Supporting Inclusive Practice

and ensuring opportunity is equal for all

Third edition

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**Chapter 1: What do we mean by inclusive practice?**

By Gianna Knowles

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**Contents**

**Introduction**

**Chapter 1: what do we mean by inclusive practice?**

Gianna Knowles

**Chapter 2: Gender and inclusion**

Gianna Knowles

**Chapter 3: Working with Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual children and families in Schools**

Zoë Leadley-Watkins

# **Chapter 4**: **Including Bilingual Learners and Children with English as an Additional Language**

Vicki Ryf

**Chapter 5: Supporting Children who are highly able**

Jenny Fogarty

**Chapter 6: What it means to have a disability or special education need**

Gianna Knowles

**Chapter 7: Inclusion and neurodivergency**

Gianna Knowles

**Chapter 8: Supporting the inclusion of autistic children**

Nicki Martin and Damien Milton

# **Chapter 9: Children who have suffered loss and grief, including bereavement**

Edlene Whitman

**Chapter 10: Looked-after children, fostering and adoption**

Anna Jones

**Chapter 11 – Supporting and including children from low income families**

Fabienne Benoist

**Chapter 1: What do we mean by inclusive practice?**

Gianna Knowles

**This chapter explores:**

* What it means to be a child and the concept of childhood
* Theories of child development
* Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory of child development
* What is meant by inclusion
* Special educational needs and disability
* The SEN Code of Practice
* Equality of opportunity and barriers to learning
* Factors that children experience that may act as barriers to their learning

**Children and childhood**

**What does childhood mean?**

What does the term childhood mean to you?

How is being a child different from being an adult?

The next time you see a child in an advert, a magazine or through some other media, notice how they are portrayed: what are they wearing, what activity are they engaged in, how do they behave, are they happy, sad, noisy, curious?

Think about the similarities between what is show n and your own experience of childhood.

Many adults can reflect on their own childhood as times free from work, financial worries and concerns about a range of other responsibilities, for many their childhood can seem to have been a time when things were more straightforward and the future was always a promise of exciting new possibilities. However, in reality it is few adults who had a truly charmed childhood where they were not at some point having to deal with situations and circumstances that worried or frightened them. Many adults can cite times when things happened at school that caused anxiety or changing family and wider social situations brought challenges and some adults, including many of you reading this book, will have had very challenging childhood situations to deal with.

Often the media can ignore the struggles some children face and represent childhood as a time filled with joy, wonder and excitement. While this is the experience of many children, for others in reality they are facing many of the challenges and problems that adults face. Most children have strong, loving and caring homes, but others experience upheavals in family life, or live in poverty, or are subjected to abuse and neglect. Some children are looked after children or are marginalised and vulnerable because they have a special educational need or disability. However, these issues aside, there does seem to be a general belief that childhood is a ‘special’ time, distinct and different from adulthood. Childhood is a point in a developing human beings life when it is acknowledged, by both individual families and wider society, that particular things are unique to this time in life – freedom from responsibility, for example, and possibly a greater tolerance of personal whims and indulgence of wants. However, from the child’s point of view, it is also a time of intense learning both through the structured compulsory education system and through the day-to-day learning involved in growing-up and learning to live in society.

Historically, in Europe and the West, the notion of childhood as a special time, different from adulthood, began to develop from the fifteenth century. Prior to this, children were treated in a similar way to the treatment of adults. Children were expected to undertake chores and work alongside adults, although the tasks they were given to do would be in keeping with their physical and cognitive development. It is not until the nineteenth century that the notion of childhood begins to develop, in a way we would understand now, where the notion of childhood brings with it distinct expectations of how families and society should provide for and treat children differently to the ways adults might expect to be treated.

**The end to children in the workplace and the development of compulsory schooling**

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain moved from being a largely agricultural nation to a highly industrialised one. Thousands of families who had lived and worked on the land moved to cities for jobs in the new factories. Just as children had worked on the farms alongside the adults, when the families moved to the cities the children continued to work with the adults in the factories and mines. However, in the early nineteenth century there was a growing belief that it was inappropriate for children to be working in such conditions. It began to be recognised that children were being exposed to considerable physical and emotional harm and were vulnerable to exploitation.

Below is a list of key dates and legislation that eventually made it illegal for children to work and legally require children to attend school.

**1833** Factory Act: this law stopped children under nine from working in textile factories. Children from nine to thirteen were allowed to work, but only for 48 hours a week.

**1836** Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages: this law meant that because a child’s birth date was recorded, it was possible for factory inspectors to check the ages of children and ensure that the children working in the factory were old enough to do so.

**1842** Mines Act: this stopped all women and girls being allowed to work underground and boys under the age of ten. It also prevented everyone under fifteen from being in charge of machinery.

**1844** Factory Act: girls under the age of 18 had their working hours limited to 12 hours on week days (including Saturdays) and nine hours on Sundays. In 1847 the Ten Hour Act reduced working hours for girls under 18 to ten hours a day and 58 hours a week.

**1870** Education Act: this was one of the first pieces of legislation relating to education. Significantly it allowed money to be raised from local rates to provide schools in all areas for children, although schools were not free and could charge fees for attending.

**1880** Education Act: this piece of legislation made attendance at school compulsory for children between the ages of five and ten. However, fees were still payable until 1891. In 1893 the school leaving age was raised to 11, and in 1899 it was further raised to 12.

**1893** Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act: this law extended compulsory education to blind and deaf children, which lead to the development of special schools. This was followed in **1899** by the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, which made educational provision for disabled children.

Throughout the nineteenth century there was significant resistance to these laws being passed. Factory owners resisted the laws as children were cheaper to employ and their physical size meant they could work in smaller spaces and, with their smaller hands, do more specialised jobs than adults were able to undertake. Parents too were resistant to the laws as it meant family income went down, not only were the children not bringing in an income, but if they were going to school, school fees also had to be found. This was also a time before welfare support, so there were no benefits available to a family if someone was too ill to work, or was unemployed and without housing benefit there was an always present fear of eviction and homelessness. In reality, despite the changes in legislation, many children continued to work, either lying about their age and not attending school or working after school.

(Victorian Children 2016, Parliament UK 2016).

The social changes brought by the Industrial Revolution and the legislative changes relating to children that followed as a result, have had a significant impact on the development of the idea of ‘childhood’. In making it illegal for children to work it is recognised that children, by comparison with most adults, are more physically, cognitively and emotionally vulnerable and therefore should not be exposed to situations that are potentially dangerous or might lead to exploitation. Further to this, by compelling children to go to school it is acknowledged that education serves to inform and develop skills, knowledge and understanding that in the longer-term provide choice and wider long-term work and lifestyle possibilities for the individual and also ensure an educated workforce for society.

In this way, making child labour illegal and instituting compulsory and later free education has contributed to our understanding of childhood as being a time where specific things do and do not happen for children. They do go to school, but do not go to work. However, this is to somewhat over simplify the situation. Many see a significant purpose of education as being preparing children for adulthood and there is, arguably, increasing pressure on children to achieve particular levels of academic success at school, to ensure that they are able to take full advantage of the opportunities employment might provide for them, and to ensure that they contribute to wider society though doing so. However, not only is education for some children a far from a happy time, but as noted above, many children still faces challenges throughout their childhood years. Some children continue to work, while others might be carers, and for other children childhood still brings with it a range of challenges.

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| **Child exploitation in the UK**In Britain there are a number of laws that prevent children under the age of 18 being employed in paid work. However from the age of 16 young people can do such jobs as babysitting and delivering newspapers and they may also do odd jobs for a parent, relative or neighbour or, with special licences which restrict the number of hours worked a child can take part in television and other entertainment work and, with permission from parents or carers young people aged 6 can join the armed forces (citizen’s advice 2016). However, despite these laws there is a darker side to children in Britain who are working. In 2015 The Guardian reported that up to 3,000 children may have been be trafficked and forced to work *running cannabis factories, nail bars, garment factories, brothels and private homes* (The Guardian 2015). Although it is not only children who are ‘trafficked’ who end up working and being exploited in the ways described above. The NSPCC reports that between 2010 and 2011 that nationally: *Over 2,400 children were victims of sexual exploitation,* including prostitution *(NSPCC 2016).* While other children worked long hours after school in parents and relative’s shops or alongside adults working in the home.As we discussed above, there are very good reasons it is illegal for children to work, children are still developing physically, cognitively and emotionally and the long hours worked, the work environment and the work itself will have a negative impact on the child’s health and well-being and may interfere with some children being able to attend school. |

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| **Child carers***The 2011 census identified 178,000 young carers in England and Wales alone; an 83% increase in the number of young carers aged 5 to 7 years and a 55% increase in the number of children caring who are aged 8 to 9 years. When figures from the Northern Ireland and Scottish census are taken into account, the total number of young carers in the UK total at least 195,000 (Barnardo’s 2016).* |

Just as in Britain we have seen how the development of our current understanding has come about for social change and through historic reasons, so too the second half of the twentieth century saw the beginning of a more global move to recognising and protecting childhood in a similar way.

**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC was established in 1989. Many governments across the world have signed the convention, agreeing that they will observe the rights for children set out in the convention. This is a significant agreement, since it seeks to provide for all *children civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to* (Unicef.org 2016), thereby recognising that children are entitled to particular treatment, because they are children.

The Convention has 54 articles that set out the rights of the child. The articles define a child as being someone under the age of 18 and having the right to a national identity, to stay with their family and parents, to have their views listened to have education and health care and to have leisure and play.

While many countries have signed to the UNCRC, the UNCRC is a convention or agreement, it is not law. The UK government has signed the UNCRC, but that does not make the articles law in the UK. Only Acts passed by the UK government are laws, therefore no one in the UK can be punished for not upholding the UNCRC. However, many of the UNCRC articles are covered by other laws in the UK, which, if broken can lead to punishment.

Although we have explored how children and childhood is protected by laws, particularly those that prevent children working, there is still a concern that the notion that the very concept of childhood, as conceived in the way we have discussed, can leave children open to exploitation. Foleley, Roche, and Tucker (2001) discuss how childhood has become and ‘industry’, that is, toy makers and the children’s fashion industry, the children’s media industry and, to a certain extend the education industry all owe their existence and, for some their vast profits, to the current concept of children and childhood. If childhood were not a special time, it would not need these special services. While Wyness (1999) writes that children are: *providing employment for adults (Wyness 1999, p.24),* which possibly: *strengthens the economic power of adults at the cost of children’s own interests (ibid).* That is to say, the development of the idea of childhood has, in some ways disempowered children. It is usually adults who will make decisions for and about children and it is dubious the extent to which children’s concerns and wishes are taken into account when decisions that directly affect their welfare are made.

There is an argument that goes: that while we have sought to protect children from the worst aspects of the adult world and provided them with a time to grow-up, learn and mature before taking on adult responsibilities, we have also infantilised them longer than we should. That is, by keeping young people in education or training until the age of 18 we have prevented them from growing in to young adults, under the guidance of older work colleagues as would have happened for previous generations and that the knock-on effects can be that it is a shock moving from childhood to adulthood, rather than a gradual transition, or that some young people are ready for more responsibility at an earlier age rebel against being kept in education when they want to be doing other things. However, more recent UK legislation –and the UNCRC does require that children have a voice in deciding for themselves what are in their best interests in certain aspects of their lives and we will come back to this in later chapters in this book.

**Theories of child development**

So far we have discussed the notion of childhood and what it means to be a child in terms of society’s views about children and what child should an should not be able to do. This next section looks at what is mean by the term child from a human developmental point of view. In Europe and North America the beginning of the twentieth century saw a rise in interest, led by psychologists and doctors, particularly paediatricians, around the idea of ‘child development’. From the 1930s the Swiss born developmental psychologist Jean Piaget led the way in codifying the stages of cognitive development children passed through from birth to adulthood. For example, he detailed at what age a child might be expected to be able to move from concrete thinking – to abstract thinking. That is, from the preoperational stage from two to seven, of seeing things from an egocentric or self-focused point of view, to the concrete operations stage at seven to eleven where children begin to de-centre and understand the nature of others and be able to empathise with others feelings and needs.

In physical development terms, just as Piaget established that children pass thought given stages of cognitive development the American psychologist and paediatrician Arnold Gesell developed a similar set of stages relating to children’s physical development – as well as their physical, social, and emotional development. Over the course of the twentieth century others working in the area of child development established influential and significant theories around many aspects of children development, with a number of theorists fiercely arguing against the work of others. So, for example, Margaret Donaldson who also researched children’s cognitive development counteracted aspects of Piaget’s theory. Lev Vygotsky established ideas about children’s language development and John Bowlby theorised about how children form attachments to caregivers from birth and how these attachments, depending on their nature will impact on how children form later attachments to others in wider society - friends and potential partners.

While all these theories are important, in terms of helping us understand what might be happening for children as they develop, one of the unforeseen consequences of these ideas has been the medicalisation of childhood and the increasing dominant idea that there is a *normal* pattern to how a child should grow and develop, cognitively, physically and emotionally and that any child who does not develop in these possibly quite prescriptive ways is *not- normal*.

**Maslow and wellbeing**

While the theorists above are concerned to set out developmental trajectories for children growing in to adults, to indicate a typical line of development in the areas of physical and cognitive development, all these theories explain development in terms of the individual person or child. That is, the growth of that child almost as if it had no control over what was happening. Maslow, however explores how what is happening around a child will impact on that child’s growth and development. Particularly in terms of achieving what Maslow defines as self-actualisation (Knowles and Holmstrom 2012). For Maslow, the goal of human growth and development is ‘self-actualisation’ or ‘full-humanness’ (Maslow 2014, p. 3). For Maslow too, this gets away from notions of ‘illness’ and ‘health’ (Maslow 2014), which are fundamental to the normal trajectories just discussed and the binary notion of ability/disability. He does acknowledge the word ‘self’ is not necessarily helpful as it implies selfishness.

**Self - actualisation**

Being self-actualised includes the following characteristics:

* accepting the self and others for what they are, understanding that others will have different views and not feeling threatened or the need to change those views
* strong relationships with a few people and enjoys privacy
* able to see challenges as problems ‘outside the self’ and be objective about them
* able to deal with uncertainty
* creative, be that scientifically as well as artistically
* able to accept and reject fashions and ideas on their own terms, not because they are forced on them, or is what ‘everyone’ is doing/thinks
* concerned for others and seeking to help and support others
* strong moral sense, but not bigoted

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html#self2>

However, for a human to achieve this state it requires a foundation of other aspects of support and care to be in place first which self-actualisation can build on. For this reason Maslow represented this process as a hierarchy, most often shown as a pyramid and referred to as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

Self-actualisation.

Self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect for and by others.

Safety and security, health and family.

Basic physical needs, for example food, water, warmth, shelter, air, sleep.

(Knowles and Holmstrom 2012, p.19).

At the bottom of the pyramid are the basic psychological needs we all have and that ensure survival and growth, these needs being: shelter, water and food. These are the most basic needs that must be met and ones that will ensure physical health, without which the journey to self-actualisation cannot begin. The next level of needs contain affection and relationships and the following level moves on to feelings of self-esteem and confidence and feeling respected by others. Education falls in to level three of this hierarchy and, importantly we can see that for level three to be achieved, the needs in level one and two must be being met.

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| **Understanding Maslow’s hierarchy of needs*** Work your way through Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, beginning at the bottom and think out how your own needs are being met.
* Consider who is around you and helps you achieve in meeting some of the needs listed – and who you support to help meet the needs of others.
* Think about your experience of working with children in an educational setting. How do such settings actively encourage children to develop self-esteem, confidence and respect for others?
* How does this happen for all children in the setting, depending on their gender, ethnicity or if they have SEN or a disability?
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Maslow states that we do not necessarily start at the bottom of the pyramid and work our way up in a smooth trajectory. Life for most people is much messier than that. Many people struggle with ensuring they have their basic needs met and this can significantly impact on their capacity to achieve self-respect and self-esteem. For children achieving well-being can be even more challenging as having their needs met is much more dependent on who is around them to support and provide for them.

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| **The Scottish Government’s Getting it right for every child approach - GIRFEC**The Scottish Government have recently passed: The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This Act recognises that: *each child is unique and there is no set level of wellbeing that children should achieve* (*gov.scot 2016b)* and that all children *should be helped to reach their full potential as an individual (ibid).*In order to ensure wellbeing is achieved the Scottish Government have written a set of wellbeing indicators and guidance for working with children. The indicators include children being: safe, healthy, achieving at school, having a nurturing place to live in and the opportunity to take part in activities. The indicators include that the child feels respected and has the opportunity *to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them….and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community* (ibid), and that children are included. The Scottish Government defines inclusion as overcoming: *social, educational, physical and economic inequalities*, to ensure they are *accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn (ibid).* GIRFEC also ensures children are given a voice in any decisions that affect them so that they *understand what is happening and why* (ibid). |

**Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory of child development**

In explain the thinking behind GIRFEC, the Scottish Government states: *a child’s or young person’s wellbeing is influenced by everything around them (gov.scot 2016b),* a view which is at the heart of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of child development. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917 – 2005) was a Russian born American psychologist, whose work is rooted in the notion that, as individuals we are wellbeing is impacted on by the people and events that are around us and form part of our lives. *Bronfenbrenner’s work explores how a child is surrounded by and grows-up into a community and how the child’s interaction with the different ‘layers’ of that community will help shape aspects of who that child grows up to be, the experiences they have, the characteristics they develop and the opportunities that they are provided with (Knowles and Holmstrom 2012, p.18).*

**Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model**

(Adapted from Knowles and Holmstrom 2012).)

Bronfenbrenner expressed his theory diagrammatically as a range of concentric circles representing how a developing child has the possibility of gradually increasing the range of community and society it engages with. As a child moves out and away from its immediate family the impact on the child’s wellbeing will be determined by the range and quality of interactions it experiences.

**What is meant by the term inclusion?**

So far this chapter has explored some key points around what it means to be a child, what childhood might be thought to be and various theories explaining how children might develop physically, cognitively and in terms of their wellbeing. We have also explored factors that might impact on aspects of that development. What we have learnt so far is that, there are unlikely to be any two children who experience their childhood in the same way and it is for these reasons that when we think about working in a learning environment with children we need to be aware that each child will bring to that learning environment a different set of experiences and a different approach to their learning. Indeed, not only will children differ in terms of their life experiences but their home backgrounds too will be diverse, and many children will also bring to the learning environment learning needs and disabilities particular to them. All these factors will impact on how a child will engage with their learning and it is these factors that we need to consider if we are to ensure we are providing an inclusive learning environment, a learning environment in which all children are enabled to achieve and enjoy wellbeing.

In 1994 Salamanca in Spain hosted a meeting of government representatives of more than 92 countries. At the meeting the countries attending agreed that educational policy in their own countries would be reviewed and developed to ensure that: whatever their learning needs, all children would be provided with an equal chance of achieving at school and be enabled to make progress in their learning (UNESCO 1994). In particular it was acknowledged that not only is access to education a fundamental right, but that that each child is unique and different. It was agreed children come from many different backgrounds and that while some children have particular special educational needs or disabilities, over and above this, all children have individual characteristics and interests and that all these factors have an impact on how a child is enabled to engage with their education. The conference reaffirmed children’s right to an education, acknowledged the diversity of children’s needs and pledged that their own country’s mainstream education system would *accommodate* these factors *within a child entered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs (UNESCO 1994 p.viii).*

As a result of the Salamanca meeting a *Framework for Action* (*UNESCO 1994)* was drawn up and outlined what, in the UK have become known as the principles of inclusion. From Salamanca 1994 and the Framework for Action classroom educational practice in all UK mainstream schools began to adopt an approach to teaching and learning that was to be inclusive of all children’s learning needs and is now a fundamental principle of UK educational practice. Those working with children in educational settings understand that learning activities must take into consideration needs pertaining to particular aspects of children’s backgrounds, coming from a low-income family, for example, or because the child had a particular learning need or disability. Inclusion meant and continues to mean that all children must be able to enter their classroom, be that with or without assistive technologies and be able to access the learning activities being presented by the adults in the classroom. Having a particular learning need, such as dyslexia, needing to use a wheelchair, having English as an additional language, an autistic spectrum condition, being a gifted mathematician or parents of the same sex should not be a barrier to learning, or mean a child faces discrimination.

Since Salamanca the principle of inclusion has shaped both social and educational policy in the UK. From 1997 and before, Educational settings having been developing their inclusive practice and there is now much good and outstanding practice happening in Early Years settings and schools. The first two editions of this book, published in 2006 and 2010 have sought to bring to the reader key aspects of relevant government and educational policy and present aspects of good practice to help put that policy and practice in place.

Over the past 15 years settings and schools have understood that as they have developed their approach to learning activities to ensure the activities are accessible to children with a range of needs that the learning of all children has improved. For example, the use of visual timetables in classrooms, which were often initially introduced to better support the learning of children on the autistic spectrum are now generally regarded as good practice for all children, since they offer all children the opportunity to see how their day will be structured and to understand the learning they will be engaged in. In this way, settings and schools have moved to an approach to learning that that focuses on a social model of learning and meeting children’s needs. That is, the learning environment is inclusive because all children can access the learning – irrespective of their needs or ability. Nothing ‘special has to be done or provided for them.

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| **What is an inclusive learning environment?**Below is a list of features that identify an inclusive learning environment, next time you are in an education setting look for examples of these indicators of good practice.* Learning activities designed to enable all children to join in and learn in a way that meets their needs and abilities.
* There is evidence of collaboration between pupils, either through talk partners clarifying ideas for each other, or team players working together to solve problems.
* The educational setting or learning environment has an ethos where children are encouraged to understand and empathise with the needs of others.
* Aspects of the educational setting’s provision is informed by the children’s voice – that is, children have an input in to how the learning environment is designed and, where appropriate, how aspects of the curriculum are approached.
* *Barriers to learning are overcome including for those pupils with disabilities and complex needs. These experiences include a wide range of well-planned visits, visitors to the school, dance and drama activities and a varied menu of extra-curricular options which ensure all, regardless of ability are fully included (OfSTED 2013).*

Good inclusive practice not only improves the learning experience and wellbeing for individual children, but also encourages all children to expect diversity in their lives. |

The development of educational approaches to what is regarded as good inclusive practice is also supported by a range of recent changes to legislation and educational policy.

**Recent legislation relating to inclusion**

**Equality Act 2010:** this piece of legislation replaced and brought together a wide range of laws relating to many forms of discrimination - race, disability and gender, to name a few. In particular it introduced a list of specific *protected characteristics* a child or adult may have, that make it unlawful to discriminate against people on grounds of having that characteristic. Protected Characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, sex and sexual orientation.

This is piece of legislation recognises that we all may, at some point in our lives experience being discriminated against, unless we live in a truly inclusive society. Some aspects of this legislation have an obvious and direct bearing on schools and children and other aspects a more complex impact. For example, an educational setting is now compelled to make reasonable adjustments to ensure a child who has a disability has their needs met, similarly Trans children – children who may be experiencing Gender Dysphoria must be supported in their educational setting. An example of a more complex impact of this legislation is ensuring there is no discrimination with regards to same sex marriages, where children there may be indirect discrimination experienced by children whose parents may be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT). Indeed the Act itself states there must *be protection for people discriminated against because they are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic (Gov.uk 2015).* These issues are discussed in more detail in chapters 4 and 5.

In 2013 the **Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act** was passed. The possible impact of this legislation, with regard to children and inclusive practice has been briefly outlined above in relation to discussing protected characteristics around gender and sexuality. However, there are also wider aspects around this discussion to consider – how, for example settings must ensure they are being inclusive of all families and children when, for example, they are exploring through the curriculum topics such as ‘My Family’.

The **Children and Families Act 2014** introduced many changes to the care of vulnerable children, extending support to them and their families from birth to 21 or 25, depending on need. In particular it made changes to adoption and fostering regulations and requires settings and schools to support children at school with medical conditions (Gov.uk 2014.)

**Special educational needs and disability**

**The SEN Code of Practice**

In 2014 the new – and long awaited **SEN Code of Practice** was introduced. This built on the successes of the previous Code of Practice (2001), while introducing significant changes to it, in that it now covers children and young people from birth to 25. It has also made the following changes: the views of children and young people must be sought and taken in to account; there must be joint planning and commissioning of services to ensure close co-operation between education, health services and social care; the statement of SEN is replaced by the Health and Care Plan (EHC plan) and it includes new guidance on the support pupils and students should receive in education and training settings.

**What is meant by equality of opportunity and barriers to learning**

In 2013 the latest version of the **National Curriculum** was published. Section 4 of the National Curriculum reiterates what inclusion means for the current generation of primary school children. It states educational settings must ensure they are: *Responding to pupils’ needs and overcoming potential barriers for individuals and groups of pupils (DfE 2013 p.8).* It makes explicit reference to the Equality Act 2010 stating: *Teachers should take account of their duties under equal opportunities legislation that covers race, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment (ibid).* It also reinforces the continuation of the excellent inclusive practice already in operation in educational settings by reiterating that: *a wide range of pupils have special educational needs, many of whom also have disabilities. Lessons should be planned to ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving. (DfE 2013 p.8).*

**Factors that children experience that may act as barriers to their learning**

In 2011 the government introduced the **pupil premium**. This was the first time it had been officially recognised that children from low income families (and, in this instance also children who are being fostered or in care), could be adversely affected by their backgrounds in terms of their capacity to achieved in their learning. The introduction of the pupil premium has meant that educational setting have had to act positively to ensure that they are including and supporting the specific needs of these children. This support is directly funded by the government who give schools: *extra funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils from reception to year 11* (Gov.uk 2014). With regard to this book, the chapters on looked-after children, fostering and adoption and children from low-income families explores not only the particular challenges faced by these children, but also how educational settings can ensure they are including and supporting these children in terms of their educational success – and using the pupil premium to do so.

**Conclusion**

This chapter, as their first chapter in this book, has sought to raise and discuss key points that will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapters. At the heart of inclusive practice is the notion that truly inclusive learning environments will allow any child, whatever their needs, to access the learning activities provided and thrive in that learning environment. In beginning to explore how this might happen for children, we have firstly explored what it means to be a child, as our view of what children are, and what childhood is about, will impact on how we work with children and seek to ensure they are included. We have also looked at theories around how children can be supported to thrive and achieve self-actualisation and we have discussed theories of child development. It has been noted that depending on how these theories are approached they can either aid, or impair our understanding how children thrive and learn.

In exploring these ideas many general points about children have been raised, however, what must be remembered is that every child is unique and will bring to any learning situation a specific range of individual needs, abilities and expectations. A child’s needs may arise because of the home background they come from, their, gender, their ethnicity or whether they have an SEN or disability. Indeed, all children’s learning needs are a combination of all, or some of these factors. Having now raised these points, the remaining chapters of this book will look, in more detail, at some of these factors and provide more insight and understanding into how to consider these factors when thinking about developing an inclusive environment.

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