

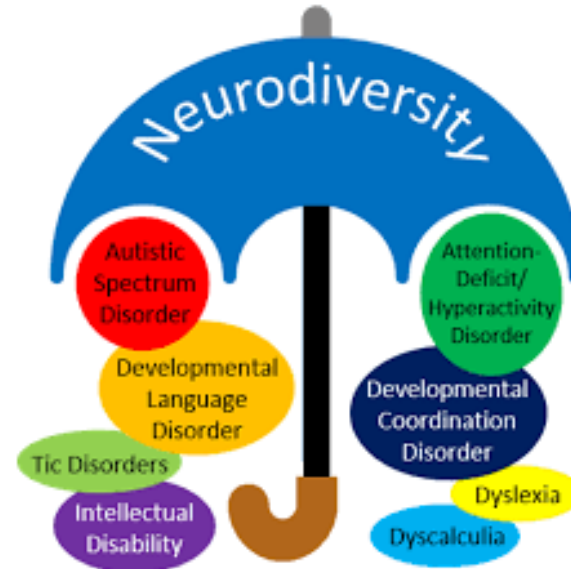
Practitioner enquiry

Charlotte Ward – SfL Teacher

Kelso High School

2022-2023

LEANS
Learning About Neurodiversity at School



Question for enquiry:

- Can teaching a young person about their Neurodiversity and how to manage it, help to improve their behaviour at school?



The 'How' of Practitioner enquiry.

- **What's the problem?** Neuro-diverse children are struggling to meet the expectations of classroom behaviour.
- **What's already known?** The 6 students highlighted and chosen for group are all finding their mainstream classes difficult to navigate. All of the students have relatively new identifications of neurodiversity's including ASD, ADHD, ADD, and Dyslexia.



What's already known?

- I have carried out observations of the 6 students in different mainstream classes using the CIRCLE Framework (CPS – Circle Participation Scale) to highlight the individual child in each different environment and then evaluating the observations. Once evaluated, I have sent suggested strategies to support the child in their classroom.
- Following this, I have begun to use the LEANS project developed by The University of Edinburgh. This teaches children about neurodiversity.



C CHILD
I INCLUSION
R RESEARCH INTO
C CURRICULUM
L LEARNING
E EDUCATION

What's already known?

- *'Many neurodivergent pupils face **cognitive, sensory, and social** challenges in the school environment. Some challenges may be compounded - or caused - by a lack of understanding and acceptance from adults and peers. By explicitly teaching about neurodiversity and neurodivergence, LEANS seeks to increase understanding of how differences in cognition, interaction, and sensory processing affect their school experiences. The resource also aims to improve understanding of the legitimacy of neurodivergent people's differing needs and strategies.'*



References

- Neurodiversity for schools.
- <https://www.adhd-360.com/neurodiversity-for-schools/>
-
- LEANS is a resource pack.
- <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/neurodiversity-schools>
-
- Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Strength-Based Strategies to Help Students with Special Needs Succeed in School and Life Paperback – Illustrated, 1 Oct. 2012
- by [Thomas Armstrong](#) (Author)
-
-
- <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/inclusion-in-practice>
- CIRCLE Framework
-
- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/neurodevelopmental-disorders-and-neurodiversity-definition-of-terms-from-scotlands-national-autism-implementation-team/C6582CFF0E5E00F2F0F38F294A6659D1>
- [Neurodevelopmental disorders and neurodiversity: definition of terms from Scotland's National Autism Implementation Team | The British Journal of Psychiatry | Cambridge Core](#)



LEANS Project

- *LEANS is a resource pack. This means that its items form a curriculum for introducing neurodiversity, and reflecting on how it might affect pupils in a primary school context. LEANS is designed to be delivered in full and in a certain order, consisting of 7 topic units:*
- *introducing neurodiversity*
- *classroom experiences*
- *communication*
- *needs and wants*
- *fairness*
- *friendship*
- *reflecting on our actions. <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/neurodiversity-schools>*



My aims from my practitioner enquiry.

- My aim is to find out whether, teaching a young person about their Neurodiversity and how to manage it can improve their behaviour at school.



How will you know what happened?

- I will know if this has worked by carrying out a set of final observations of the 6 focus pupils, once we have finished our programme of study around Neurodiversity. If there is a noticeable improvement in their behaviour and I am able to observe this improvement and use of strategies taught during sessions, I will know that this study has been successful.



How will you know what happened?

- Neurodiversity is a common factor when considering the behaviour management of a classroom. Each student in a class enters with a range of their own needs. Those that are Neurodiverse face additional challenges when compared to that of their Neurotypical peers.
- Many young people are diagnosed or identified with a Neurodiversity and are not equipped with tools and strategies to help them manage and navigate their way through the mainstream classroom. Especially in the secondary section of school, where young people are met with the task of working with a wide range of teachers with **different teaching styles** and **classrooms**. This additional challenge to a young person can cause a really detrimental effect to the mental health and well-being of our Neurodiverse students.

- This fact, has brought me to my question of enquiry – **Can teaching a young person about their Neurodiversity and how to manage it, improve their behaviour at school?**



What did I decide to do?

- I was made aware of the LEANS project created by the University of Edinburgh by my Line Manager. This is a project that has been created by educators to empower Neurodiverse children to understand their identification and how they can be taught to manage it and self-regulate to navigate their time in the mainstream classroom.
- I chose 6 young people all of which had fairly new identifications of Neurodiversity or who were in the process of being diagnosed/identified. I planned to meet with the group twice a week for a period of 2 terms to teach them about Neurodiversity and how it can affect them and how they can manage their symptoms to make their time at school easier to manage.



What I read...

- Pupil behaviour and engagement in the classroom is crucial to ultimate attainment and achievement – the more positive the behaviour and engagement, the more positive the outcomes for each pupil. <https://www.adhd-360.com/neurodiversity-for-schools/>
- Behaviour as a whole school has become a focus and I felt that this focus of enquiry was well suited to my position as an Additional Needs Teacher.
- **Victoria Honeybourne is a specialist advisory teacher and autistic. Her latest book, [The Neurodiverse Classroom](#) is published by Jessica Kingsley Publisher.**
- When discussing ‘Supporting neurodiversity’, Honeybourne mentions that, *‘Implementing the neurodiversity paradigm in an educational setting simply means viewing things from a different perspective. It is about realising differences in brain function are a normal and natural aspect of human variation to be expected and accepted. It is about anticipating and preparing for a neurodiverse student population even before pupils set foot through the door.’*

So...

- With this in mind, I felt that it would be a great way to empower our young people by teaching them about their own, personal Neurodiversity so that they may be the ones to 'spread the word' and educate others, including teachers, in how best to support them in their classroom with their Neurodiversity and the difficulties these can highlight.
- In recent years, there has been a rise in what is known as 'The Neurodiversity Movement'. This suggests that rather than being seen as having a 'disorder' they are just 'part of a normal variation'. However, despite this movement, young people with neurodiversities can find managing the mainstream secondary classroom difficult because of the differences they face. Therefore, I feel that it can only be a positive to empower our young people to see that they have brains that work differently but rather than this being seen as a negative, it can be seen as a positive, or as I like to refer to it, a 'superpower'.



- *‘Singer situates her arguments in the social model of disability with an explicitly political dimension, which has sprouted a civil rights ‘neurodiversity movement’. The implication is that autistic people, and by extension, all those who are neurodivergent or different on other neurocognitive dimensions are not disordered, but rather part of normal variation’.*
- (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/neurodevelopmental-disorders-and-neurodiversity-definition-of-terms-from-scotlands-national-autism-implementation-team/C6582CFF0E5E00F2F0F38F294A6659D1>)

Plan for the enquiry.



- Carry out CPS (CIRCLE Participation Scale) observations of each student in at least 2 different mainstream classrooms and evaluate. **(Fig 2)**
- Meet with young people, 2 times a week to teach them about their Neurodiversity and how to manage it. This will include use of, The LEANS project (Learn About Neurodiversity at School). Once this programme of study is completed, move on to teach about individual Neurodiversities (ASD, ADHD, ADD, and Dyslexia). Finally, focus on self-regulation strategies.
- Carry out observations of the students to look for improvement and ask teachers if they feel they have seen any improvement in their behaviours during their lesson.

Conclusion .

- When I first began my practitioner enquiry, I was starting engaging in a new programme of work that although had been thoroughly researched, I had not used it before.
- Initially, there was an almost immediate improvement in the presentation of the students that I worked with in their mainstream classes.
- I observed them directly using techniques we learnt about and practised in our group sessions.
- Over time and due to recent timetable change into new S2 and S3 classes, there has been a huge decline in their presentation in class.
- This could be due to our sessions stopping and with having to change and adapt to new teachers, classrooms and general school environment.

conclusion

- In conclusion, I believe that although there is a clear benefit in empowering our Neurodivergent pupils by teaching them about how their Neurodiversities affect them, and how they can manage these difficulties or differences in their day to day lives, this does not take into account the huge difficulties they face when dealing with constant changes, especially when they have just began to really adjust to their new normal.
- I believe that it may be, us as educators who are the responsible ones to rethink how we support and prepare our Neurodivergent pupils to succeed rather than setting them up to fail.