Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Work with Children & Young Individuals
Identify barriers to children and young people’s participation

Barriers to inclusion tend to fall under three categories: physical, organisational, and attitudes of others. These categories capture the main issue and you should be able to see from the examples how they relate.

Organisational barriers to inclusion and participation

Sometimes the way a school or its learning materials and resources are organised can become barriers to inclusion and participation.

Unidentified training needs

When the staff or management team at a school have not been adequately trained in diversity and inclusion, this can lead to a disparity in treatment of disadvantaged children. It can also lead to crucial areas of the school's resources and the way it is organised being inadequate for the needs of all children who attend.

Training should be updated regularly, as practices do change, and there is a great deal of work being done in the background on diversity and inclusion within schools.

Policies and practices

Sometimes policies and practices can form barriers to inclusion, and this can sometimes be related to inadequate diversity training for governors and managers.

For example, a policy at school that states children must be able to achieve a grade C average or they are not allowed to join extra-curricular clubs after school such as drama, art, or sports, may appear on the outside to support high achievement at school. However, it effectively discriminates against less academically able children and reduces their opportunities to increase their skills in these other areas.
Barriers to inclusion and participation.

- Resources
- Access arrangements
- Attitudes from pupils, staff, and parents
- Policies and practices
- Unidentified training needs
Attitude barriers to inclusion and participation

School staff and teachers' attitudes

Attitudes can make a big difference to pupils in terms of inclusion. For example, teachers who feel that it is ‘too hard’ to teach mixed ability classes may find that their attitude prevents them from teaching effectively. A couple of slight adjustments, such as an extra classroom assistant and a hearing loop may be all it takes to achieve the inclusion, but if the teacher or other staff feel those things are ‘too hard’, those adjustments may not be made.

Attitudes of school staff and governors may sometimes be inconsistent with the school and its policies, and this can lead to difficulty in propagating the positive messages of inclusion. For example, a teacher who votes BNP and whose attitude towards people of ethnicities different from his own is that they should not be there at all will be unlikely to successfully and consistently promote inclusion within his class.

Pupils' and parents' attitudes

Other pupils and parents can also have attitudes that make it harder for full participation to take place. For example, parents who have the belief that homosexuality is wrong may influence their children with this type of thinking. If those children then go to school and meet other young people who are on the verge of coming out as gay, difficulties and even bullying may ensue. Victims of bullying (no matter what the 'reason' behind it) often lose the opportunity to be included in activities due to fear of what may happen.

Physical barriers to inclusion and participation

Access arrangements

From 2001, all new schools built are expected to have made access arrangements to ensure that children who are physically or otherwise disabled can still access the same facilities as other children.

For example, they should have ramps or lifts built-in wherever there are steps or stairs; that automatic doors have wheelchair access, and that disabled toilets are available for use.

Schools that were built before 2001 are not compelled to make these arrangements, but they are still expected to make 'reasonable adjustments' where possible.
Resources and equipment

Children with disabilities should not be excluded from activities or lessons because of a lack of equipment or resources. For example, a child with autism who is good at basketball but gets overwhelmed in noisy social situations should not have to miss out on the end of term celebration for the basketball team just because a support worker could not be made available to accompany him.

Similarly, a child who is hearing- or sight-impaired shouldn't have to struggle with looking at overhead projections or with listening to the teacher at the front of the class. Ensuring that audio-visual equipment is in place to easily deal with the effects of these types of disability is part of ensuring inclusion and full participation.