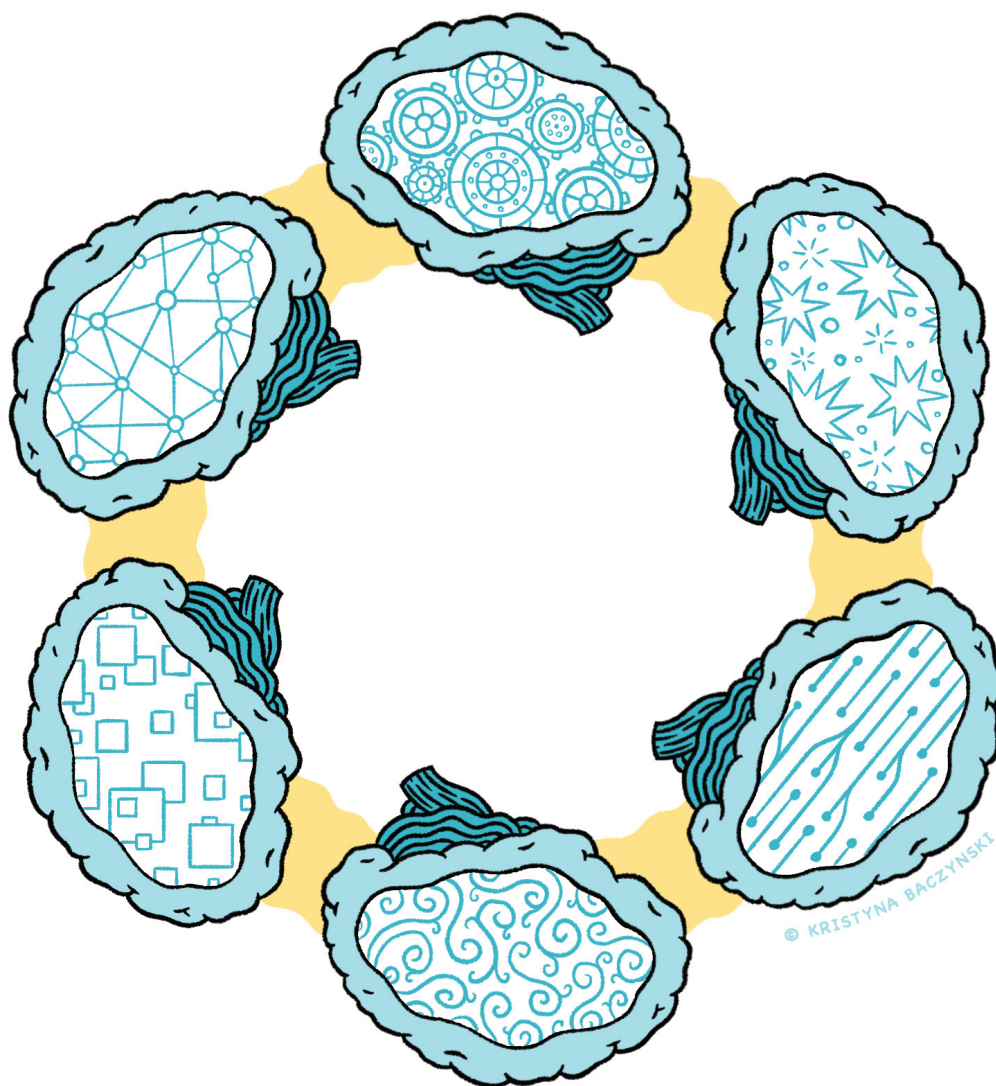
Top things to know

Senior leaders can have an important “spearheading” role here, as they are often the ones with leverage and experience to change things at system level. Remember you don’t have to change everything at once—you can start with one policy area, or pilot things at classroom level. This approach requires schools to invest time in reflecting and planning, but has the potential to *save* some of the time and resources currently spent on specialist, individual supports by making the school environment more universally accessible and supportive to everyone.

[Universal Design for Learning](#) (CAST, 2018) is an established, well-documented methodology that can support inclusion by design, and is successfully used across New Zealand’s education system (Butler, 2019; New Zealand Government, 2013). This approach is also gaining traction in Irish education policy and guidance (e.g. Flood & Banks, 2021).

Find more about this approach in Section 2.3 of the Planning Guidance Document.

Approach 4: Committing to be a neurodiversity- affirmative school



© KRISTYNA BACZYNSKI



Approach 4: Committing to be a neurodiversity-affirmative school

Core ideas and values

- School policies, practice, and everyday interactions reflect the fact of human neurodiversity and the principles of the neurodiversity paradigm: that includes all people in the group, is naturally occurring, and that no way of being (or learning) is better than any other.
- Neurodiversity is an issue of human rights, diversity, and equality.
- Neurodiversity principles have profound, often radical implications for education that affect all learners. This strategy *is not* about adopting neurodiversity language in addition to, or instead of current terms, but about re-shaping practice in line with principles.

The vision for inclusion

Schools adopt the neurodiversity paradigm, and commit to policies and practices that reflect that position and its values. They actively seek to identify and remove policies and practices that aim to normalise children, or those that systematically disadvantage neurodivergent pupils. Supports within school are available to all, free of judgement, and focused on facilitating access rather than correcting deficits. The ultimate goal is for the school to become a non-stigmatising, safe environment for neurodivergent people.

Get started by asking...

- How much do we know about neurodiversity concepts? Are we ready to use them to set goals and reflect on policy? (and if we don't think we know enough, what's our first step?)
- To what extent do our current policies and practices communicate that certain ways of learning, communicating, and being are more desirable or more valid than others? How hard would it be for us to let go of those ideas?

Top things to know

This approach is about profoundly re-thinking practice based on a set of values that may be strikingly different from implicit and explicit values in our current education system. It is an approach for schools who are ready to deeply examine their current practices and assumptions, to be honest (even when it's uncomfortable), and to make small steps towards cumulatively bold, radical changes over time. It *will* require leadership, commitment, and resources. It will not be the right choice for every school, right now.

Get an overview with an online talk from Professor Sue Fletcher-Watson on "[Neurodiversity: acceptance and affirmation in the classroom](#)" (free, 50 min)

There are a wide range of online articles about neurodiversity, many by neurodivergent people. Try [Neurodiversity is for Everyone](#) (Oolong, 2019) and Walker's [definitions](#) (2014).

Find more about this approach in Section 2.4 of the Planning Guidance Document.



5. Twelve Changes that could make your school more inclusive

The contributors to the Diverse Trajectories workshop focused on inclusion policies and planning—but also identified a number of **discrete changes to practice or policy** that can support neurodivergent pupils in belonging and participating at school. For example, to *“reduce barriers and sensory distress around school uniforms by making policies more flexible for all pupils”* (#9). The changes are grouped by topic and numbered for ease of reference, but numbers *are not* a ranking in terms of impact or importance. The Twelve Changes are a menu of suggestions, but not a to-do list or checklist of steps that will produce “good” inclusion policy or outcomes—though we hope they will be beneficial. They are separate from the **planning approaches**, though you might use some of these actions to reach goals you have identified in your planning.

While these practice and policy changes have wide relevance across school settings, they will not fit equally well in every school community. Consider which ones might be attainable and useful for you. We hope that all schools will find at least one relevant option on this list and be inspired to take action!

If your school has the commitment and capacity for broader changes in your inclusion policies and practice, we strongly encourage you to look beyond these suggestions and engage with an action cycle of planning and evaluation.

Approaches and Changes—what’s the difference?

The Twelve Changes are direct suggestions of “what to do”. While some (like investing in staff training or pupil teaching about neurodiversity) are more complex or longer-term than others, they are all relatively discrete alterations to your school’s to practice or policy.

The Approaches are about a guided process of developing or re-developing your school’s policies. They present different visions for what “good” inclusion could be like, and offer different sets of questions for schools to address during a structured planning process.



5.1 Ideas to build on

1. Inclusion as belonging

We recommend that schools adopt a definition of educational inclusion that focuses on, or at minimum includes, pupils' sense of belonging in their school community. School belonging is an 'umbrella' concept, that can include *"the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school social environment"* (Goodenough, 1993, p80), and also whether they *"feel that teachers care about students and treat them fairly; get along with teachers and other students, and feel safe at school"* (Libbey, 2007, p52). School belonging is measurable, and there is substantial prior research linking it to positive pupil outcomes (e.g. Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters, 2018).

We believe belonging is an essential concept for thinking about inclusion and planning successful policies—so important we included it twice! In addition to adopting a belonging-focused definition of inclusion in Change #1, one of our four planning approaches focuses on facilitating pupil belonging. See p20 in this document, and Section 2.1 of *Belonging in School Part 2, the Planning Guidance document*.





2. Transdiagnostic thinking

We recommend thinking “across diagnoses” about the challenges, strengths and needs learners may have (a transdiagnostic perspective). If your school has them, end official or unwritten policies that use specific diagnostic labels to determine which supports you offer (or cannot offer) to learners. Adopt policies that focus on assessing and supporting specific needs (for example, access to typing or ergonomic pens for children who show fine motor control difficulties), or further promote these policies if they already exist in your school.

Currently, school inclusion legislation and policies often focus on diagnostic labels (though to different extents across the UK nations). Diagnoses may determine whether children are eligible for *any* additional supports, or which supports they are subsequently offered. While rarely spelled out, **these policies assume that a diagnosis will be a useful heuristic for understanding characteristics of people in that group**, such as what learning needs they may have and what supports may help them.

We recommend adopting a transdiagnostic perspective because there is increasing concern among neuroscience and psychology researchers that diagnostic labels may not be very good at capturing differences between individual children. Multiple recent, large studies have shown that familiar diagnostic labels such as ADHD or autism are *not* accurate predictors of children’s behavioural, cognitive, or learning difficulties, or even what their brains are like (Astle et al., 2019; Kushki et al., 2019). If current diagnoses were doing a good job describing children’s cognition, behaviour, and learning, we would expect those with the same diagnosis to “cluster” together on measures of these aspects. However, the opposite appears to be true. Children with *similar* profiles of behaviour and skills may have *different* diagnoses (or some may have no diagnosis), and children with the *same* diagnosis may have quite dissimilar profiles from one another.

The implication of these findings is that current diagnostic labels such as ADHD or dyslexia are not a good heuristic for learners’ support needs or abilities, because labels do not uniquely identify behavioural, cognitive, or learning profiles.





3. Diversity includes neurodiversity

Directly talk and teach about neurodiversity as an aspect of human diversity. Link it to other diversity, equality, and rights issues that your school already teaches. As of 2023, national curricula in the UK nations do not mandate teaching about neurodiversity, even though it is a fact and a part of everyday life—the way other types of diversity are a part of life in the UK. It's difficult for people to understand and accept neurodevelopmental differences between people (including their own differences) if they don't know those differences exist at all, or don't have vocabulary to talk about them.

Try introducing neurodiversity concepts in class and directly rebutting stereotypes, keeping in mind that *neurodiversity* refers to differences present across the whole group, not neurodivergence alone (see 'What is neurodiversity?' page 18). **By thinking about all our differences and similarities through the lens of neurodiversity, we can promote acceptance, understanding, and equality of opportunity for all children, but particularly those with neurodevelopmental differences.** As noted in the introduction, children and young people with neurodevelopmental differences are a *significant minority* even according to government education data, which is almost certainly an underestimate (as it will not count anyone who is undiagnosed, or stuck on a waiting list). As further discussed in the Planning Guidance Document (Section 2.4), promoting acceptance and understanding is badly needed, in light of the extensively documented differences in neurodivergent children's and young people's wellbeing compared to neurotypical peers, and the negative effects of stigma on this group (e.g. Understood.org, 2022).

In the classroom now, familiarity with neurodiversity concepts and vocabulary can be a useful and practical tool. **Neurodiversity can help staff members to explain why people do things differently at school or are held to apparently different expectations, in a way that avoids blaming individuals, or labelling them as deficient, incapable, or "not trying"**. Many neurodiversity-related differences at school show up in daily routines and small, repeated conflicts—like one learner protesting about who gets to use the computer for a lesson, or why someone is in trouble over uniform and another person has an exception. What pupils and adults do and say in many of these everyday situations really matters for overall school experiences—especially for neurodivergent children who may already experience high stress at school and be very aware of their differences.

The [Learning About Neurodiversity at School \(LEANS\) project](#) is a freely downloadable, comprehensive resource for introducing neurodiversity concepts in primary school (Alcorn et al., 2022) that covers many of these daily-life classroom topics, and provides detailed further information for teachers about teaching this topic.

4. Equity

Talk and teach about equity and equality: Why it can be fair for pupils *not* to be treated "the same"? Perceived differences in pupil treatment at school can be a persistent source of conflict over "unfairness". Directly teach about an equity-based model of fairness (versus one based on equality, i.e. sameness), and counter the idea that differences in treatment are automatically "unfair", or automatically disadvantage others. People should get what they need to participate and thrive—which often means they *won't* all be treated exactly the same. Encourage staff to model "equity thinking" in pupil interactions, mediating disputes, etc. What does it look like to put this principle in practice? *Multiple resources/ lessons are available online for different age groups.*



5.2 Sensory issues and environment

5. Sensory awareness

Improve staff awareness of sensory issues and impacts, and equip pupils with knowledge and vocabulary to talk about them. Sensory factors can be a major factor in pupils' ability to physically be in the school environment, feel safe, and take part. A consistent piece of input from pupils, neurodivergent adults, and families is that these differences often aren't understood. Begin by raising awareness among all staff about what sensory processing issues are, and that they can seriously affect people. Directly teach pupils about the existence of sensory needs, and provide vocabulary to talk about these. Take pupils seriously when they tell you about their needs.



© KRISTYNA BACZYNSKI

6. Sensory review

Review the sensory environment of your school, and if possible seek direct feedback about helpful and challenging spaces or aspects. Which parts are supporting people or posing challenges, and why? Even if some desired changes may be impractical now, there might be easy wins—like reducing busy hallway displays. There are recent research papers and guidelines that may be able to help you identify relevant sensory factors to review, and possible changes to make (e.g. British Standards Institute, 2022; MacLennan et al., 2022).



5.3 Daily demands on learners

7. Attendance

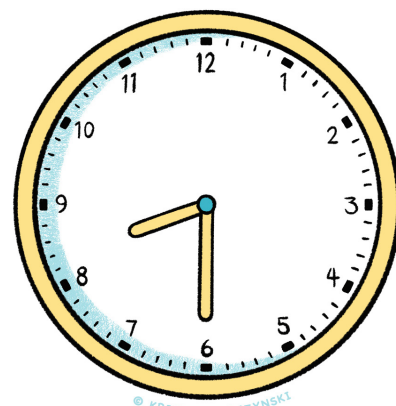
Remove public rewards and punishments around attendance. Rewarding perfect attendance (and the reverse) often means systems are rewarding children based on things outside their personal control. These markers separate and label children—which may feel good to those getting a gold star, but may be a clear message of not-belonging or not being valued for others.

8. Arrival and departure

Offer flexibility about when and how pupils arrive and depart school. Neurodivergent pupils in particular may face heightened challenges around the number of tasks, transitions and time pressures required to *get* to school. Everyone arriving (or leaving) at once may be almost unbearably chaotic and distressing for some. If you can, help reduce that stress by offering options. For example, entering through a quieter side door, or a “soft start” or “soft end” to the school day, which some schools are already implementing (e.g. in the Dundee area).

9. Uniforms

Reduce barriers and sensory distress around school uniforms by making policies more flexible for all pupils. Uniforms pose a consistent source of stress for some neurodivergent pupils, due to their sensory processing. Being consistently too hot, too cold, scratched by labels or pinched by shoes makes participation harder! Sensory issues occur across diagnostic labels, and will also affect pupils *without* diagnoses. Offer flexibility to everyone, and help normalise people meeting their own sensory needs. If changing the policy isn't possible yet, be more forgiving in cases where policies are followed imperfectly—such as a child wearing black trainers instead of black dress shoes.





5.4 Supporting staff to support learners

10. Inclusion-focused Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Help staff feel equipped to support learners by investing in awareness and training related to inclusion. Seek to identify, prioritise, and take actions on gaps in awareness and training, not only on inclusive practices, but also topics like neurodiversity, trauma-informed practices, and mental health. Plan toward comprehensive and consistent CPD on these topics. Staff members learning and training independently is common, but can create inconsistency across the school. External partners, such as third-sector organisations, local experts-by-experience, or academics may be able to support CPD.

The Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) has a free 2021 **report** with evidence-based recommendations for schools about choosing (or creating) effective and impactful CPD (Collin & Smith, 2021).



11. Everyone supports inclusion

All staff play a role in making their school inclusive, and contribute to whether learners feel respected, safe, and included. Everyone—including playground monitors, mealtime and administrative staff—has a role in shaping children’s experiences. We encourage you to include as many staff as possible in inclusion-related training and planning, not teachers alone. For example, training all staff around sensory issues, or about less-common ways of communicating, like children who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices (AAC).

12. Neurodivergent staff

Every school will have neurodivergent staff members—learn from them, if they are willing to share! Their conjunction of lived and professional experience is a valuable resource for understanding the needs of your pupils, and which parts of the school environment and practice may be working more or less well to support them. We would strongly encourage you to listen to, and learn from their experiences. We also recommend [Learning From Autistic Teachers: How to Be a Neurodiversity-Inclusive School](#) as an excellent, recent book on this topic (Wood et al., 2022).



6. Conclusion

The current picture of inclusion is challenging in mainstream schools across the UK. The *Belonging in School* resource, building on the many contributions to the Diverse Trajectories and ITAKOM workshops⁶, isn't a comprehensive account of current inclusion issues or approaches. We aren't the first to propose many of these ideas—but they are worth repeating!

Despite barriers related to funding and staff workload, positive changes *are* possible at school level, over the short and medium term. **A major takeaway from our contributors was that successful inclusion policies are as much about a school's culture, values, and planning process than they are about adopting specific lists of practices or supports.** School culture and everyday decision-making can have a profound impact on neurodivergent learners' sense of belonging and participation at school (Section 3). Our **Suggested Changes** (Section 5) are helpful starting points. While they can concretely benefit pupils and/or staff, they are ultimately isolated. These suggestions aren't the right tool to *develop* new policies, or assess and revise current practice.

The **Action Cycle** and **Four Approaches** (both Section 4) provide structure and 'lenses' for schools to reflect on their choices, policies and values around inclusion, and plan towards future policies and practices that better meet the needs of neurodivergent learners, and have been checked at every step for their *feasibility*. *Part 2 of Belonging in School, the Planning Guidance document, explains the Cycle and the Approaches in the level of detail needed to implement them, for schools who feel ready to engage with them.*

There is still far to go, in order to for every neurodivergent learner to feel like they belong in their school community, and for every staff member to feel equipped to teach them. We hope the Twelve Changes and the explicit structure of the Action Cycle will be a useful tool for any school that is unsure how to approach their inclusive policy development, or how to translate bigger ideas into actions.

Before you go, we encourage you...

1. To identify at least one change to make **this year**.
2. To set a **timeline** towards undertaking an inclusion planning cycle—even if this may be a longer-term goal at your school.
3. To share the *Belonging in School* resource with your colleagues.

Thank you for reading, and don't forget that *Belonging in School* has a Part 2, with detailed, hands-on guidance about using the action cycle, the Four Approaches, and measuring your changes. Don't have Part 2? Download it here: <https://inclusion.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/>

⁶ See Section 7 'About the *Belonging in School* project'



7. About the Belonging in School project

The Belonging in School resource is the final output of a series of stakeholder workshops, and builds on earlier reporting for a policy audience (Lewis, Zdorovtsova & Astle, 2023). **It is not a stand-alone research project, but resulted from opportunistically developing and extending the policy-focused outputs into a hands-on, action-focused tool for educators and schools.**

Development and release of the Belonging in School resource was made possible with funding from the Medical Research Council (MC-A0606-5PQ41) and by a donation from the Templeton World Charitable Foundation, as part of their Global Conference on the Science of Human Flourishing.

7.1 Initial workshop

In October 2022, Professor Duncan Astle received a donation from the Templeton World Charity Foundation to run a workshop as part of the Global Scientific Conference on Global Flourishing. The November 2022 *Diverse Trajectories to Good Developmental Outcomes Workshop* aimed to integrate our growing scientific understanding of the diversity that exists in neurodevelopment with pragmatic policy recommendations for achieving good developmental outcomes. The workshop included over 80 experienced contributors from education, policy, the charity sector, academic research, and clinical practice, alongside people with lived experience of neurodivergence.

7.2 Policy briefing, feedback, and second workshop

The first output based on the *Diverse Trajectories* workshop was a **policy briefing** about barriers to inclusion and potential solutions in UK schools (Lewis, Zdorovtsova & Astle, 2023). Following this output, the team sought additional feedback from the original workshop attendees, and from a mixed group of researchers, practitioners, and community members with lived experience as part of the *Delivering Inclusive Education Workshop* (ITAKOM conference, Edinburgh, March 2023). These inputs contributed to a revised briefing.

7.3 From Policy to Belonging in School

The policy briefings were originally tailored to a very broad audience of educators and policymakers, and were concerned with policies, barriers, and actions at multiple levels, from classroom to national. An additional project goal was to build on the workshop contributions and briefings to develop new resource content about implementing inclusive practices. Here, the focus would be more specifically on educators and schools—local inclusion issues, not national ones.

This second writing and development phase became **Belonging in School**. It launched in June 2023, and the team welcomed Dr Alyssa Alcorn as the Public Engagement Lead. While the outputs of the *Diverse Trajectories* and *Delivering Inclusive Education* workshops informed the current resource and its recommendations, Belonging in School adds new content and references. It is a different type of content, oriented towards engaging in reflection and taking action.



Thank you!

We would like to thank all participants in the Diverse Trajectories to Good Developmental Outcomes Workshop (2022) and the Delivering Inclusive Education Workshop (2023) for sharing their experiences and professional insights during the events, plus giving feedback on the earlier policy briefs. We would also especially like to thank Dr Sian Lewis for her work on the Diverse Trajectories Workshop and on the policy brief.





8. References

Alcorn, A.M., Fletcher-Watson, S., McGeown, S., Murray, F., Aitken, D., Peacock, L.J.J., & Mandy, W. (2022). Learning About Neurodiversity at School: A resource pack for primary school teachers and pupils. University of Edinburgh. <https://salvesen-research.ed.ac.uk/leans>

Allen, K., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 30, 1-34.

Astle, D.E., Bathelt, J., The CALM Team, & Holmes, J. (2019). Remapping the cognitive and neural profiles of children who struggle at school. *Developmental Science*, 22(1), e12747. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12747>

British Standards Institute (2022). PAS 6463:2022: Design for the mind. Neurodiversity and the built environment. Guide. British Standards Institute. <https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards/pas-6463/>

Butler, C. (2019). Translating UDL: an Aotearoa/New Zealand Story. In: Learning Designed [website]. CAST. (<https://www.learningdesigned.org/resource/translating-udl-aotearoanew-zealand-story>).

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Collin, J., & Smith, E. (2021). Effective Professional Development. Guidance Report. *Education Endowment Foundation*. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-professional-development>

Druin, A. (2002). The role of children in the design of new technology. *Behaviour and information technology*, 21(1), 1-25.

Dyson, A., & Gallannaugh F. (2008). Disproportionality in special needs education in England. *Journal of Special Education*. 42(1), 36–46. doi:10.1177/0022466907313607.

Flood, M., & Banks, J. (2021). Universal Design for Learning: Is it gaining momentum in Irish education?. *Education Sciences*, 11(7), 341.

Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools*, 30, 79–90.

Graham, B., White, C., Edwards, A., Potter, S., & Street, C. (2019). *School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children*. London: UK Government. (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800028/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion_literature_review.pdf).

New Zealand Government (2023). *Inclusive education* [website]. New Zealand Government, Wellington. <https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/>



- Kushki, A., Anagnostou, E., Hammill, C., Duez, P., Brian, J., Iaconi, A.,... & Lerch, J. P. (2019).** Examining overlap and homogeneity in ASD, ADHD, and OCD: a data-driven, diagnosis-agnostic approach. *Translational psychiatry*, 9(1), 318. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41398-019-0631-2>
- Lewis, S., Zdorovtsova, N., & Astle, D.E. (2023).** *Towards inclusive schools: enabling all students to flourish*. Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge. <https://github.com/nataliazdorovtsova/Diverse-Trajectories-Workshop/blob/main/InclusionBrief.pdf>
- Libbey, H.P. (2007).** *School connectedness: Influence above and beyond family connectedness*. University of Minnesota.
- MacLennan, K., Woolley, C., @21andsensory, E., Heasman, B., Starns, J., George, B., & Manning, C. (2022).** "It is a big spider web of things": Sensory experiences of autistic adults in public spaces. *Autism in Adulthood*. <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/aut.2022.0024>
- Oolong. (2019, October 19).** Neurodiversity is for everyone. Medium. <https://oolong.medium.com/neurodiversity-is-for-everyone-f375a27aa3c9>
- Scottish Government (2019).** *Guidance on the presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-presumption-provide-education-mainstream-setting/>
- Scottish Government (14 December 2021).** *Summary Statistics For Schools In Scotland 2021*. Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-schools-scotland/pages/5/>
- Special educational needs statistics team (2022),** *Special educational needs in England: January 2022*. Department for Education (DfE). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2022>
- Slaten, C., Ferguson, J., Allen, K., Brodrick, D., & Waters, L. (2016).** School Belonging: A Review of the History, Current Trends, and Future Directions. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 33(1), 1-15. doi:10.1017/edp.2016.6
- Understood.org (April 2022).** Neurodiversity and Stigma Study. <https://mediacenter.understood.org/image/Understood.org+Neurodiversity+and+Stigma+Study.pdf>
- Walker, N. (2014).** *Neurodiversity: Some Basic Terms & Definitions*. Neuroqueer (blog). <https://neuroqueer.com/neurodiversity-terms-and-definitions/>
- Walker, N. (2021).** *Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilities*. Fort Worth, TX: Autonomous Press.
- The Whitley Researchers (2018).** *Aspiration in Whitley: Improving the collaboration between schools, families, and the community*. University of Reading and Whitley Community Development Association. <https://aspiration-in-whitley.whitley-cda.org/>
- Wood, R., Crane, L., Happé, F., Morrison, A., & Moyse, R. (Eds.). (2022).** *Learning from autistic teachers: How to be a neurodiversity-inclusive school*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.



Text ©2023 The Belonging in School team. Alyssa Alcorn, Natalia Zdorovtsova and Duncan Astle assert their right to be identified as the authors of this resource.

Illustrations ©2023 Kristyna Baczynski

Please cite Part 1 of Belonging in School as follows:

Alcorn, A.M., Zdorovtsova, N., & Astle, D.E. (2023). *Belonging in School Part 1: An Introduction to School-level Approaches for Developing Inclusive Policy*. Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge.

The Belonging in School resource and associated materials are published under a Creative Commons [CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/):

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International. Please review the terms of this license for guidance on how you can and cannot use, share, and adapt this work.

<https://inclusion.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/>

Contact the project team: diversetrajectories@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk

