

Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education

Follow-up Study



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Follow-up Study



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INTRODUCTION

The high cost of school failure and inequity for individuals, and for society more widely, is increasingly being recognised across Europe. Raising the achievement of all learners is seen not just as a policy initiative, but as an ethical imperative underpinned by the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). These provide a framework for a rights-based approach for all learners. In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 – to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ (UN, 2015) – this framework aims to ensure that learners are not marginalised or excluded from mainstream education (European Agency, 2015).

The [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education](#) (the Agency) acts as a platform for collaboration for the ministries of education in its 31 member countries. The Agency member countries’ shared ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is that ‘all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers’ (ibid, p. 1). This vision is the focal point of all Agency work, which aims to help member countries to improve their educational policy and practice. It also helps them align with the European Commission statement that: ‘developing the capacity and role of teachers and school leaders is essential ... to provide a clear strategic vision and leadership’ that improves all learners’ experiences and outcomes – through policies that are ‘both inclusive and flexible’ (2017, p. 4).

This paper outlines a short programme of work designed to follow up on the Agency’s [Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education](#) (Raising Achievement – RA) project, which ran from 2014 to 2017. It describes the purpose of the follow-up study, outlines the methodology used and describes the main changes to policy and practice that can be attributed to the project in full or in part, directly or indirectly. Finally, it highlights key learning points from this work for different stakeholder groups in the RA project.



THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY

The follow-up study was designed to explore developments since the end of the original project in 2017 (refer to [Annex A](#) for a summary of project information). The follow-up visits aimed to find out about changes to policy and practice that can be attributed to the project in full or in part, directly or indirectly.

This aim was clearly framed within the context of Agency work, where impact is identified when there is valid information to say that Agency work has had an influence on a change in thinking about or implementation of policy or practice for special needs and/or inclusive education (DeStefano, Janson and Innes, 2013).

To assess the Raising Achievement project's longer-term impact, an independent consultant visited the three learning communities involved in the original project:

- Istituto Tecnico Agrario Sereni (upper-secondary school) and Istituto Comprensivo Antonio Rosmini (primary and lower-secondary school), Rome, Italy
- Group of Schools in Łajski (primary and lower-secondary school), Commune of Wieliszew, Poland
- Calderglen Learning Community (Calderglen High School and Sanderson High School, co-located mainstream and special school), East Kilbride, United Kingdom (Scotland).

The visits took place during November and December 2018, to follow up on progress 18 months after the final conference in Malta and four years after the initial contact with the Agency staff.

This work re-visits:

- changes to structures, processes and outcomes for the different stakeholder groups that were attributed to the original RA project;
- the extent to which changes have been sustained.

It also examines further developments and changes in attitudes towards inclusive education since the end of the RA project. Following a summary of the original project outcomes and stakeholder reflections on the project, this report sets out the findings of the follow-up work and discusses the learning points for various stakeholder groups.



THE RAISING ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT 2014–2017

The original RA project addressed issues that affect the experiences of learners from diverse backgrounds, who face different challenges in education. It provided a synthesis of information from varied education systems with examples of evidence-informed approaches that move both policy and practice forward to enable learner success.

[Annex A](#) contains more details about the project, while [Annex B](#) has a full list of project outputs.

The RA project did not focus on inclusion itself, but on achieving valued outcomes for all learners. The learning communities' work showed the potential of monitoring school development through an 'inclusive lens', focusing on equity across all school structures and processes. Inclusive education becomes an underlying principle that enables schools to grow more skilled at responding to the differences of individual learners. In this way, schools increase their capability to provide an equitable, high-quality education for all.

Reflections on the original project

Following the final project meeting in April 2017, the project team conducted a survey of all participants, including stakeholders in the learning communities. All participants were very positive about the nature of the project. School leaders valued the way they were able to engage with Agency staff, project participants and the other learning communities. They valued the insight that Agency staff offered in respect of a deeper understanding and knowledge of inclusive education. Among the group of project participants, school leaders felt they were able to benefit from areas of expertise and examples of practical experience offered by project experts. School leaders also positively viewed contacts with the other learning communities and felt able to extract and apply aspects of good practice from these other contexts to their own, based on the shared exchanges within the RA project.

Teachers indicated that they received a great confidence boost and validation of their work in inclusive education through the RA project. Positive feedback from project participants confirmed that successfully facing the challenges of inclusive education was of benefit to their schools and the children and young people they served.

For parents, it was a source of pride that, through its involvement in the RA project, their child's school was recognised across Europe as an example of good practice. In some schools, young people were proud of the attention given to their successes in being a school that readily included all learners.

Finally, working directly with learning communities, school leaders and researchers gave the Agency a wider perspective, going beyond its usual target group of policy-makers.

Project outcomes

As the project outputs noted, it is difficult to attribute these outcomes solely to the school or learning community's involvement in the RA project. However, the learning



communities carried out a [self-review](#) at the beginning and end of the project's practical work phase. The self-review results showed that positive outcomes from the RA project activities included:

- the development of strategies to increase staff engagement;
- increased parental involvement;
- closer collaboration with the wider community (e.g. neighbourhood schools, universities);
- examination of pedagogy for deep learning;
- the development of growth mindsets for success;
- inter-disciplinary teaching to provide a more relevant curriculum;
- focus on self-review and examining the quality of inclusive practice;
- professional development for staff.

The final RA survey showed that focusing on continuous support for teachers and school leaders can increase schools' capability to raise the achievement of all learners. Project practical work also showed ways to build teachers' professional knowledge and expertise to meet learners' diverse needs. Such knowledge can be introduced through networking both within the learning community and beyond (e.g. with local universities, other schools/colleges and local specialists) to increase the capacity for evidence-informed practice within the school.

Two key recommendations from the final RA survey note the importance of a school ethos that supports respectful interactions and relationships among stakeholders, as well as developing a flexible curriculum that offers a more personalised choice to ensure relevance, particularly in senior phases of schools.

The school stakeholders involved were able to describe project processes that developed their thinking (e.g. by use of research, exchange of documents/practice examples, input from visiting experts) and enabled them to develop structures and processes that improved support and raised the achievement of all learners. These include the aspects outlined below.

Pedagogy for all learners

During the original project, all schools were skilled in offering forms of pedagogy to meet all needs. They did this by providing staff support in the classroom for all young people or directly for learners with additional or special educational needs (SEN). Teachers valued support staff who were deployed for the whole class.

Support for learning

During the original project, all schools valued the quality of support for learning that they offered. A range of practices led to the view within all the learning communities that effective support for learning is very important.



Leadership roles and approaches

During the project, leaders further developed – and shared – their vision for inclusive education and increased involvement and leadership opportunities for a wider group of teachers, parents, learners and community members, such as local employers. They felt that the project validated their commitment and increased their confidence in interpreting national initiatives in more innovative ways, aligned to the vision of inclusive education.

Curriculum development

The learning communities were already developing their curricula. However, they welcomed the project's support to develop a more bespoke curriculum, as in Calderglen, and increase the authenticity of curriculum plans, for example, at Rosmini. They worked hard to recognise the diversity of learners, raise expectations and improve all learners' achievements, including wider outcomes beyond solely academic attainment.

Partnerships and collaborative working

The key partnership in the learning communities was the relationship with parents. Working together with parents was a strong feature of practice in the schools. This was further developed during the project, along with partnerships with community members, such as local employers and universities.

Support for staff and leaders

During the project, schools looked at improving support through staff training, involvement in research projects and collaborative working with other staff (e.g. specialist teachers).

Learner well-being and participation

During the project, the focus on this area was helpful to schools that had introduced a number of new processes to ensure improved learner well-being, with a greater recognition of its importance for raising the achievement of all learners.

In Calderglen, developments in taking forward ideas linked to growth mindset across the school with young people, staff and parents had a positive impact on understanding and led to further programmes for young people at risk of underachieving. The schools in Italy and Poland placed a strong emphasis on music, drama and creative activity, through additional programmes that enabled the participation of all and wider achievement in the schools.



METHODOLOGY

The Agency's follow-up study was of an exploratory nature. It aimed to find out the extent of RA project impact beyond the end of the original project in April 2017.

In this study, exploratory research is seen as a form of structured enquiry that increases knowledge and understanding of causes and connections, rather than testing hypotheses. It requires 'a committed dedication to the phenomenon under scrutiny and systematic, critical, open, and self-reflective research' (Reiter, 2017, p. 148).

In preparation for the independent consultant's visits to the three project learning communities in November and December 2018, questionnaires were developed for use with different stakeholder groups. These were used to conduct semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders involved in the original project.

These included:

- 1:1 interviews with national actors, such as the Agency's Representative Board members and/or National Co-ordinators;
- local area or school leaders and community partners;
- focus groups with parents, teachers and support staff, including specialist staff and partners.

[Annex C](#) contains a full list of those interviewed as part of the follow-up.

The interviews and focus group discussions covered the RA project's focus areas:

- Pedagogy for all learners
- Support for learning
- Leadership roles and approaches
- Curriculum development
- Partnerships and collaborative working
- Support for staff and leaders
- Learner well-being and participation.

[Annex D](#) contains further information about the questionnaires and interview guidelines.

Participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of change in the above focus areas, following on from the results of the two self-reviews carried out at the start and end of the project. The Agency was interested in the period since the final conference in April 2017.

This format allowed for the follow-up of interesting answers, yet also ensured coverage of all issues that needed to be addressed. Interviews were carried out with the aid of a staff member interpreting from Polish or Italian to English, when necessary.

Observations and engagement with learners and their perceptions of strengths and areas for improvement in their school were also part of the follow-up.



Learners' comments were recorded and notes were made on observations. Both were referred to in the evidence base written up for each of the learning communities.

Quantitative information and data that showed RA project impact were also collected. These included information and data on learner attainment and wider achievement provided by the learning communities.

Relevant information was therefore gathered through measurable facts, observable facts and perceived changes. The independent consultant collected qualitative and quantitative information from interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and synthesised this to identify emerging trends, themes and key messages across the learning communities. This was followed by reflection on the new material in relation to the original project outcomes, to verify and confirm findings and look for any new perspectives or connections that could contribute to the learning from the project overall. Positive developments were then identified as key learning points for two sets of stakeholders, namely, policy-makers and key decision-makers, as well as school leaders and leadership teams.



DEVELOPMENTS IDENTIFIED SINCE THE END OF THE PROJECT

The Agency's Raising Achievement project involved national policy-makers and key decision-makers, researchers and practitioners (school leaders) and Agency staff working directly with schools in learning communities. At the school level, the project engaged directly with school leaders, staff and parents, as well as their wider set of partners. The sections below describe the improvements in the RA project's focus areas that the learning communities have identified since the end of the formal project activities.

Pedagogy for all learners

Follow-up interviews indicated that the learning communities' practices in the area of pedagogy for all were sustained. Teachers used a range of personalised approaches that took account of the diversity of learners, their interests and individual needs. In all learning communities, class teachers collaborated with support teachers to further develop their teaching and learning approaches.

In Calderglen High School, the deepening understanding of inclusive education led the school to broaden its previous work in developing a pedagogy for all.

Support for learning

All three learning communities sustained their quality of support after the end of the project.

In Sereni, a key improvement arising from the RA project was better co-operative work among curricular teachers and support teachers. Teachers felt the gains made through this process would be further enhanced by applying a shared methodology for inclusive practices through collaboration in the classroom.

In Rosmini, teachers appreciated the levels of support that their classes received through support teachers and support assistants. Parents valued the support that enabled their children to have shared experiences with their peers in their classroom.

In Łajski, children were supported with ready access to class teachers, subject teachers, support teachers and specialists such as psychologists and speech and language therapists, particularly in the early stages of their primary education.

Calderglen's support for learning offered accredited programmes for learners with support needs to develop skills for work and used technology with targeted programmes for young people needing additional support for literacy and numeracy.

Leadership roles and approaches

At the start of the project, each of the schools in the learning communities had strong, effective leadership with a vision for inclusive education and, in some, a vision for a more



inclusive society in their country. They recognised their schools' strengths in the context of developments in their countries and were positive about the wider recognition gained across Europe for their journey towards inclusive education since the project. Leaders and teachers were sometimes humble about their achievements and readily spoke of their realisation that they still had far to go to be fully inclusive.

After the project, in Rosmini and Calderglen, teachers, parents and young people were involved in innovative change projects that had potential to be transformative. Rosmini teachers and young people were thinking through a design project to change the school environment in a more sustainable manner. Young people were leading learning more through self-directed activities. In Calderglen, teachers and parents, together with young people, were immersing themselves in stakeholders' views to consider further changes for their school. This work was in partnership with change consultants working with a design thinking approach.

Leadership for inclusive education was spread widely in Sereni through the Working Group for Inclusion, which was key in formulating the Annual Plan for Inclusion. In Calderglen, the Meeting Needs Group had a role in making decisions about aspects of additional support needs provision in the school. Italy's Working Group for Inclusion and Annual Plan for Inclusion documents gave prominence to developments in inclusive education. Their aims also linked to the RA project's focus areas.

Leadership was also extended through the role of co-ordinators with a responsibility for developing inclusive education. In Sereni, the co-ordinator for support teachers played a key role in the Working Group for Inclusion. In Calderglen, the introduction of co-ordinators allowed teachers to develop and lead short-term work in more focused areas.

Curriculum development

As a result of the RA project, Rosmini was extending its range of additional activities, including drama, music and forms of supported study. Leaders realised the need to build life skills and processes like socialisation and learning-by-doing as part of the curriculum for all.

In Sereni, the school had formed an effective partnership with the Accademia d'Armi Musumeci Greco in the *Scherma Senza Limiti* (Fencing Without Limits) programme. This extended the range of sporting activities on offer to learners within the curriculum.

In Poland, restructuring within the school had changed the nature of the curriculum and, in particular, the young people's new transition to secondary stages. Staff in the school adopted a problem-solving approach in making changes to the curriculum and also to aspects of teaching and learning in classes. Learners with SEN benefitted from the range of adaptations that support staff made to meet those needs.

Calderglen High School continued to develop bespoke provision when designing its curriculum. It emphasised growth and development in terms of what young people can do by applying growth mindset theory. It held practical sessions for teachers, young people and parents, extending its application to more subject areas. Calderglen further worked to identify and fill the gaps in its young people's achievements. Curricular programmes have



been successfully developed with the aim of reducing drop-out rates and improving staying-on rates. The view in the school was that if a course was not suitable for young people, then the nature of the course should change to better meet learners' needs. Young people at risk of failing or missing out were offered curricular support through personalised learning and support from subject area teachers and support teachers to promote basic skills, resilience and well-being. Within their shared campus, Calderglen worked with Sanderson High School, and young people from Sanderson continued to be placed in classes in Calderglen as appropriate.

Partnerships and collaborative working

All learning communities considered a close relationship with parents to be crucial in raising achievement. This was further developed during the project.

In Rosmini, parents were well supported and engaged with the school as their children with disabilities were learning with their peers.

In Łajski, high numbers of parents who valued the school's inclusive nature sought to enrol their children in the school. The local council was strongly supportive of the school. The headteacher and staff valued the partnership work with the Ministry of National Education in Warsaw to disseminate the school's inclusive education. Parents were proud of the school and valued the idea that all local children go to their local school together.

In Sereni, partnership working had led to collaboration with a local social co-operative to increase staffing for support assistants.

Calderglen had an extensive set of partners working in a number of areas at local, national and global levels. It also worked in a range of ways with Sanderson High School.

Support for staff and leaders

During the project, schools looked at improving support through staff training, involvement in research projects and collaborative working with other staff (e.g. specialist teachers).

In Italy, schools continue to develop their Annual Plans for Inclusion and their Working Groups for Inclusion. Schools in Italy and Poland have a high level of staffing in terms of support teachers, support assistants, special educators and specialist supports. These are able to offer a range of support to include and integrate children and young people with additional and complex support needs in the schools' classrooms. They were able to deploy staff who had been in posts in separate specialist provision. In Sereni, the school faced a significant challenge in offering stability in support staffing due to high staff turnover in this area.

In Calderglen, the school has deployed Pupil Equity Funding from the Scottish Government to support co-ordinator posts. It has also involved 14 other staff members in developing leadership skills linked to this area of activity. The school drew from concepts in the RA project to build capacity, not simply through providing greater resources in the form of additional staffing. Using this additional finance, it developed staff leadership skills,



extended relevant information and data and broadened curricular provision through the co-ordinator posts. In this way, building capacity was seen to focus on more effective use of staff, not simply as the provision of additional numbers. Staff from the additional learning needs faculty offered training and on-going support to other staff, including techniques for responding to challenging behaviour. Such information and skills ensured that all stakeholders view plans and provisions through an 'inclusive lens'.

Learner well-being and participation

Work on well-being continues to develop.

In Rosmini, a wider set of after-school classes and programmes had both extended support and offered opportunities to develop skills in music and drama.

Similarly, in Calderglen, support staff offered additional support for study, catch-up and homework. Calderglen had drawn together information and data from an extensive survey of young people in relation to mental well-being. This data, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, was used to decide on next steps in terms of responding to young people's stress. Additionally, they had started an 'at risk' spreadsheet, drawing together a number of related areas linked to learners' adverse experiences to support decisions about intervening earlier for some learners.

Sereni had decided to invest in staffing, appointing a second psychologist to the school to secure well-being outcomes.



NEW INFORMATION ADDED BY THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY

This section summarises the findings set out in the previous section. The information has been synthesised in relation to the key questions posed in the original project, relating to the themes of pedagogy, leadership and collaboration. Finally, the summary considers implications for national policy.

Pedagogical strategies and teaching approaches

What pedagogical strategies and teaching approaches best support learning and are effective in raising the achievement of all learners?

In terms of making curricular provision, the best support was where staff were responsive to learners' needs and changed aspects of the programme accordingly. Staff offered courses that engaged more young people than previous offers. Support teachers and other specialist staff were also able to provide discrete classes for part of the time to enhance learners' progress through supported study and homework classes, led by support staff. Underpinning these approaches was a willingness to innovate to meet the challenges of inclusive education.

Additionally, schools were more successful in offering inclusive provision where they were resourced with a range of support teachers, support assistants and specialist educators. Inclusive schools were best resourced where specialist staff and special educators worked directly in the school.

School leadership

How can school leaders best support:

- **the development, implementation and monitoring of inputs and processes for raising achievement;**
- **the participation of learners and parents/carers in the learning process;**
- **the measurement of all forms of achievement and analysis of outcomes to inform further development?**

The follow-up work confirmed that school leaders can best support the development of processes for raising achievement for all learners through a range of strategies adapted to their own contexts.

School leaders sharing their vision for an inclusive society, as well as an inclusive school, contributed to an ethos of high expectations for all learners. School leaders were assisted by national-level leadership being clear about the benefits of inclusive education in raising the achievement of all learners. School planning documents and working groups with a clear focus on inclusive education contributed to a broader view of achievement and



success in schools, extending the focus beyond improving more formal, academic attainment outcomes.

Learners and parents shared pride in the schools' inclusive nature. Learners made progress with their leadership skills and motivation to learn when they had the opportunity to lead learning in classrooms and in projects across their school. Parents valued the engagement with teachers to consider some of the processes for success in inclusive education.

Schools were not yet fully successful in measuring all forms of achievement in school in terms of quantitative information and data and qualitative processes. Schools could provide data on attainment through national test scores, but often this was not subject to analysis that took account of all dimensions of the diversity of the learner population. Some schools were able to compare aspects of achievement with national levels or consider data regarding socio-economic status or support need.

Policy support for raising achievement

How can national policy:

- **enable school leaders to raise the achievement of all learners, particularly through collaborative approaches;**
- **effectively support learning communities to undertake organisational development?**

National policy can enable school leaders to raise achievement for all learners by prioritising equitable high-quality education for all. This approach of achieving valued outcomes for all learners is underpinned by the broader view of inclusive education as a response to the differences of individual learners.

Policy should encourage schools to innovate and develop a flexible curriculum to secure high-quality education for all learners. In particular, schools should undertake curriculum development in collaboration with a wide set of partners, who are able to offer relevant experiences linked to skills for work at later stages of secondary school.

The nature of the collaboration among curricular teachers, support teachers and support assistants was also important. This was most valued where teachers worked in partnership and taught classes together. National policy can better articulate the benefits of strong classroom practice among curricular and support teachers to take account of the diversity of learners. Staffing levels enable specialist staff to support inclusive practices in schools, such as in Sereni, Rosmini and the school in Łajski. In Łajski, teachers were supported in further professional development at post-graduate level.

School leaders can be further empowered to raise achievement for all learners by national policy that operates with a wider set of monitoring and measurement tools. These tools should take account of valued outcomes for all learners.

Finally, national policy-makers and key decision-makers can disseminate and highlight good practice in schools that offer valued outcomes for all and raise achievement within inclusive education.



The RA project *Resource to Support Self-Review* (European Agency, 2017a) offers support for review and development of national policy through the use of the Ecosystem of Support for Inclusive Education (please refer to Figure 1 below). This sets out structures and processes that influence the participation and inclusion of all learners and includes macro- or national-level social, cultural and legislative contexts.

The Ecosystem can support a better understanding of the interconnections between different dimensions and levels of countries' education systems. It can also inform the actions necessary to move towards more inclusive policy and practice that will raise the achievement of all learners.

Figure 1. The Ecosystem of Support for Inclusive Education (next page)

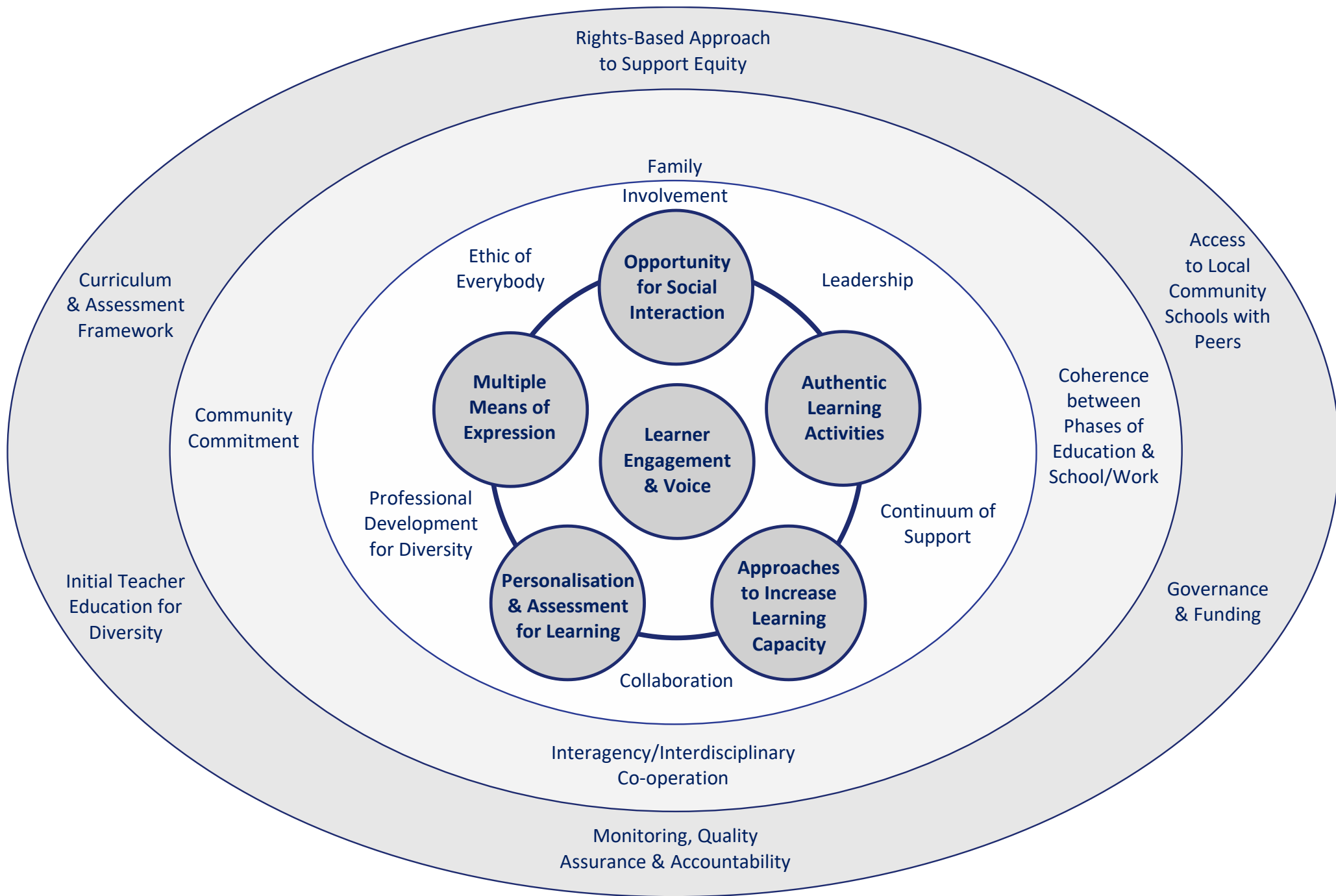




Figure 2 shows the close links between the project focus areas (used in the [self-review materials](#)) and the dimensions outlined in the Ecosystem model.



Figure 2. Links between the RA self-review and the Ecosystem model structures and processes



LEARNING POINTS

While it is not possible to separate out the impact of the RA project – in the short or longer term – from on-going school developments, it is clear that staff in all three learning communities attribute a number of positive developments to the project. School leaders identified direct impact from engagement with Agency staff, project experts and the other learning communities on progress in their journeys towards inclusive education. Similarly, the sustainability of these developments is not easy to assess. Nevertheless, across the learning communities, leaders, teachers, parents and young people shared the view, two years on, that the Agency's RA project had added value to their practice and on-going work.

Considering these points, it is possible, however, to highlight some key points about policy support and school development from this short programme of work. These are presented with a focus on two particular target groups: national policy-makers and key decision-makers, and school leaders.

For policy-makers and key decision-makers

Policy-makers at national level and key decision-makers at regional/local levels may wish to consider the following points, synthesised from the original RA project learning and further developed in light of the follow-up study.

They should:

- Ensure that inclusive schools are well-resourced with support staff and staff from specialist settings/resource centres. Inclusive schools are better supported when they use specialist staff within the school, rather than deploying such staff to work with small groups in separate specialist provision.
- Consider national annual plans for inclusive education that focus on curriculum development and pedagogy for all, while taking account of disability, gender, age, socio-economic and ethnic background for each local area and school. Planning nationally for inclusive education shows commitment to further development.
- Inform developments in inclusive education for all through the use of qualitative and quantitative information and data on the achievement of valued outcomes for all learners. Information and data can be better used to support improvements in inclusive education.
- Promote effective practice in teacher and support staff collaboration in the classroom. Both class teachers and support teachers recognise the value of high-quality collaboration to meet diverse needs.



For school leaders and leadership teams

At school level, leadership teams should involve all stakeholders to:

- Consider annual plans for inclusion as part of all school improvement programmes. Such local planning should cover a wide range of inclusive practices in a sustainable way.
- Set up inclusion working groups that consider evidence of progress across key focus areas in raising achievement and improving inclusive education for all. Such groups enable staff to collaborate in practical activities to meet learners' needs and improve pedagogy for all.
- Consider how teachers might work to improve collaboration and co-operative teaching in classrooms to raise achievement. Staff need to build on the strengths in their practice for inclusive education.
- Plan to increase the involvement of parents and families in ways that support raising learner achievement. Parents can be more fully involved in a school's progress in including and raising the achievement of all learners.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

The *Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on Inclusion in Diversity to achieve a High Quality Education for All* stress that: ‘equality and equity are not identical and that education systems must move away from the traditional “one-size-fits all” mentality’ (Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 4).

Internationally, in 2018, the OECD noted in its *Responsive School Systems* report that:

Recent evidence has added weight to the moral argument, demonstrating improved academic and life outcomes from educating students with SEN in the least restrictive environments while providing additional supports. Nevertheless, many systems still have a long way to go to create more welcoming and productive classrooms for students with special needs (2018, p. 24).

The Agency’s Raising Achievement project brought together learning communities from across Europe to share their successes in achieving valued outcomes for all learners, raising achievement in inclusive education. Each of the learning communities was able to draw on the expertise of the other learning communities, project participants and Agency staff to reflect on and consider ways to further develop their successes on their journey to inclusive education. The Agency’s member countries should consider developing the learning from this project as a key part of their work with the Agency to improve and sustain their practice to raise the achievement of all learners in inclusive settings.



ANNEX A: RAISING ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Following requests from its member countries, the Agency conducted the Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education (RA) project from 2014 to 2017. The project set out to explore the pedagogical strategies and teaching approaches that best support learning and are effective in raising the achievement of all learners. It examined approaches that directly or indirectly affect young people's motivation and capacity to learn that were likely to increase participation and engagement, help to reduce the number of early school leavers and, ultimately, raise the achievement of all learners.

The key questions for the project were:

1. What pedagogical strategies and teaching approaches (e.g. use of ICT, focus on key competences) best support learning and are effective in raising the achievement (academic and social) of all learners?
2. How can school leaders best support:
 - the development, implementation and monitoring of inputs and processes for raising achievement;
 - the participation of learners and parents/carers in the learning process;
 - the measurement of all forms of achievement and analysis of outcomes to inform further development?
3. How can national policy:
 - enable school leaders to raise the achievement of all learners, particularly through collaborative approaches;
 - effectively support learning communities to undertake organisational development?

The project themes of pedagogy and leadership were therefore supported by the third theme of collaboration. The RA project themes are implicit in the Agency's holistic model, the Ecosystem of Support for Inclusive Education.¹ The model sets out, in graphic format, the main structures and processes that influence every learner's participation and that must be considered to maximise opportunities for learning and achievement. In the model, the learner is at the centre of a series of systems – each located inside the next – that work together to shape the learner's development. The RA project work focused mainly on the micro-, meso- and exo-levels. However, the macro-level is also included, as it is critical in shaping the policy context to support work at other levels.

¹ More detail can be found in the RA project [Resource to Support Self-Review](#) (European Agency, 2017, pp. 10–15).



The RA project involved 29 Agency member countries.² Each participating country nominated a school leader and a researcher to be involved in project activities, which centred around three learning communities:

- Istituto Tecnico Agrario Sereni (upper-secondary school) and Istituto Comprensivo Antonio Rosmini (primary and lower-secondary school), Rome, Italy
- Group of Schools in Łajski (primary and lower-secondary school), Commune of Wieliszew, Poland
- Calderglen Learning Community (Calderglen High School and Sanderson High School, co-located mainstream and special school), East Kilbride, United Kingdom (Scotland).

Following a kick-off meeting in Athens in June 2014, the project team and project participants visited the three learning communities in 2015. All parties worked together to explore the key issues/priorities that the learning communities had identified and support them to introduce relevant initiatives. The learning communities and project participants continued the dialogue via an online project forum that served as a platform for communication and on-going support on three levels: within the learning communities, between the learning communities and among the ‘international learning zone’.

In 2016, the participants made their second visit to the learning communities. The learning communities completed a project self-review, developed as part of the project, at the start of the practical work phase and again towards the end of the project.

In April 2017, the project concluded with the [Raising Achievement International Conference](#), which took place in Malta, under the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. A survey was carried out involving the learning communities and all project participants (researchers and school leaders from participating countries) at the end of the project in spring 2017.

The Agency has published a summary of the project, entitled [Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education: Final Summary Report](#) (European Agency, 2017b). While it is particularly aimed at policy-makers/decision-makers, it offers information on the project background, findings and recommendations.

² The Agency member countries involved in the RA project were: [Austria](#), Belgium ([Flemish](#) and [French](#) communities), [Croatia](#), [Cyprus](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Greece](#), [Hungary](#), [Iceland](#), [Ireland](#), [Italy](#), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Malta](#), [Netherlands](#), [Norway](#), [Poland](#), [Portugal](#), [Slovakia](#), [Slovenia](#), [Spain](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#) and United Kingdom ([England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#)).



ANNEX B: RAISING ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT OUTPUTS AND RESOURCES

Project Conceptual Framework and Terminology Paper

The [Project Conceptual Framework](#) contains the definitions of key terms and concepts used in the RA project.

Literature Review

[Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education – Literature Review](#): This international literature review provides background information to support the development of evidence-based strategies and promote innovation in schools.

Country Reports

The RA project survey collected information from 22 individual countries about their policy and practice regarding raising achievement. This information is available online in the form of 22 detailed [individual country reports](#).

Project Overview Report

[Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education: Lessons from European Policy and Practice](#): This report provides an overview of the RA project. It outlines policy and practice in many of the participating Agency member countries. It also discusses the particular challenges that countries raised, with reference to both recent literature and project findings. Finally, it makes some recommendations to address these challenges.

Self-Review Resource

[Raising the Achievement of All Learners: A Resource to Support Self-Review](#): This resource includes materials to be used at a local level for school self-evaluation and in considering the support needed from the national policy context.

Guidance for Teachers and Leaders

[Key Actions for Raising Achievement: Guidance for Teachers and Leaders](#): This guidance provides materials which aim to increase schools' capacity to raise the achievement of all learners. School leaders and teachers can use the materials to plan and develop effective leadership approaches, as well as quality teaching, learning and assessment strategies at whole-school and classroom levels.



ANNEX C: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

In carrying out follow-up in Italy, Poland and Scotland, the independent consultant engaged with the following groups and individuals across the learning communities:

- National Representative Board Members and National Co-ordinators for the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (3)
- Local council member (1)
- Partner organisations (3)
- School leaders (14)
- Parents (7)
- Teachers: curricular (12) and support teachers (5)
- Specialist support staff (2)
- Children and young people (various classes).



ANNEX D: QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEW GUIDELINES FOR FOLLOW-UP WORK, OCTOBER– DECEMBER 2018

As the RA project's practical work phase was completed almost two years ago, it is useful to re-visit the learning communities to find out about changes to policy and practice that can be attributed to the project in full/in part, directly or indirectly.

Focus areas would correspond to the following, covered in the project self-review:

- Pedagogy for all learners
- Support for learning
- Leadership roles and approaches
- Curriculum development
- Partnerships and collaborative working
- Support for staff and leaders.

Learner well-being and participation would be covered indirectly through school-level information and feedback from different perspectives (teachers, school leaders, parents, other relevant externals).

The following activities were carried out as part of the follow-up work:

- Collection of quantitative data (questions sent in advance of the independent consultant's visit)
- Interview with Representative Board members and/or National Co-ordinators
- Web-based questionnaire for governors/local area education personnel/inspectors
- Interviews with school leaders
- Focus Group 1 with teachers
- Focus Group 2: short questionnaire for parents, agencies, psychologists and employers
- Web-based questionnaire for Focus Group 2.



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