

The Inclusion and Belonging Project

Wandsworth Schools and Community Psychology Service (SCPS)

The SCPS agreed to explore children and young people's with SEND understanding and thoughts regarding what helps them feel included in their schools, in order to identify the things that most help them to feel they belong and possible factors influencing their sense of inclusion. One hope was that the children's views would shape the development of an Inclusion Charter for the borough that might influence school leaders' perceptions and ultimately support more children being educated in local provision. The SCPS chose to explore three specific questions in relation to children's belonging. Firstly, did children within the borough feel a sense of belonging in their schools? Secondly, what helped children feel that they belong? Finally, what else did children and young people think would improve their sense of school belonging within the LA? In order to answer these, a two-phase, mixed-methods approach was adopted. Young people's sense of belonging was explored using the Belonging Scale (Frederickson et al., 2007) and the School Connectedness Scale (Resnick et al, 1997), alongside individual or semi-structured group reflection sessions. By using this multi-dimensional approach, it was hoped that a fuller understanding of the sense of belonging felt by children and young people in the LA could be explored. In the first phase, children were asked about their understanding of inclusion and belonging, and what they felt schools were doing to support them or could do more of to improve in this area. The second phase took the themes identified in the first phase and explored these further, aiming to identify and rank the most important factors of belonging and inclusion to children within the LA. Quantitative data from the scales was also analysed.

A total of 38 children aged three to sixteen participated in Phase 1. The children were members of five schools; an ASD base in a nursery (n=5), two mainstream primary schools - including one with a Hearing Impairment unit (n=19), a mainstream secondary school (n=4) and a secondary special school (n=10). All students were on the SEN register and were selected for participation by the school SENCO. Fortysix children aged seven to fifteen participated in Phase 2, representing a further eight schools within the LA. These comprised five mainstream primary schools – including one with a Language Unit (n=30), one primary special school (n=3), one mainstream secondary school (n=9) and one residential secondary special school (n=4).

Four key themes were identified as important in supporting children's sense of belonging in school: Relationships, School Environment, Teaching and Learning and Extra Curricular Activities (See Table 2 for key themes, subthemes and key quotes). Children and young people also ranked the emerging themes to create a list of Top Ten tips for inclusion and belonging (see Table 3).

With the support of the graphic design team a poster was created to display the young people's key ideas adopting the title "School for Everyone: Our Ten Top Tips to help us feel we belong."

This poster has been distributed to all local schools as well as displayed in key parts of the Town Hall building. Several presentations have taken place to promote the findings of the

project, share the Top Ten tips as well as pose reflective questions to school staff and key stakeholders. The presentation audience so far includes

- Wandsworth Cllrs- we presented at the Cllrs' Committee where young people who had participated in the project had the chance to present the top tips themselves.
- Chairs of Governors from schools across the borough
- Primary Heads' Forum
- Primary and Secondary SENCO forums
- Youth Council

Part of our findings were also presented at the DECP (Division of Educational and Child Psychology) conference 2018 and were also submitted to a peer reviewed journal in the form of an article which we are hoping will be published in 2019.

Appendices

Table 1: Description of gender, ethnicity, SEN, and school type by research phase

	Phase			Phase	
	Phase 1	Phase 2		Phase 1	Phase 2
Male	52.63%(20)	56.52%(26)	ASD	28.95%(11)	36.96%(17)
Female	47.36%(18)	43.48%(20)	CL	21.05% (8)	13.04% (6)
			SEMH	18.42% (7)	2.17% (1)
White British	18.42% (7)	43.48%(20)	HI	13.16% (5)	2.17% (1)
White Other	2.63% (1)	13.04% (6)	PD	2.63% (1)	10.87% (5)
Black			SPaL	2.63% (1)	21.74%(10)
Caribbean	5.26% (2)	6.52% (3)	Other	2.63% (1)	13.04% (6)
Black African		2.17% (1)	Not available	10.53% (4)	
Black Other		2.17% (1)			
Asian Indian		2.17% (1)	Nursery	13.16% (5)	
Asian Pakistani	5.26% (2)	8.70% (4)	Primary	50.00%(19)	65.22%(30)
Asian Other		4.35% (2)	Secondary	10.53% (4)	19.57% (9)
Other	2.63% (1)	13.04% (6)	Special	26.31%(10)	6.52% (3)
Not available	69.44%(25)		Residential		8.70% (4)

Table 2: Themes/Sub-themes representing Children's Perceptions of School Belonging

Relationships	
Sub-themes	Examples of Quotes
Friendship *	"If you don't have friends you don't want to come to school. With your friends you can talk about the lessons and dreams about what you want to do when you get older. You need someone to talk to when things go wrong."

Relationship with peers *	“Like for example, when something’s too heavy, someone will help me. This could be anyone, even people I don’t know. That’s how I know I belong.”
Relationship with staff *	“If you get along with them you learn better, you can have a laugh and engage and learn more. You listen more and understand better.”
Community and Family *	“My parents. They can come in to school and help, if you need it.”
Acceptance *	“If not accepted you feel very down. It makes you feel happy to be accepted and you want to come to school.” ²²
Extra-curricular activities	
Sport/ Clubs *	“I feel like achieving something for the school is a big part of being at school. I like sports and it’s one of the places I mostly feel special.” “Being a part of a club at school and meeting your friends and new people.”
School trips *	“When you get included in activities on fun days, you don’t feel alone.”
Play	“We can play tag and hide and seek.”
Environment	
Physical environment	“Re-painting the school to make it multi-coloured. People would be happier and it would make a big difference.”
Familiarity	“You’re always going there. Feels like home.”
Safety *	“In this school students threaten people and might be part of a gang. If you feel safe you would feel free to do and say what you want and voice my opinion.” (this was an example of an ethical concern and a case that was followed up with school)
School Identification	“Our school uniforms. We all wear the same thing, so we’re part of a great big [school] family”
Equipment	“They give children stuff, like glasses and a light magnifier so everything is clearer if they can’t see”
Teaching and Learning	
Tailored support *	“Help for reading- I find reading hard and I can’t read it out loud. Adults help me, help me sound it out and I feel more like part of the school when I can read things”.
Group work *	“Working as part of a team – you’re working together so you’re never alone.”
Rules and routines	“Getting along with the school rules.” “Teachers invite us into the classroom.”
Recognition/ Rewards	“When my teacher compliments me to my parents.”
Curriculum/ teaching approach	“PSHE especially. We sit in a circle and group problem solve in small groups. Bigger groups can feel like madness”

* These subthemes represent those that children ranked as priorities in phase 2 of data collection (part of “Top Ten Tips to Help us Feel we Belong”)

Table 3: Top Ten Tips

Friendship	Help us all to make and keep friends.
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Relationships with school staff	Get to know us. Be there for us when we need to talk to someone.
School Trips	Make sure we can all take part in school trips.
Community and Family	Invite and help our families to take part in school life.
Sports Activities and Clubs	Have lots of different sports activities and clubs. Make sure we can all take part.
Acceptance	Accept, respect and be kind to everyone.
Safety	Help us to feel safe at school; listen to us. Do something about what we tell you.
Group work	Let us learn and take part in groups.
Equipment	Give us equipment that helps us when we learn and play.
Tailored Support	When we need help think with us about special or different ways to help us.