Analysis of Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity: Review of Legislative Basis

In 2004 schools began appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead [DSL], previously known as Child Protection Officer, to take the lead of child protection issues. 'Working to protect, safeguard and promote the welfare of children is not optional; it is a core duty and responsibility...' (Burton and Reid, 2018, p.4) unfortunately, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the risk to vulnerable children and adults has heightened. This has caused many organisations to alter the way they operate due to lockdowns and local restrictions causing professionals to face unprecedented challenges. Some of the risk factors faced by children and families are poverty, lack of support networks, abuse, neglect and child exploitation. Internet Watch Foundation (2020) discloses that 8.8 million attempts were made to access images of children being groomed and coerced into making explicit images and videos of themselves in one month of lockdown.

In 2010 the Equality Act became regulated, protecting everyone in Britain, replacing the Race Relations Act (1976) and Disability Discrimination Act (1995), creating one general act to follow in the replacement of many smaller ones. This act pushes for regularity to create fair opportunities. It challenges injustice in line with the Human Rights Act (1998) and seeks to uphold people's privileges, becoming an advocate for diversity. Brown (2016) explains that diversity celebrates how different people are and is strongly linked to human rights and freedom. It is about recognising a range of different backgrounds, knowledge, skills and experiences to level inequalities. This ruling shields and safeguards individuals against implications of discrimination, harassment and victimisation through the nine protected characteristics – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010). Ephgrave (2018) states that this law ensures dignity and alleviates the impact of morale through categories such as job adverts, interviews and health or disability queries and that the importance of this cannot be stressed enough. This corresponds with Page (2020) explaining that everyone has the right to diversity and moral conduct. Diversity should be celebrated within the classroom and can be promoted with as little as learning to pronounce your students' names (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006). Failure to make reasonable adjustments in line with the characteristics violates the Equality Act 2010.

The role of a teaching assistant [TA] is to provide support and aid children's learning. As teachers are stretched with large class sizes they rely upon teaching assistants to provide support for those that need encouragement to reach their full potential. Sharples et al (2015) demonstrate the impact of TA's as it is commonly mistaken that teaching assistants are employed to relieve teachers of their workloads. Unison (2016) suggests that effective deployment of TA's is to deliver high-quality one-to-one, small group interventions or Special Educational Needs or Disability [SEND] has positive effects on children's academic, social and emotional wellbeing.

The teaching assistant whose experience will be reflected upon facilitates a Learning Support Centre that will be referred to as the LSC. For this assignment the School shall be specified as School A which is located in one of the most deprived areas in the country (ONS 2016). The LSC consists of a group of twelve children all of whom are on the SEND register or have little to

no English. Currently, the academy consists of 16.3% of children on the SEND register, which is higher than the national average.

The SEND policy (2019) for School A is part of the trust's national policy system. It sets out statutory guidance to promote responsibility and accountability for every child through inclusion in line with The SEND Code Of Practice (2014) and Teachers Standards (2011). Educational advisor Morewood (2018) highlights that some children who are regarded as SEND will require an Educational, Health and Social Care Plan [EHCP] to get the right level of support needed. Kendell (2018) explains that gaps in learning can be minimised when practitioners, external agencies and parents collaboratively recognise the uniqueness of each child. The scheme of learning for the Learning Support Centre (2019) seeks to promote inclusion, equality and diversity by offering a bespoke curriculum, which is supported by The Warnock Report (1978).

The practitioner focuses on teaching children in the LSC life skills through focused activities as well as incidental and turning them into learning prospects. The TA seeks to promote safeguarding practices by creating a secure environment and awareness of additional vulnerabilities with SEND children. An example of this is of a child who upon going to the toilet began menstruating and although she was chronologically twelve years of age, cognitively she was at the age of a three-year-old and was unaware of how her body was changing. Tes (2020) explains that learners with SEND often find this difficult, however, learning about changes in their body is crucial for their wellbeing, thus, the TA set out to ensure the child understood how to maintain hygiene and sanitation through games and role-play. The Sex and Relationship Policy (2020) sets out lifelong learning for children about physical, moral and emotional development which The DfE (2020) concurs that children should be made aware of this upon reaching age, physical and mental maturity. The guidance acknowledges flexibility to tailor content to meet the needs of the child with varied developmental stages through the Equality Act (2010) and take positive changes so pupils do not experience a disadvantage and are safeguarded due to their protected characteristics.

Although School A possesses an SRE Policy (2019) it shows very little guidance or training on how to best educate SEND children to make them aware of the changes they will experience. It explains that practitioners are required to use their skilled judgement, however, Bates (2019) explains that schools must certify that students with protected characteristics receive an age-appropriate lesson so they have the right to enjoy safe and healthy relationships the same as others.

The Equality Act (2010) highlighting that where learners with SEND may experience a disadvantage due to their protected characteristics schools must prevent this and take positive action which is acknowledged in School A's Anti-Bullying Policy (2019). To achieve this, School A can take positive action to further develop the SRE Policy (2019) through providing adequate training and advice to meet the needs of SEND children to promote diversity especially as teaching assistants play a pivotal role in making the curriculum accessible. For example, when lining up during lunch times staff can reinforce learning about personal space, through generalising learning outside of education to support children in understanding about their behaviours, relationships and maturity (Martin-Denham, 2015). Although, Meisels (1985) explains that early intervention is necessary it is often overlooked and is an important aspect to consider. By discussing this matter previously the child could have been better prepared mentally and emotionally.

Research shows that a variety of factors such as attitudes, engagement and transition effects the emotional state of a child when becoming independent. (Wright, 2014). However, not all children are or will be ready for a responsibility it is important in order for them to adapt to certain situations. The practitioner sought to improve the child's self-esteem and confidence in developing a new routine and a successful transition into gaining independence. With the current threat of Coronavirus personal hygiene must be enforced more so than before. Through utilising strategies such as offering hand hygiene packs (RDaSH NHS, 2020) and effective discussions about staying clean and safe: personal care can be achieved.

Schools are required to create unique and purposeful policies to adapt to their establishment to harmonize the need for structure as stated by Kampen (2019). The Education And Inspection Act (2006) identifies that having an effective behaviour policy is not only a legal requirement but can assist in creating a caring, stimulating and safe environment. With rewards and sanctions, educational settings offer guidance on how to promote welfare and safeguarding in children this underpins behaviour theorist Skinners Operant Conditioning Theory (1938).

The Child Protection Company (2019) clarifies that safeguarding expectations advance frequently and it is vital for educators to keep on top of the current guidance. The behaviour policy aims to develop character and proficiency in every child. The professional seeks to promote the behaviour policy in line with safeguarding through using encouraging language and building positive relationships with learners which Harley and Hart (1997) explain correlate in effective classroom management (Teachers' Standards 2011).

Cook (2019) explains that there is always a reason why a child behaves in a certain way and is necessary to understand why this is. However, the Covid-19 pandemic amendments have not been translated in particular for SEND children who may need affection or restorative care to ensure class bubbles are protected. An example of this is a child diagnosed with ADHD, which the Equality Act (2010) recognises as a protected characteristic. The disorder induces negative results on his sleeping pattern for which the learner takes regular medication to aid him to tackle this. Gingerich et al (1998) state that although ADHD is a deliberating disorder, diversity variables such as ethnicity, gender, age and socio-economic factors have been neglected in research to its origins.

Often the child becomes extremely distraught due to his disability and as a result will physically harm children and staff, thus to safeguard all, the child is removed from class. The learner struggles to express verbally why or what has distressed him therefore when this occurs the practitioner takes the child to a changed classroom where she has created a box that assists him to communicate through picture cards and emojis. Betker (2017) supports this clarifying that children often need a switch of the environment to help alleviate any problems they may be facing.

With the Covid-19 pandemic causing additional challenges children with ADHD and similar disabilities face an increased level of risk due to physical distancing and disorganisation. Cortese et al (2020) state that ensuring social distancing measures is presenting considerable challenges for educators and children in particular if restorative measures are required.

The practitioner discovered that the child particularly enjoyed baking which resulted in a therapeutic effect. Consequently, upon the learner returning to his classroom feeling unperturbed and tranquil many of his peers have expressed their displeasure towards why, in

their eyes, he is rewarded for bad behaviour. The SEND Code Of Practice (2015) states that schools and institutions have a duty for providing emotional, mental and social development for children with disabilities, this includes extra support arrangements for pastoral care and prevention of bullying. As the learner is prone to impulsive temper flare-ups as well as responding to challenging situations the TA judges it necessary to educate the class of his protected characteristic to ensure equality.

Though the Children's Rights In The UK Act (2016) and UNICEF (1989) describe that children should be treated fairly and equally this does not mean that all children should be treated the same. School A's SEND Policy (2019) approves this stating children with SEND must be effectively supported and refers to the Anti-Bullying Policy (2019) stating that learners with protected characteristics must be shielded from the bullying of any form.

Hall (2017) explains that although anti-bullying policies are widespread and might be effective at reducing bullying if the content is based on evidence and theory in addition to being implemented with a high level of devotion within institutions. The Anti-Bullying Policy (2019) for School A expresses a zero-tolerance towards bullying, nonetheless, does not address measures on how pupils with SEND are protected and kept safe. The practitioner sought to target this through an explanation of what equality means within the classroom as well as how she will ensure safeguarding when the child is in crisis.

The Coronavirus Act (2020) temporarily amends the EHCP assessment and plans by stating the process will be extended due to short staffing, which could present undesirable effects on the child. The professional targets to remain vigilant in monitoring the child's wellbeing. Encouraging positive wellbeing can maximise emotional intelligence and provide communication aids. Young Minds (2017) highlights through wellbeing a crisis can be averted.

To conclude, safeguarding, equality and diversity must be central to teaching to encourage every child's learning and developmental needs. Schools and agencies must work collaboratively to create comprehensive strategies (Lord Laming's Report 2003) and aim to maintain safeguarding. Schools can seek to minimise gaps through connecting with parents and communities and is vital that diversity is celebrated in the classroom and any inequalities are addressed with the ever-growing diverse society. Stewert and McCann (1999) highlight that to ensure schools are promoting this it is imperative for educators in particular those in management roles are aware of changes in the legislation which impact on school policies.

Promoting discussions within the classroom so that issues can be diminished will aid to prevent prejudice towards protected characteristics. Many schools set out commitments towards equality to promote inclusive practice through social interactions resulting in long-term positive effects. (Equality, diversity & inclusion in work with children & young people, 2011). Reflective practice ensures the continuously improving quality of care is provided resulting in changes for legislation to improve future developments. It certifies that pedagogy is examined, identifying areas for improvement and development in planning.