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 Supporting all children to reach their potential: practitioner perspectives on creating an inclusive school environment

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'Supporting all children to reach their potential: practitioner perspectives on creating an inclusive school environment'

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Abstract
This paper explores practitioner perspectives on effective inclusion within a school environment. Inclusion within school settings is more than children with a range of needs, including special educational needs (SEN) being taught together within a classroom. It is important that a school community recognises the uniqueness of each child and works together to address those individual needs, helping the child to reach their full potential. Data was gathered through interviews from fourteen members of teaching and support staff within one primary school in the North of England, identified by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) as being an inclusive school. Findings report that in order to make inclusion effective for all children, practitioners acknowledged the importance of collaborative practice within the school, with outside agencies and parent partnership. A number of barriers to effective inclusion were also highlighted, including inadequate pre-service training, the national curriculum, mandatory testing at the end of key stages and school funding.

Key words:
Inclusion, Special Educational Needs (SEN), National Curriculum, Testing, Training, parent partnership, collaborative working

Introduction
Prior to the implementation of the 1981 Education Act in England, children with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) were placed within segregated settings rather than mainstream schools (Kendall 2017). However, one important consequence of this act, was the right for children with SEN and other needs to access inclusive education within mainstream schools (Runswick-Cole 2011). Subsequent and current legislation e.g. The Children and Families Act (2014) stresses the importance of parental choice in terms of educational provision which Webster and Blatchford (2013) acknowledge has resulted in increasing numbers of children with SEN being educated within mainstream settings.

In attempting to define the terms 'inclusion' and 'inclusive education', Florian and Black –Hawkins (2011) opine that whilst the terms are important they are also problematic due to the term 'inclusion' being used so broadly within education. Humphrey (2008) argues that there is no universal agreement as to what the terms actually mean. Furthermore, Wilde and Avramidis (2011) suggest that this lack of common definition of 'inclusion' leads to a range of differing practices within education settings. However, what is clear is that inclusion is not just about enrolling children with SEN or disabilities into mainstream schools (Humphrey 2008), but is more about mainstream schools providing for a wide range of needs, ensuring that all

children fulfil their learning potential (Avramidis et al 2002; Hodkinson 2016). Whilst there are many identified barriers to effective inclusion, literature acknowledges a broad range of inclusive practices within school settings, including positive attitudes towards inclusion from staff (Horne and Timmons 2009; Avradamis and Norwich 2002), staff responses to individual differences (Florian 2008) and staff working collaboratively within the setting and with other professionals (Mulholland and O'Connor 2016; Wilde and Avramidis 2011). However, these positive strategies that support inclusion can vary across the education sector, with some schools being more 'inclusive' than others. Although this study was limited to one school, the participants identified a range of practice that supported inclusion for all, as well as barriers to effective inclusion, adding to relevant current literature.

Literature review
The National Curriculum and Testing
In identifying the key issues faced by those working in schools, a number of factors emerge from the literature including the development and subsequent implementation of the National Curriculum (NC). The NC was introduced to state maintained English primary schools in 1989 with the remit of ensuring that the same standards of teaching and learning were implemented across the country (Roberts 2017). There has been a number of reviews to the NC and in 2010, the new coalition government confirmed plans to review and reform the existing NC (Greany and Waterhouse 2016). The revised NC was implemented from September 2014 with major revisions made to the subject content of all NC subjects (Roberts 2017), focussing on the 'core' subjects of English, maths and science and 'standards' set that children should achieve by the end of Key stage 1(Year 2, ages 6-7years) and Key stage 2 (Year 6, ages 10-11 years) (Edmondson and Robertson 2016). However, the implementation of National policy of this scale is not without its critics. Steers (2014) suggests that the programme of study for the NC core subjects are over prescriptive and do not take into account children with SEN. Further issues are raised surrounding the testing of core subjects at the end of each key stage, suggesting that they are not developmentally appropriate and may be a barrier to inclusion of children with SEN (Nuttall 2016). Additionally, Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi (2014) identifies conflict between the schools drive to improve examination results and inclusion, an issue also discussed by Runswick-Cole (2011) who refers to this problem as the 'standards agenda' and inclusion. Schools are required to improve their academic standards and at the same time are expected to include children who for a range of reasons, including SEN and behaviour difficulties, are possibly going to fall short of attaining those standards (Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi 2014). Steers (2014) further concedes that lack of progress for many children could result in them viewing themselves as failures. The implementation of this national framework is supported by a variety of different elements within the school environment including the head teacher, special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo), teachers, Learning Mentor and teaching assistants (TAs).

Supporting Learning

The *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (DFES, 1994) in England established that maintained schools must have a designated person responsible for ensuring the co-ordination of provision for children with SEN. This role became the responsibility of the SENCo (Hodkinson 2016). Brown and Doveston (2014) suggest that the role is broad and includes working with other teachers, parents, TAs, Learning Mentors and with other professionals. This aspect of multi professional team working is identified within literature as important in supporting successful inclusion (Hodkinson 2016; Ko 2015). Pearson et al (2015) view the role of the SENCo as one of supporting the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream settings, however Morewood (2012) argues, it is not the sole responsibility of the SENCo to ensure adequate provision for individuals with SEN but inclusive practice should be a whole school approach, a view also supported by Mulholland and O'Connor (2016;1070) who discuss the importance of how collaborative practice is 'integral to effective inclusion.'

To support children with a wide range of differing needs within mainstream settings, there has been an increase in numbers of support staff which Graves and Williams (2017) suggest is driven by inclusion policies. Support staff include, TAs and Learning Mentors (Blatchford et al 2011; Webster et al 2010). The role of the TA is wide and varied and recognised as important in supporting both pupils and teachers, however the number of TAs employed within a setting depends upon available funding (Humphrey and Symes 2013). Part of their role may include academic support, delivering structured intervention programmes for children who are not making progress in certain areas of the curriculum (Webster et al 2010) or working with children with SEN (Webster and Blatchford 2013). Wren (2017) found that TAs were deployed to work within academic support but their role included social and behavioural support as well, which may be on a one to one basis or working with small groups (Bignold and Barbera 2012). However, Blatchford et al (2012) and Waddington and Reed (2017) acknowledge that children who received more support from TAs than the class teacher, were more likely to make less academic progress than other children within the class. Research by Webster et al (2013) challenged the existing models of TA deployment within a number of school settings. Findings identified that there was a positive change in classroom practice with TAs working across the attainment range, allowing the teacher to spend more time with the children with SEN.

Learning Mentors were introduced to schools as part of the *Excellence in Cities* initiative by the then UK government, to raise standards and pupil's attainment (Rhodes 2006). The role of the Learning Mentor within a school is primarily to help children overcome barriers to learning. Mintz (2010) suggests that part of this role can include looking at emotional aspects of learning, including the child's motivation for learning and their mental well being, which can impact negatively upon an individual's learning. Roper Marshall (2006) identifies the role as one that is wide ranging, but includes working with a range of support services, teachers, children and their families, therefore contributing to inclusive practice.

Parent Partnership

To support successful inclusion, the importance of working in partnership with parents is clearly identified and emphasised within literature (Kendall 2017; Hornby and Lafaele 2011; Sime and Sheridan 2014). An effective home and school partnership can have a positive impact on the experiences and educational outcomes of the child (Lendrum et al 2015). Furthermore, Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017) suggest that there has been an education policy focus within the UK to increase parental involvement within education settings and opines that, as a result of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspecting schools and taking into account parents' school satisfaction, schools are being encouraging to build effective relationships with parents.

Training needs

Training for staff that support children with SEN and a range of needs is widely discussed within literature (Graves and Williams 2017; Graves 2014). Whilst Avramidis et al (2002) identifies a perceived need for adequate pre-service training relating to SEN, they suggest that there should also be continuing professional development (CPD). Similarly, literature acknowledges the need for appropriate training for TAs initially and in terms of CPD, (Bignold and Barbera 2012; Higgins and Gulliford 2014) although CPD is subject to available funding (Glazzard 2011). However, Webster et al (2010) in a large scale study found that the majority of support staff did receive relevant in service training, but they did identify that there was a lack of joint planning and feedback between the teacher and TA.

Lack of pre-service training relating to SEN is not solely confined to TAs but is also relevant to trainee teachers before they enter the teaching profession (Kendall 2016). Richards (2010) suggests that there is a wide variation in the quality and quantity of training around SEN within Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and concedes that schools were expected to provide most of the training on SEN. This variable experience resulted in many newly qualified teachers feeling unprepared and not confident in teaching children with SEN, an issue also identified by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011).

Method

This study adopted a purposive sampling method, allowing the researcher to interview people who had relevant experience (Bryman 2012). The research design was qualitative in nature, providing the opportunity to focus upon the experiences of a range of staff who worked with children with SEN and additional needs within a mainstream education setting. The researcher has a long standing of working with children with SEN within a school environment and the school was personally known to the author.

The research followed BERA 2011 ethical guidelines. Permission to carry out the research was given by the Head teacher, allowing access to a range of practitioners within the school. Prospective participants were given details about the researcher, purpose of the study, data that would be collected and how that research would be used. From a total of 27 practitioners within the

school (gender representation: 2 male and 25 female), fourteen agreed to partake in the study. Informed consent was required from the prospective participants as discussed by Creswell (2009). All participants completed the relevant consent forms that were sent via e-mail.

The school context
The school used for this study is a Catholic faith primary school and nursery in the North of England, serving pupils between the ages of 3 and 11. In 2013, the school was inspected by Ofsted. Findings stated that the school was highly inclusive, with staff working together to ensure that no child was disadvantaged by their circumstances. A recent inspection in 2018, acknowledged that each child was valued as an individual and their uniqueness respected. Currently, there are 49 pupils on the SEND register.

Participants
The fourteen members of staff who participated in the study undertook a range of roles across the education workforce. One participant was male and a member of the senior management team, 13 participants were female, of which 2 were also senior management. The participants were a representative sample of the practitioners within the school (see table 1 for participant information).

Table 1: Participant details

Participant	Role within the school	Years of school experience
Participant A	Head teacher	17 years
Participant B	Deputy Head	28 years
Participant C	SENCo	18 years
Participant D	Learning Mentor	12 years
Participant E	Teaching Assistant	5 years
Participant F	Teaching Assistant	6 years
Participant G	Teaching Assistant	3 years
Participant H	Teacher	11 years
Participant I	Teacher	5 years
Participant J	Teacher	5 years
Participant K	Teacher	10 years
Participant L	Teacher	11 years
Participant M	Teacher	13 years
Participant N	Teacher	2 years

Research approach
Semi-structured interviews were used to collate data from members of staff, allowing flexibility to add or omit questions during the interview and to let the interviewee develop ideas raised by the researcher (Denscombe 2010). Participants were assured of anonymity (Bryman 2012) and could terminate the interview at any time (Silverman 2006). Interview questions were

constructed around two main themes. Firstly, staff views of what they considered worked in supporting inclusion and secondly, staff perceptions of barriers to inclusion within the school.

Interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. With permission from the participants, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were asked if they required a copy of their interview to check for accuracy but declined the offer. A thematic data analysis approach was used to analyse the data (Cohen et al. 2011). Transcripts were read, re read and then data selected, analysed and manually colour coded into themes (Bryman 2012; Wellington 2000).

Following coding, five themes emerged; inclusion and inclusive practice, collaborative practice, training, National Curriculum and testing and funding.

Findings
Theme 1: Inclusion and inclusive practice
All of the participants within this study acknowledged the inclusive ethos of the school towards the inclusion of all children with a wide range of needs as the following comments show:

'The ethos of our school and staff is that we promote inclusion and we welcome any child into our mainstream setting.'
(A Head teacher)

'Inclusion is so important, the children work together and they are all part of the school and the local community'
(L Teacher)

However, participants did recognise that as more children are identified as having SEN or additional needs within the setting, this presents challenges to staff, especially when supporting children with social, emotional and behavioural issues. Nonetheless, participants did not identify a need to exclude individuals with challenging behaviours and spoke of the strategies used to support them within the classroom, emphasising the importance of input from the Learning Mentor in terms of nurture groups and one to one support. Furthermore, support also included working closely with the child's family.

Participants spoke of ensuring that lessons were accessible to all children and that work was differentiated even within the constraints of the NC. Importantly, participants encouraged the children within the school to have a positive attitude to their studies, identified their strengths to focus on and ensured that the children were confident in what they did.

The SENCo opined that whilst the main objective of the role was to ensure that the SEND code of practice was adhered to throughout the school, it was also considered important that there was a whole school approach to inclusive practice starting with early identification of needs.

'Early identification of needs is important and it is absolutely paramount that right from nursery, staff let me know if a child has speech and language difficulties, unusual behaviours or physical or academic concerns. It's important that they inform me straight away and then support can be put into place.' (C SENCo)

The role of the Learning Mentor was viewed by participants (n=10) as being essential in supporting inclusion within the setting, particularly in the area of social and emotional support. Participant D explained that the role was wide and varied and included, bereavement counselling and emotional support either within small nurture groups or on a one to one basis for children who experienced difficulties in their home environment e.g. domestic abuse, parents that had separated or were in prison. Relaxation techniques were also delivered by the Learning Mentor to the children, including meditation and hand and head massage.

'For any children who need a break from being in a large class and a noisy environment, which can be chaotic for them, they can come to me and we complete relaxing activities for about 20 minutes and then the children return to class. They really do benefit from the sessions.'
(D Learning Mentor)

Whilst participant D acknowledged that for some specialist support there was often a 6 to 8 months waiting list, particularly for specific counselling for children who have witnessed domestic abuse, it was made clear that the children were supported regardless of the period of time. This is illustrated by the comment below:

'I have children that I have worked with since they were in receptions class. If their home life is still the same, they may need that support right through school. We support the children until they leave, if we feel they need it.'
(D Learning Mentor)

Theme 2: Collaborative practice
Working collaboratively within the school and with outside agencies was identified by all the participants as essential in supporting inclusion.

'We all work as a team and talk to each other, it's important if you want to ensure that the needs of the children are met.'
(B Deputy Head Teacher)

Participants discussed the value of collaboration between the teacher and the TA, particularly in terms of sharing knowledge about individual pupils they worked with during the day. This then informed future joint planning for the delivery of the curriculum. This collaborative working was not confined to particular classes but was a whole school approach.

'Having an extra person in your classroom is great. I have a brilliant TA, she is really good and we work closely together. We plan sessions for the week

together and at the end of the day, we have a short meeting to discuss any issues that may have arisen.'
(I Teacher)

Within the school, TAs were not deployed to work solely with children with SEN in the classroom, but shared this role with the class teacher.
'Within the class, one of us will work with the children with SEN and the other one will work with the other children and vice versa, we swop around.'
(E Teaching Assistant)

One example given that demonstrated collaborative wider practice between all staff within the school setting was discussed by participant E:

'We have a child in class who is on the ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder). I speak to his mum every morning to see if his food choice has changed. Our school cook is really good and makes sure that he has the same meal every day. I speak to her each morning just to confirm that his choice hasn't changed.'
(E Teaching Assistant)

Whilst this practice may be considered a small intervention in terms of inclusion, the outcome of this action impacts in a positive way for the child and is an example of collaborative working between the wider school workforce.

In terms of collaborative practice, the Learning Mentor liaised closely with the SENCo, outside agencies, including specialist support teachers, all members of staff and parents to ensure that children received appropriate support when necessary.

'If staff have a concern about a child, they let me or the SENCo know. We work closely together to see what support package needs to be put in place for that child. If I feel that I have done all I can do and the child is still not in the place where we want them to be, I will make a referral for specialist support.'
(D Learning Mentor)

The effectiveness of the SENCo within the setting and as a collaborative partner was recognised by other members of the team.

'Our SENCo is brilliant and she understands what good practice is and how we as a school can support the children and the parents.'
(B Deputy Head Teacher)

This whole school approach to support also included staff input into the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Three times a year, the SENCo, parents and children had the opportunity to come together with the class teacher and the TA to discuss and arrange targets for the following term.

Outside agencies
Working with outside agencies was identified by participants (n=9) as essential. They acknowledged that there was an increase in the number of children entering the school (within the foundation stage) requiring referral to speech and language services and emphasised the importance of input from the therapists, who also gave practitioners strategies that they could use to support the children. Within the school, there were a number of children who had a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and participants spoke of the close liaison between school, parents and the external specialist in autism who came in to the school on a regular basis, observed individuals and advised staff about appropriate strategies that could be used to support the child and staff shared the ideas with the parents.

'The specialist in autism gives us great ideas to try with the children. Ideas such as cushions, visual timetables, fidget toys and jewellery for children who have pica, this is when they have to put things in their mouth. We give them something recommended by the specialist and this may stop them eating pencils or their clothes. It works for some of the children and parents will try it at home.'
(L Teacher)

The early years' staff liaised closely with a local nursery. During transition from nursery to the school, both settings worked together so that the children's needs were identified and appropriate strategies could be put into place prior to entry to the school.

Parent partnership
Participants (n=12) emphasised the importance of working with parents in supporting the children, right from the early identification of the child's needs.

'The parents are fully involved in what we do, and parents have to agree and be on board before we can go any further in terms of assessment and specialist support, right from the start of the identification of needs'
(C SENCo)

A number of workshops were held by the school during the year and members of the family were invited to partake in the activities alongside the children, described by Sime and Sheridan (2014) as 'family learning' where parents, children and family members learn together through the planned activities.

'We do a lot of workshops that cover a number of areas including phonics, crafts and play sessions, so although there is an educational spin on it, you're getting the parents and other members of the family to come in, sit down and talk. You develop a relationship with the family.'
(H Teacher)

The school had an open door policy and participants (n=10) stated that

parents were encouraged to come in and meet with the staff if they had any concerns about their child. The importance of such meetings was identified by participant I:

'I had a child in my class last year and her mum was concerned about her behaviour outside of school, so it was good to have that conversation with the mum because her child wasn't presenting these issues in school. We talked about what could be causing her anxieties and strategies to put in place. I think that parent input is so important.' (I Teacher)

The participants who worked within the school nursery felt that the home visits carried out prior to the child starting nursery were important, not only in terms of seeing the children in their own environment, but they felt that this meeting enabled staff to develop an initial rapport with the family. Furthermore, the early years staff used a software program '2Build a Profile' enabling them to send out weekly reports to parents based on daily observations of their child. This included a summary of what the child had been working on, the next steps in developing skills based around the activity and included photographs of the children completing the activities. Parents or named individuals were encouraged to feedback and offer updates on the child. Participants felt that this encouraged parent/staff partnership

Participants conceded that parents who had children with SEN or additional needs, were often far more informed about what worked well in supporting the needs of their child than the staff within the setting, as the following comments illustrate:

'Parents have more insight than us because they are dealing with it every day. They may have strategies that we haven't thought about. They are the experts in working and supporting their child!'
(J Teacher)

'No matter what the issue is for the child, I think that if parents are informed and on board, then you can work together. They often actually know as much, if not more than the staff do.'
(B Deputy Head teacher)

Theme 3: Training
Pre-service Training
It was identified by participants (n=12) (including those with three or less years service) that there was insufficient pre service training around the different areas of SEN and training to support individuals with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, within their college or university courses. This lack of appropriate training left them feeling unprepared to meet the needs of all children with additional needs within the classroom.

'We did have a couple of lectures at university, but they were very general. Sort of a whistle stop tour of SEN but not so many ideas about how to support the children with varying needs within your classroom. It's been a learning curve! Fortunately, this is a supportive school and you can go and ask staff about differing strategies that may be effective.'

(N Teacher)

Participant C had completed a graduate training programme and was based in a school for a full year, acknowledging that this was an excellent way to gain experience of supporting children with a wide range of needs.

'I was so fortunate. I shadowed the SENCo and I could see how the children were supported within that school. It was the best experience, rather than all of the theory, having the practical side of it as well, is what you really need. I learnt so much.'
(C SENCo)

Participant K identified the lack of training relating to special needs within their university course, but reflected that a teacher had delivered a talk to the university cohort on their experiences of the initial years as a practitioner. Participant K stated that it was informative and it would have been beneficial to have a range of practitioners delivering similar sessions around supporting children with a range of needs from a practitioner perspective.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
Although there were concerns about the lack of sufficient and appropriate pre-service training, participants (n=10) stated that subject to funding, the SENCo ensured that there were training sessions for all teaching and support staff on a regular basis, focussing on a range of SEN, including dyslexia, autism and social, emotional and behavioural issues.

'I make sure that all staff have lots of training. Recently staff been trained in the area of autism, because that seems to be an area being identified more within our mainstream school.'
(C SENCo)

Guest speakers had been brought in to speak to all practitioners on a range of differing issues including, bereavement support for children. Participants were also encouraged to attend relevant courses and feedback to other members of staff.

'I went on a course recently on how to deliver a programme called toe by toe. I had been asked to deliver it to children but I wasn't confident enough. So, I went on the course. In a twilight session after school, I showed other people how to use it.'
(G Teaching Assistant)

Theme 4: The National Curriculum (NC) and Testing
Concerns were expressed by the majority of participants (n=11) about the revised NC, acknowledging that it was far more challenging than the former curriculum, being very specific in terms of subject matter and delivery. They felt that the revised curriculum was too prescriptive, rigid and intense. In voicing their concerns, staff considered the NC to be a barrier to learning for many children particularly those with SEN. Participants spoke of the negative

impact upon a child's confidence and self esteem when they struggled to meet the learning objectives required by the curriculum.

'It's very hard for the children with SEN who do struggle, there are such strict criteria, we have so much to cover within a year and if they can't get to grips with a topic, we can't spend extra time working on it. If you haven't mastered one topic, how can you move on to another one? I feel that the National Curriculum is very regimented, impacting massively on the child's confidence and self esteem.' (F Teaching Assistant)

Testing
The mandatory testing (SATs) at the end of key stage 1 and 2 was viewed as a barrier to inclusion by participants (n=9). Participant A stated that some children with SEN, may not achieve the expected levels of attainment set out within the NC assessment programme, consequently this may impact negatively upon the child.

'The whole SATs process is a nightmare! We have a couple of children in their final year who have SEN. We know that they won't gain the expected levels of attainment but they really have made progress. I think that this testing impacts on the child's self esteem. They may leave our school feeling a failure because they didn't get the expected levels.'
(A Headteacher)

One of the issues identified by participants (n=6) was stress and anxiety upon individuals, particularly when taking the required tests at the end of the key stages. This was especially pertinent to the children who were on the ASD.

'There is so much to cover in the NC and it's okay if you are a child who is 'high functioning' but for other children on the ASD, they still have to pass the tests so it can be difficult for them, it's stressful and can make their anxiety worse.'
(L Teacher)

To minimise the possible negative impact upon a child's self esteem, the Head teacher stated that a range of strategies were in place. Staff encouraged all the children to identify their strengths in given areas, giving an example of one child who was not expected to attain the required levels within the SATs but was extremely good at art and design. His work was displayed throughout the school which according to the Head teacher, made the child feel proud of what he had achieved.

Theme 5: Funding
Lack of sufficient funding was identified as being a barrier to inclusion. Funding to support SEN is provided by the local authority (LA) with the amount being specific to each school. The amount is dependant upon a number of factors, including the number of children within the school and how many are on pupil premium e.g. children who are in care, children who are entitled to free school meals.

'It's great that we identify the needs of the individual but funding is a big issue and it really does worry me. How are we going to support the children with SEN if we haven't got the funding to fully address their needs? That's the sad part of it really, it's so frustrating.'
(A Head teacher)

Participants (n=4) suggested that additional staff in the classroom would be beneficial but acknowledged that this important resource was subject to funding. The Head teacher explained that the school budget would have to be used to fund the first twelve hours of a TAs contract and then the school could apply for further funding from the LA but additional funding would only be given for a couple more hours of TA support.
In supporting children with a range of needs, early identification and appropriate intervention was regarded by participants (n=11) as essential. However, lack of funding was again seen as a barrier to implementing adequate specialist support. As one participant explained:

'I think that lack of money has always been an issue. I have a boy in my class who has home/life issues, but there are other difficulties not yet identified. The SENCo has been told that at the moment there is no funding available for him to be assessed straight away. We have one specialist teacher who comes in once a week to do assessments and we have so many children needing an assessment, so obviously we have to go on a waiting list.'
(K Teacher)

Participant K conceded, that this lack of diagnosis prevented specific provision and support being put in place early on from relevant experts. However, it was acknowledged that all staff worked closely together and with the SENCo to ensure that the individual needs of the children were met as much as possible, regardless of specific diagnosis and specialist input.

Limited funding was also identified as problematic in terms of being able to purchase specific resources to support children with SEN within the classroom. Participants spoke of the range of technology available that would support children in their learning, e.g. lap top computers, specific computer programmes and Dictaphones that would help children with their processing difficulties. However, funding was allocated for essential resources and training, rather than what may be considered as non essential.

Discussion
This study is significant in that it identifies from practitioners perspectives not only barriers to inclusive practice, but also positive practices that support the inclusion of children with a range of differing needs within a mainstream education setting. Similar to the findings by Lambe (2011), a positive attitude towards inclusion was considered important by all of the participants. It was evident that the notion of inclusion was not just about working with and supporting children with SEN but importantly, that the individual needs of all children within the setting were provided for, concurring with the findings of Humphrey (2008). Literature recognises that staff may encounter difficulties in supporting children with challenging behaviours within a mainstream setting

(Broomhead 2013) and whilst the participants in this study did identify that this was a growing area of need within the school, there was a positive approach to support within the classroom rather than exclusion, utilising a range of support from within the school and relevant outside agencies.

In facilitating inclusion, participants acknowledged the importance of collaborative practice between staff, which is widely discussed within literature (Mulhollland and O'Connor 2016: Wilde and Avramidis 2011). Contrary to the research by Webster et al (2010), findings from this study identified the collaborative working between teaching staff and TAs within the classroom. Teachers and TAs planned the weekly delivery of the curriculum together and met at the end of each day to discuss any issues that may have arisen. In terms of classroom practice, TAs worked across the attainment range and were not solely deployed to work with children with SEN. This role was shared between the teacher and the TA. This method of working has been identified as positive classroom practice by Florian (2002) and Webster and Blatchford (2013). It was evidenced within this study that the Learning Mentor and the SENCo worked closely with all members of staff, outside agencies and families. As discussed by Morewood (2012), this whole school approach to inclusion was deemed by participants as being effective practice.

Participants spoke of the importance of engaging and working with parents which is widely discussed within literature (Sime and Sheridan 2014: Hornby and Lafaele 2011). They stated that the school had an 'open door' policy and parents were encouraged to engage with the staff in a variety of differing ways, including attending workshops. Furthermore, it was acknowledged by participants that parents who had children with SEN or additional needs were often more knowledgeable than the staff in addressing the needs of the child, which concurs with the findings of Lendrum et al (2015).

In terms of adequate pre-service training in working with and supporting children with a range of SEN and additional needs, participants identified that there was a deficit in the training they had received at university or college and considered this to be a barrier to supporting inclusion. These findings are similar to research by Ellis and Tod (2014) and Webster and Blatchford (2014) who acknowledge that this is a cause for concern. All participants in this study were encouraged to attend a wide range of in service training and CPD organised by the SENCo, subject to sufficient funding. This practice concurs with findings by Bignold and Barbera (2012) and Higgins and Gulliford (2014) who advise that support staff should have access to CPD as well as teachers.

The majority of participants identified the NC as a barrier to inclusion, stating that it was difficult to deliver if there were mixed year classes and was too prescriptive in the planned delivery. Participants also acknowledged that when children were struggling to meet the learning objectives required by the curriculum, this impacted negatively upon the child's confidence and self esteem. These findings support those of Steers (2014). Furthermore, participants stated that some children, for a wide range of reasons would not meet the required standards in the compulsory examinations at the end of key stages (SATs), which could mean that they viewed themselves as failures.

These issues have also been widely discussed within research (Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi 2011: Runswick-Cole 2011: Steers 2014).

The final area of discussion within this study was the lack of adequate funding from the LA which was seen as a barrier to effective inclusion. Participants suggested that it would beneficial in supporting individuals within the classroom, if there was additional funding to purchase specific resources (including staff). Whilst acknowledging the importance of appropriate early intervention for children with SEN and additional needs, lack of funding meant that individuals could not be assessed immediately by relevant outside agencies, having to go onto a waiting list, although intervention strategies were employed in the mean time. These findings also concur with those of Hodkinson (2010) who discusses the difficulties experienced by LA's in terms of managing funding to schools.

Conclusion
This paper set out to identify inclusive practices within one mainstream school that supports all children within the setting to reach their educational potential and possible barriers to inclusion, from practitioner perspectives. Due to the practitioner focus this study offers an original viewpoint to support developing practice in this area. What is clear within this study, was the staff commitment to inclusion for all and the whole school approach to making this work. Whilst the SENCo had responsibility for ensuring that the needs of children with SEN were met, it was evident that the emotional wellbeing of the children was also considered important with staff working closely with the Learning Mentor. What made the difference in this school was the collaborative working of the whole staff team and this is a recommendation for any schools wishing to develop their inclusive practice.

A second issue identified, related to the lack of pre-service training. The result of which was insufficient knowledge for those entering the profession about how to identify and support a wide range of needs within a classroom setting. This issue is well documented within literature (Gibson and Kendall 2010: Ellis and Tod 2014: Webster and Blatchford 2014) with this study showing that this issue has not yet been resolved. This was not just confined to teachers, the study highlights that TAs are similarly lacking in pre service training before they enter the school environment. Further research is imperative to support the change in policy which is needed to ensure that training is delivered to support all staff entering the profession. However, the scene was slightly better once staff were within the school environment as CPD and training were an integral part of the development of all the practitioners.

The NC and required testing at the end of key stages were found to be problematic and an area of concern for staff. Whilst this was the consensus of staff within one school setting, it would be important to conduct further research within this area, soliciting the views and opinions of practitioners from a range of primary school settings across the country. A further review of the NC in terms of appropriateness and effectiveness may be required in the near future. While this study does not offer a conclusive answer regarding

inclusive education it does through the voice of the practitioner, identify some significant messages for both schools and teacher training institutions.

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