NCSE PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2025/26

SCHOOL RESEARCH SUMMARY

School name: Hansfield ETSS

Practising teacher lead: Julie Rogers

Research theme: Leadership and Management, Implementing targeted Teacher Professional development for the inclusive classroom

Research aim: The aim of this study is to increase teachers' self-efficacy and knowledge in teaching within an inclusive classroom through the provision of targeted, in-school professional development opportunities for teachers of two specific class groups (one mainstream class and one Autism class).
Research Question 1: Have teachers received professional development in the area of inclusion?
Research Question 2: With the professional development they have/have not received, do they feel prepared for the inclusive classroom?

Methods

A pre and post intervention questionnaire was completed by participants. The questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

Research Question 1 captured numerical data related to teacher professional development experience.

Research Question 2 explored teachers' feelings and experiences, which were best understood through open ended questions.

There were 11 participants including Post-Primary Teachers who teach in an autism class and who are teaching in mainstream and deliver the Level 2 Learning Programme. All Participants completed a targeted professional development session from the NCSE and participated in a community of practice facilitated by Oide in L2LP.

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Research findings

Key Themes that emerged from the Pre intervention questionnaire :

1. Desire for more professional development: A clear majority said they would have liked more professional development in the last 18 months.

2. Barriers to professional development: The biggest barrier by far was lack of time. A few also mentioned being new to teaching, lack of suitable courses, competing PD commitments.

3 Willingness to attend training: Almost everyone said they would attend in-school professional development if it were provided.

4.Teachers feeling overwhelmed. On teachers' emotional responses, many initially described feeling nervous, overwhelmed, anxious, or unsure, especially when they were new to the class or unfamiliar with students' needs. After several months, many reported feeling more comfortable, positive, and better able to support students, often because they had built relationships, understood student needs more clearly, and established routines. However, a few still felt stressed or concerned, especially about time, planning demands, and meeting the needs of all students.

Overall, the findings suggest that staff are committed and willing, but they would benefit from more time, more targeted training, and greater involvement in support planning.

My top three findings

1.Time and workload remained the biggest issue. In both the pre and post-questionnaires, teachers said these classes required more preparation than other classes. Lack of time was the main barrier to doing more professional development.

2.Teachers were willing and engaged but still needed more support. Teachers were broadly positive about inclusive teaching and were willing to attend training. The post-intervention comments suggest the training was useful. Their written comments suggest that the training was seen as helpful and relevant. However, teachers still reported difficulties with meeting a wide range of student needs.

3. Confidence was strongest in Autism and Dyslexia, but weaker in other areas. Across the data, Teachers were most confident supporting students with Autism and Dyslexia, highlighting a need for targeted training in other areas.

Impact of my research

As a member of the Senior Leadership Team, this research highlighted the importance of professional development in inclusion for increasing staff knowledge and confidence. More importantly, it identified the practical barriers that prevent teachers from engaging in such PD.

As a result of these findings, the school has prioritised in-school PD and has created opportunities for teachers to attend during the school day. This was achieved by scheduling sessions and communities of practice during exam periods and by removing participating teachers from the supervision roster to allow them to attend it. This now takes place twice per year and will continue next year in order to build on the PD provided this year.

As a result of this research, the school now has a core team of staff who have each participated in targeted inclusion PD on two occasions this year. Prior to this research, participants had only engaged with this type of PD during their initial teacher education.