



**Empowered by
Collaboration:**
*A System-Led
Approach to Inclusion
and Well-Being*

Maria Dawes



This session

- ▶ The challenge
- ▶ Rethinking the system
- ▶ How MATs, partnerships and other groups can create collaborative capacity to respond
- ▶ What leadership behaviours are needed to enable collaboration to become a powerful driver of equity
- ▶ Key principles of inclusive practice

The challenge and the opportunity

Every child, regardless of background, need or previous experience of school should be able to access the education they need to thrive, achieve, be respected and belong.

Discussion

*What do you want
to achieve for
vulnerable learners
in your
organisation?*

*What would it take
- beyond your own
organisation - to
make that
aspiration possible?*



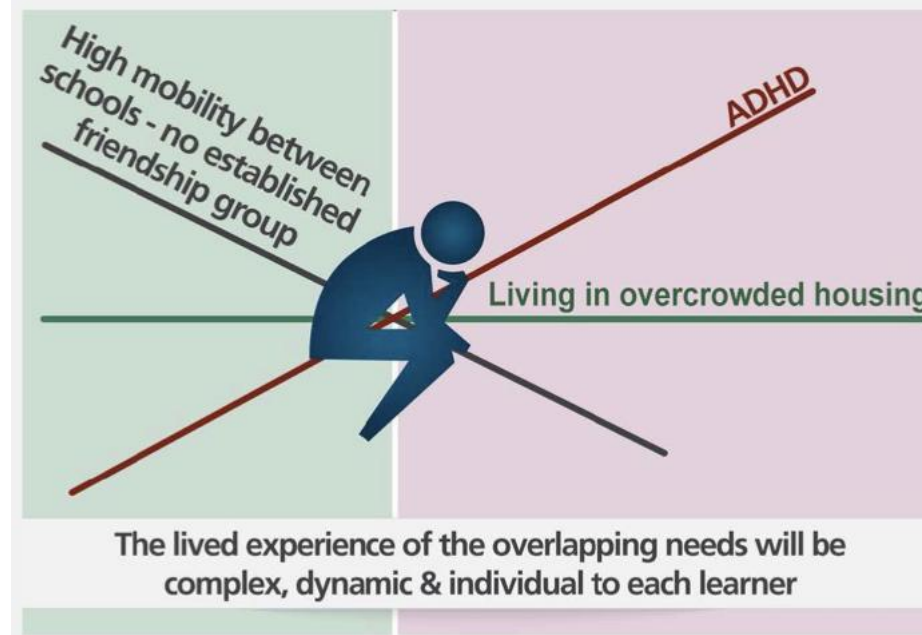
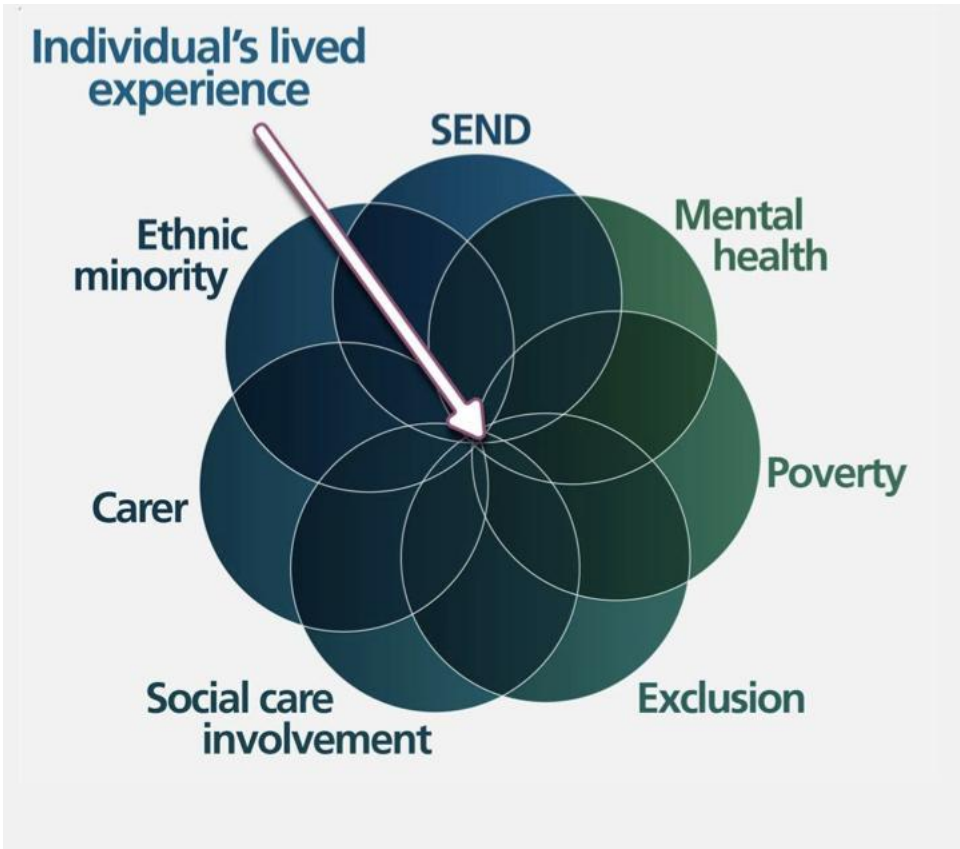
Rethinking the system?

From demand led and bolt-on to part of a positive social mission to ensure all children can grow up to live rich and fulfilling lives in which they are both visible to and valued by their communities.

‘There are not children and SEND children. There are just children.’

Nicole Dempsey, Dir of SEND & Safeguarding, Dixons AT

Intersectionality



Teacher Handbook SEND: Whole School SEND

Five Principles for Inclusion



1. Dignity, not deficit
2. Greater complexity merits greater expertise
3. Different, but not apart
4. Success in all its forms
5. Action at all levels

Tom Rees and Ben Newmark - A good life: towards greater dignity for people with learning disability

CST

The White Paper: from sidelined to included

The White Paper places mainstream inclusion at the heart of its reforms.

- ▶ Tiered support and Individual Support plans (ISPs)
- ▶ National Inclusion Standards
- ▶ Inclusion bases
- ▶ Schools must publish an Inclusion Strategy
- ▶ Schools will come together in local groups to pool funding, share resources and improve support

A school system rooted in collaboration and partnership

- ▶ Systemic change needs a coalition for change
- ▶ Proper collaboration can reconnect capacity.

“I don’t think you can have a high-performing education system unless there’s deep collaboration and proper knowledge-transfer and professional learning together.”

Steve Munby

“Being part of a group, you’re better able to respond to local problems,”

Tom Rees

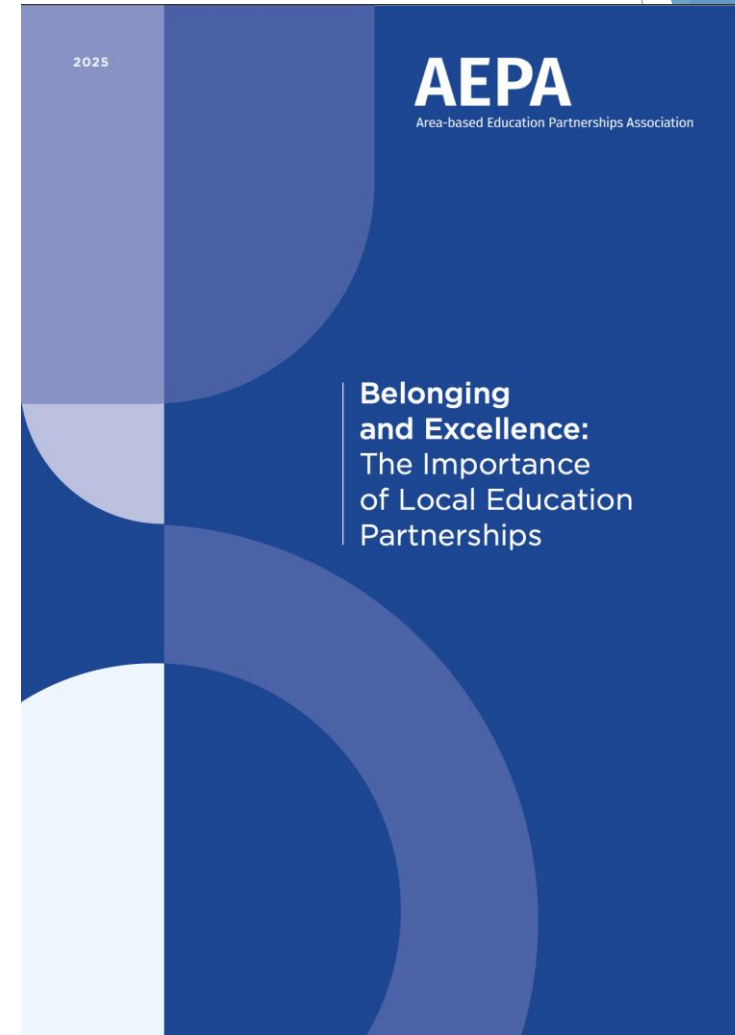
Why strong groups of schools matter

- ▶ Shared expertise in SEND and inclusion
- ▶ Consistent expectations and approaches across schools
- ▶ The ability to pool resources for specialist support
- ▶ Smoother transitions for children who move between schools
- ▶ Strengthened collaboration between mainstream and specialist schools
- ▶ A collective responsibility for all children in the community

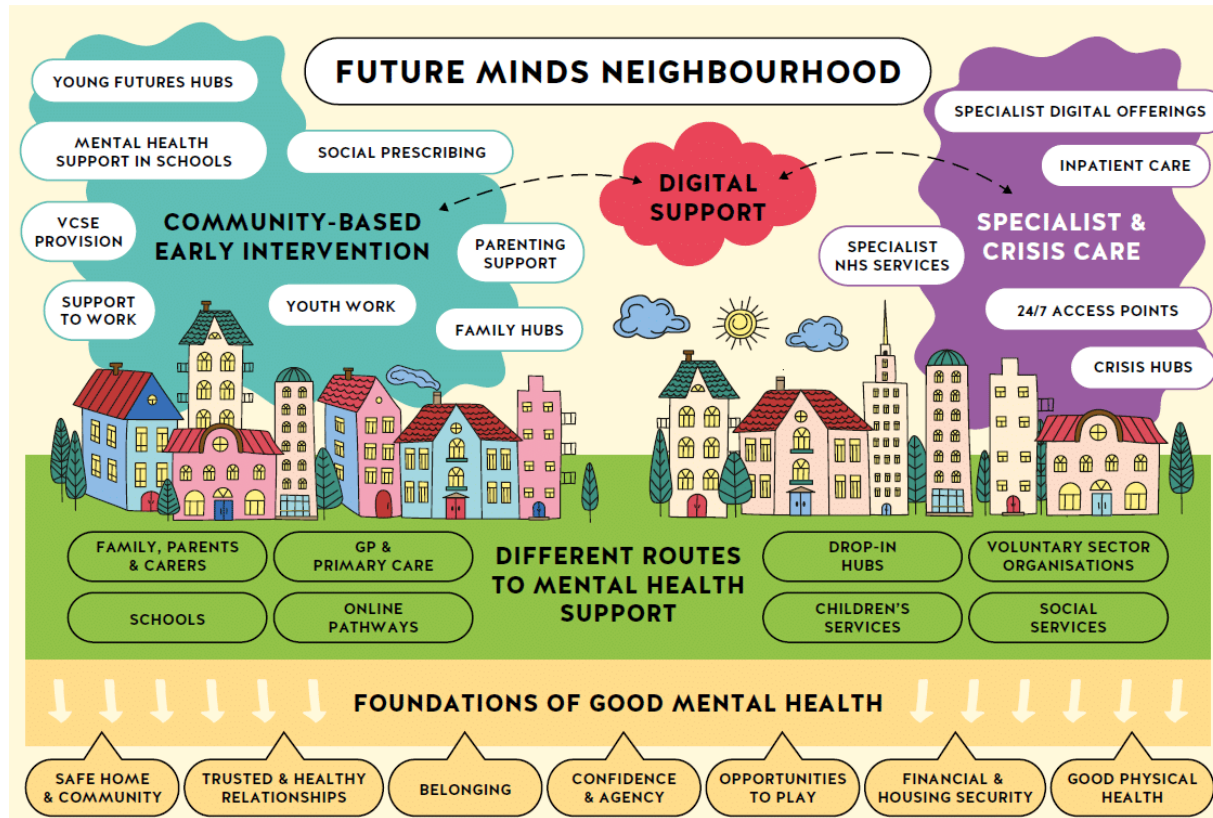
Why place matters

“Place matters. It gives families a key part of their identity and contributes to their sense of belonging. Schools need to understand place and locality to make meaningful connections with children and families and they themselves are also a central part of their local community.”

Belonging And Excellence AEPA



Why Partnerships matter



- ▶ Defines inclusion locally, with shared expectations
- ▶ Creates collective accountability across all providers
- ▶ Tracks and supports children who disappear from view
- ▶ Enables MATs and LAs to pool capacity
- ▶ Requires collaboration, not just encourages it

Discussion

Where in your system is collaboration strongest?

How do we ensure that 'no school is left behind' and that there is further inconsistency in access to high quality provision for the most vulnerable children?

Embedding inclusion across a school group or partnership

Culture and belief

Leadership & governance

Inclusive curriculum and teaching and learning

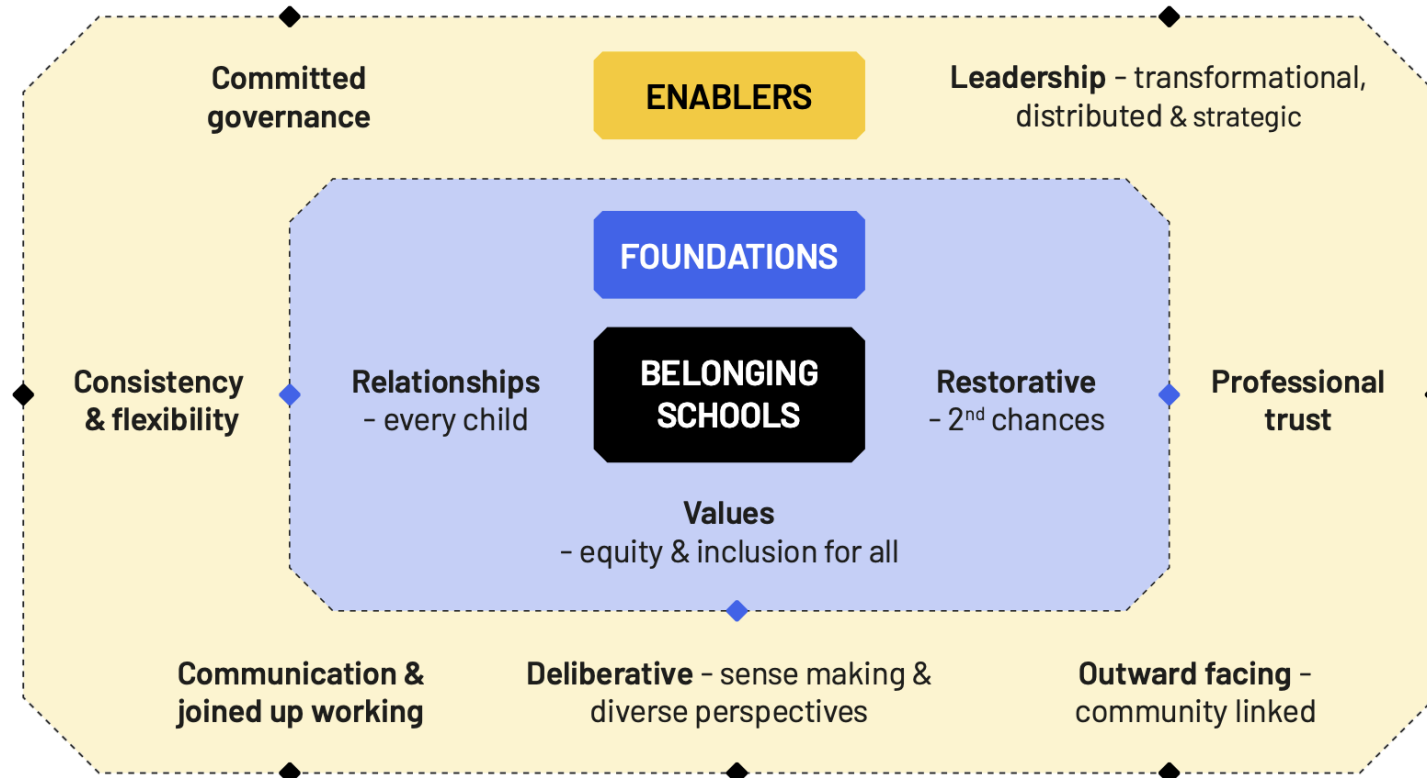
Focused support for individual pupils

Developing staff expertise

Pastoral care and well-being embedded into everyday practice

Genuine partnerships with parents

Inclusive Schools Research

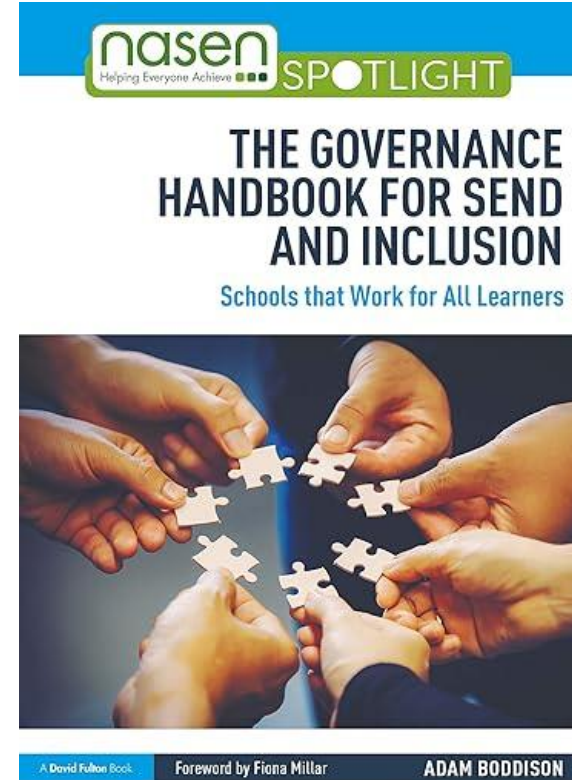


Key areas of practice:

- Pastoral support
- Early help, safeguarding & multi-agency
- Behaviour, inclusion & exclusion
- Teaching, learning & curriculum
- Student voice, parents & community
- Staffing & CPD
- Continuous improvement

Belonging
Schools, Toby
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Inclusion focused governance



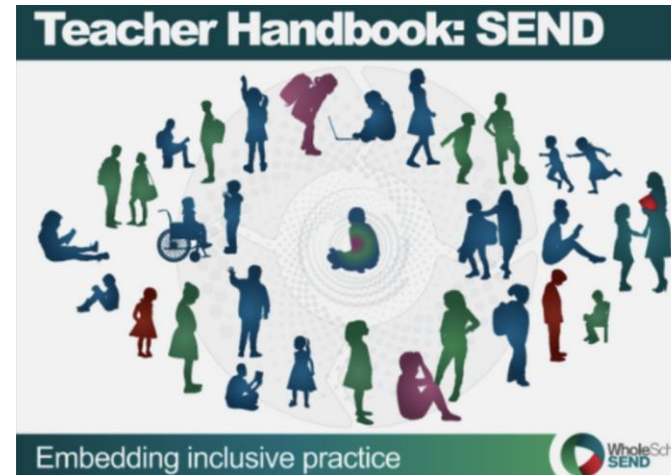
‘Think SEND’: everyone’s responsibility:

- to what extent does our trust board effectively carry out these functions related specifically to SEND, and what processes do we have in place to support them?
- What will be impact on SEND pupils?

High Quality teaching for all pupils



EEF: Five a day: supporting high-quality teaching for pupils with SEND



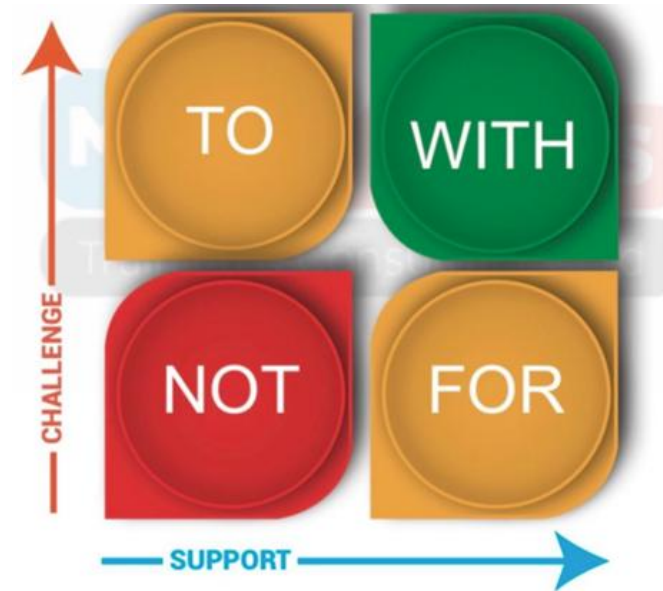
Whole School SEND: Teacher Handbook: SEND - Embedding Inclusive Practice

Early identification grounded in a nurturing approach



Strengthening inclusion through relationships and partnerships

- ▶ Working in Partnership with Families and the Community
- ▶ Collaborating Across Services and the Local System
- ▶ Shared Continual Professional Learning



Discussion

What one behaviour, if strengthened, would have the biggest impact on inclusion?

What one system change should we make that would have the biggest impact on inclusion?

A system that is inclusive by design, not by exception.

A system where:

- ▶ every child feels they belong
- ▶ every school is part of something bigger
- ▶ every trust acts as an anchor institution
- ▶ every partnership holds the ring for education as a public good
- ▶ and every leader sees inclusion as the work, not an add-on

I don't just like this school - I love it. It is the perfect place for me. In this school they don't judge you. Some people don't accept difference and they judge what you look like rather than who you really are. But in this school the teachers make all those worries and struggles go away.

Daniel, Year 9 (taken from Beyond Boundaries, Natalie Packer and David Bartram)



References and further reading

- ▶ Beyond Boundaries - Leading Great SEND Provision Across a Trust: Natalie Packer and David Bartram, 2024 (John Catt)
- ▶ [Nurture UK](#)
- ▶ [Belonging and Excellence](#): The Importance of Local Education Partnerships: AEPA
- ▶ [Inclusions in Practice](#) - a series of case studies supported by the Expert Advisory Group for Inclusion
- ▶ [A Good Life](#): towards greater dignity for people with learning disability: CST
- ▶ [Special Educational needs In Mainstream](#): EEF
- ▶ [Future Minds](#): a campaign for youth mental health
- ▶ [Teacher Handbook](#): SEND, Whole School SEND
- ▶ The Governance Handbook for SEND and Inclusion: Schools that Work for All Learners, Dominic Boddinson, (NASEN)
- ▶ A Little Guide for Teachers: SEND in Schools: Amjad Ali (Corwin)
- ▶ [The MAT Factor](#): Exploring how multi-academy trusts are supporting pupils with SEND: Lillian Flemons and Matt Walker, NFER