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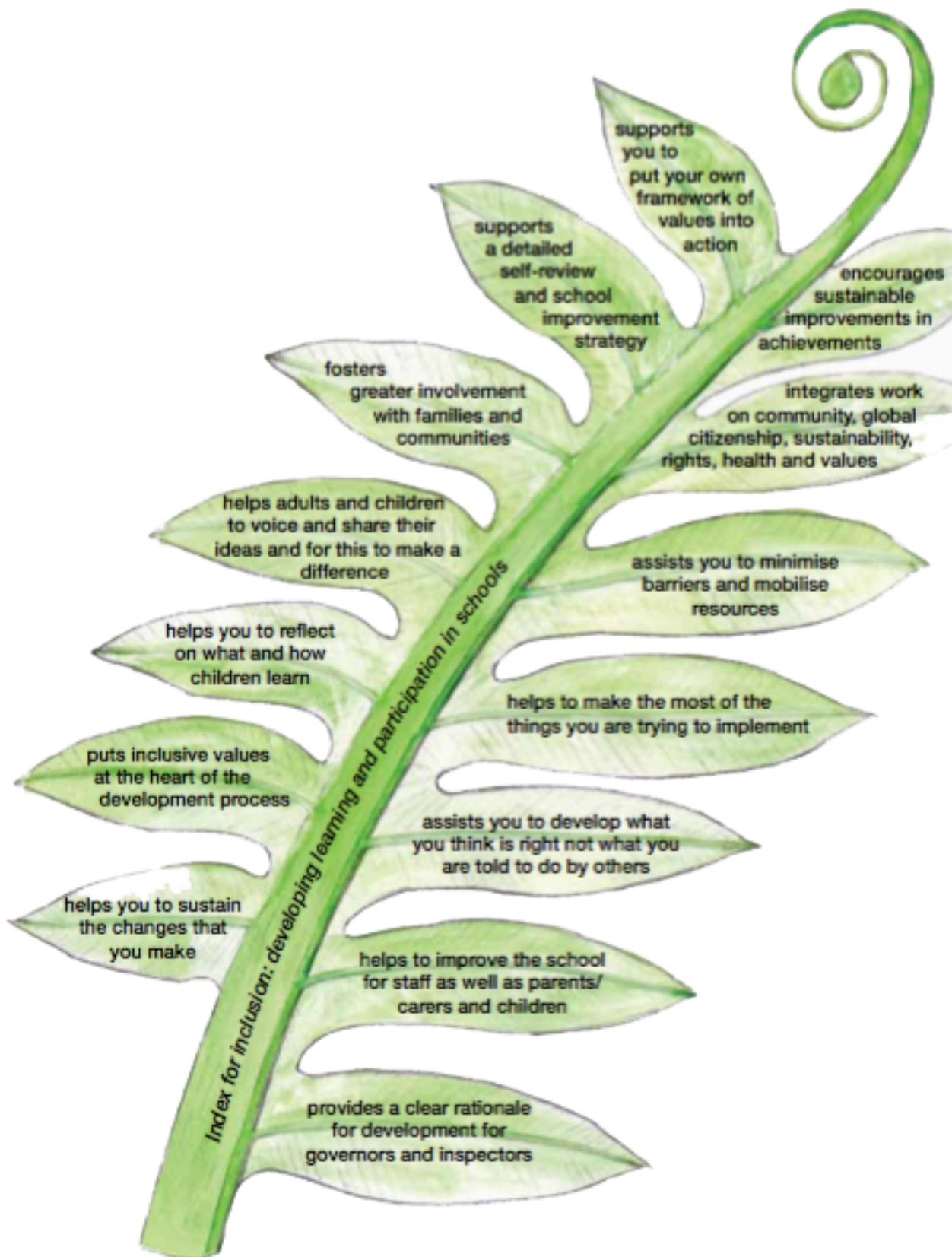
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# Developing access, learning, and participation in schools through the Index for inclusion

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## Elements of the Index

The Index has 6 main elements:

- KC** 1. *Key concepts*: to support thinking and discussion about tackling ESL through inclusive development.
- DN** 2. *Planning framework*: to structure the approach to review and development.
- IP** 3. *Collecting evidences*: to enable a detailed review of all aspects of a setting and help to identify and implement priorities for change.
- CE** 4. *An inclusive process*: to ensure that the processes of review, planning and implementing change are themselves inclusive.
- PF** 5. *Documenting and networking*: to consolidate, communicate and review the process by expanding the inclusive network.

### *Inclusion in education involves...*

- Putting inclusive values into action.
- Increasing the participation of children and young people in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, activities and communities of local settings.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in settings so that they are responsive to the diversity of children/young people in the locality.
- Valuing equally, all children, young people, parents/carers and practitioners.
- Viewing the differences between children as resources to support learning and participation rather than as problems to be overcome.
- Acknowledging the right of children to good quality education and school in their locality.
- Making improvements for practitioners as well as for children.
- Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all children not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as ‘having special educational needs’.
- Learning from attempts to overcome barriers for children whose learning and/or participation is a focus of concern, to make changes that benefit children more widely.
- Emphasising the development of community and values, as well as achievements.
- Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between settings and communities.
- Recognising that inclusion in early education and school are aspects of inclusion in society.

### *Questions:*

- To what extent is inclusion seen to be associated with children seen as ‘having special educational needs’?
- To what extent is inclusion identified with children whose behaviour is viewed as problematic?

## *Questions to address barriers and resources*

1. What are the barriers to school attendance, learning, and participation?

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2. Who experiences barriers to attendance, learning, and participation?

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3. How can barriers to attendance, learning, and participation be minimised?

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4. What resources are used to support attendance, learning, and participation?

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5. What additional resources can be brought into action to support attendance, learning, and participation?

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## *What is support?*

- What activities count as support for access, participation, and learning?

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- What are the implications of the definition of support for the work of practitioners?

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- What are the implications of this view for professional development?

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- What are the implications of this definition of support for how support is co-ordinated?

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## *Change*

Schools are always changing, in all sorts of ways for all sorts of reasons. Only some of these changes happen as a result of a school development plan.

Changes may not be consistent with each other or with the development of inclusion.

Do all the changes you make to the school pull in the same direction?

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Do all changes support inclusion?

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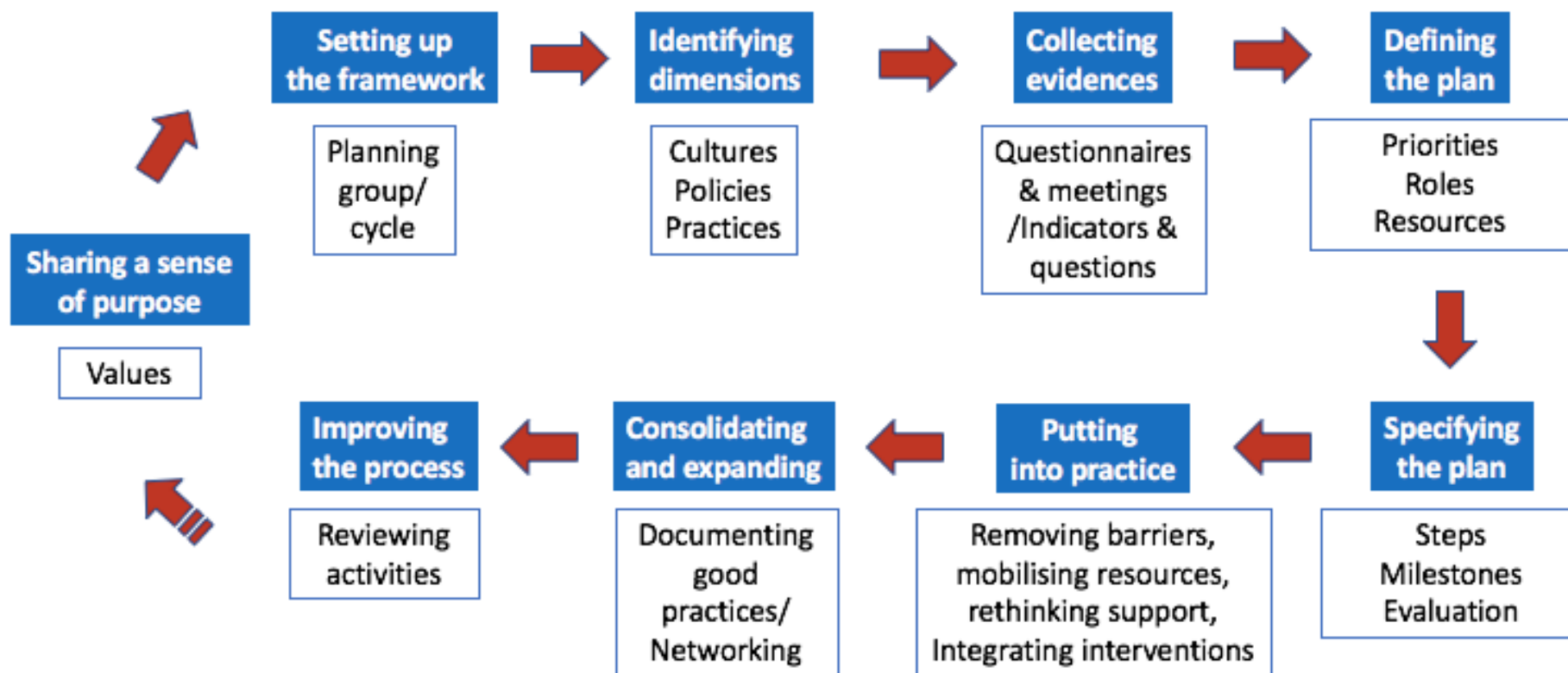
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## *Does our school develop shared inclusive values?*

- a) Do staff, governors, parents/carers and children give time to talking about values, their implications for action, the nature of their own values and how they differ between people?
- b) Are values understood as revealed through actions rather than words?
- c) Is everyone in the school committed to the equality of value of all people and to the participation of all?
- d) Do adults and children explore the values behind their ways of working and acting in the school?
- e) Do adults and children avoid assuming that everyone in a community shares the same values?
- f) Is it understood that it involves practice and trust to honestly express the values that inform one's own actions?
- g) Is it understood that agreement about values is usually partial, since differences of view, for example about participation and equality, may be revealed as conversations deepen?
- h) Do staff, children, parents/carers and governors broadly agree upon a framework of values that can be drawn on in shaping actions within the school?
- i) Is an agreed framework of values used to resist pressures from outside the school to act according to different values?
- j) Do staff review their practices in the light of their agreed values and propose changes where practices are informed by values that they reject?
- k) Is it understood that applying shared values may involve steering between competing interests, for example, when one child's participation interferes with that of another?
- l) Do adults and children draw attention to actions inside and outside the school that are inconsistent with an agreed framework of values?
- m) Are changes in the school made in accordance with an agreed framework of values?
- n) Do discussions go beyond headings for values to the complexity of their meanings?
- o) Do staff and children link any summary statement of school values to more detailed understandings?
- p) Are the limitations of ideas of national, global or Western values explored?
- q) Does the school publicise its values and encourage others to engage with staff and children on the basis of the values agreed within the school?
- r) Does an agreed framework of values apply equally to adults and children?
- s) Is it recognised that we all have to work hard to act in accordance with our values?
- t) Is it understood that a strong framework of values may be held by people with no religion as well as a variety of religions?
- u) Is it understood that having a religion or a particular political position does not ensure inclusive values?
- v) Do people connect the ways they act outside school with the way they act inside it?
- w) Is it understood that the implications of some values, such as caring equally for all and encouraging hope in the future, are aspects of the professional duties of staff?
- y) \_\_\_\_\_
- z) \_\_\_\_\_

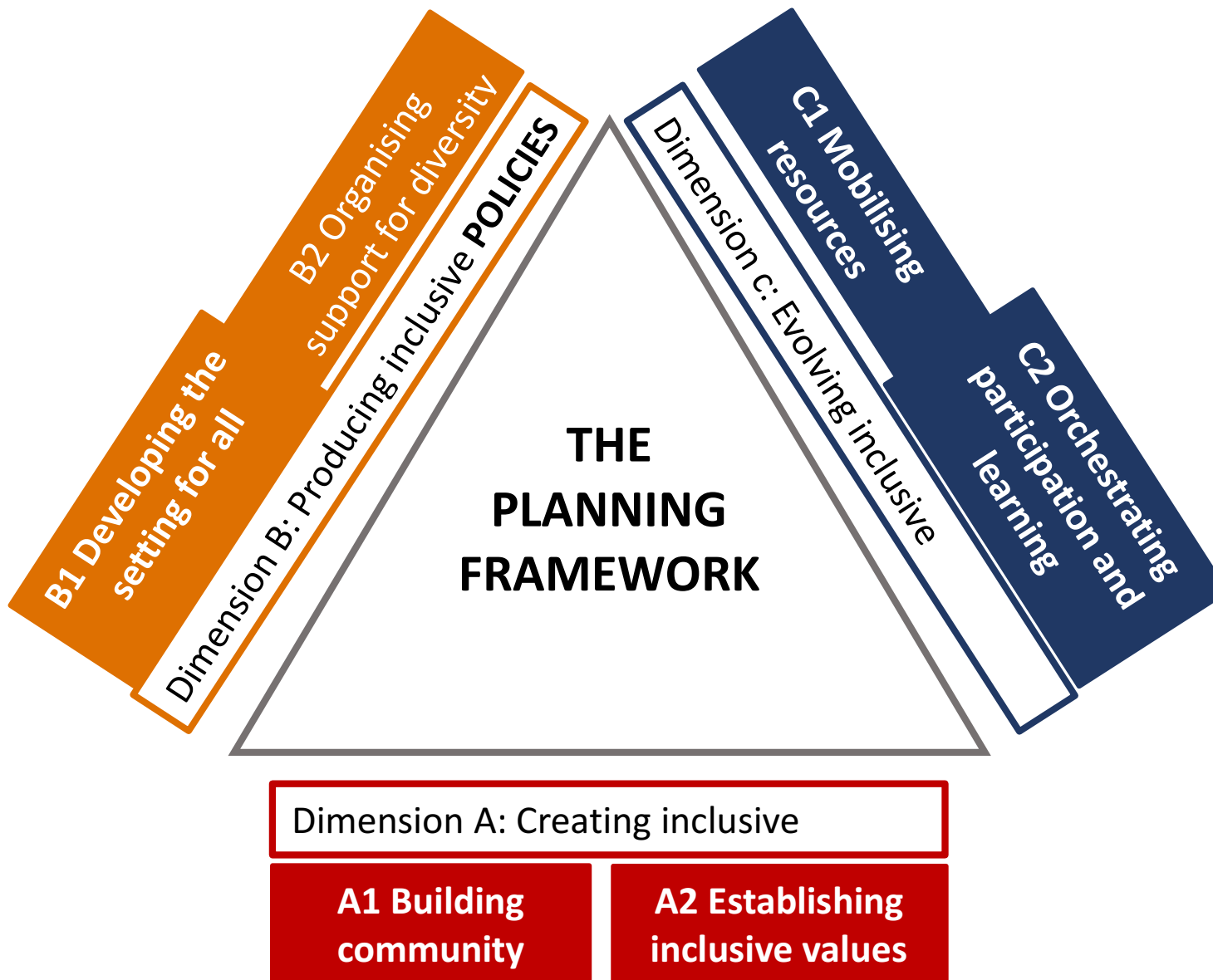


## The Planning Cycle



*Inclusive development through the reflection and action of collaborating adults and children*

## Index dimensions and sections



## **DIMENSION A Creating inclusive *cultures***

### **A.1 | Building community**

#### **INDICATOR A.1.1 | *Everyone is made to feel welcome***

- a) Is the first contact that people have with the setting friendly and welcoming?
- b) Is the environment of the setting uplifting?
- c) Are children and their parents/carers always greeted and said goodbye to?
- d) Is the setting welcoming to all children, including children with impairments, Travellers and asylum seekers?
- e) Is the setting welcoming to all parents/carers and other members of its local communities?
- f) Is information about activities and policies provided for all parents/carers?
- g) Is information accessible to all, irrespective of home language or impairment (for example, available as necessary in translation, Braille, audiotape, large print)?
- h) Are Sign Language and other first language interpreters available when necessary?
- i) Does information about the setting state that all children from the surrounding communities are welcome?
- j) Are local cultures and communities celebrated in signs and displays?
- k) Are there positive rituals for welcoming new children and new practitioners and marking their leaving?
- l) Do children/young people feel ownership of the space/s or room/s?
- m) Do children, parents/carers, practitioners, management committee/governors and community members all feel ownership of the setting?

*Further questions*

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## **DIMENSION B Producing inclusive *policies***

### **B.1 | Developing the setting for all**

#### **INDICATOR B.1.2 | *All new practitioners are helped to settle***

- a) Is there an agreed policy for introducing new practitioners to, and supporting them in, the setting?
- b) Are the difficulties recognised that new practitioners may have in settling into a new job in what may be a new locality?
- c) Do longer serving practitioners avoid making new practitioners feel outsiders, for example by the use of 'we' or 'us', which excludes them?
- d) Does every new practitioner have a mentor who is genuinely interested in helping him or her to settle in?
- e) Are there opportunities for all practitioners, including new practitioners, to share their knowledge and expertise?
- f) Are new practitioners provided with the basic information they need about the setting?
- g) Are new practitioners asked about what additional information they need, and is it provided?
- h) Are observations about the settling of new practitioners, and students on placement, sought and valued for the fresh insights that they may contain?
- i) Are the observations of practitioners who are leaving sought and valued for the insights that they may contain?

*Further questions*

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## **DIMENSION C Evolving inclusive *practices***

### **C.1 | Orchestrating learning**

#### **INDICATOR C.1.3 | *Activities encourage the participation of all children***

- a) Do activities involve children emotionally and convey excitement and fun in learning?
- b) Is self-expression encouraged through art, music and dance as well as through language?
- c) Are puppets, dolls and photographs used to explore particular situations and emotions?
- d) Is use made of photo-diaries to record and share activities in and away from the setting?
- e) Do practitioners extend the range of stories, songs, games and rhymes from the familiar, drawing on other cultures and languages?
- f) Do activities build on language and literacy experiences which children have outside the setting?
- g) Do activities build on differences in children's previous knowledge and experience?
- h) Do practitioners recognise that the process of making something or attempting an activity can be more important than the end product?
- i) Do practitioners always respond positively to children's artistic and creative attempts?
- j) Do practitioners maintain contact with children by getting down physically to their level?
- k) Do practitioners ensure that babies and young children are aware that an activity is about to start, for example by registering presence before picking them up, caring for, or feeding them?
- l) Do practitioners recognise the physical or mental effort required by some children with impairments or chronic illness to complete activities, for example if lip-reading or low vision aids are used?
- m) Do practitioners provide alternative ways of giving access to experiences or understanding for children who cannot engage in particular activities, for example, because of a visual impairment?
- n) Are children with severe communication difficulties encouraged to feel that their responses to activities are valued?
- o) Do practitioners provide children who communicate non-verbally with a range of opportunities to make choices using pictures, photographs and objects?

*Further questions*

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## QUESTIONNAIRE 1: INDICATORS

Please tick the boxes for the the groups below which describe your involvement with the preschool:

- ☐ teacher
 ☐ teaching assistant
 ☐ other member of staff
 ☐ parent/carers  
☐ child or young person
 ☐ governor
 ☐ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►

Agree  
 Agree and disagree  
 Disagree  
 Need more information

Dimension A – Creating inclusive cultures						
A1: Building community	1	Everyone is welcomed.				
	2	Staff co-operate.				
	3	Children help each other.				
	4	Staff and children respect one another.				
	5	Staff and parents/carers collaborate.				
	6	Staff and governors work well together.				
	7	The school is a model of democratic citizenship.				
	8	The school encourages an understanding of the interconnections between people around the world.				
	9	Adults and children are responsive to a variety of ways of being a gender.				
	10	The school and local communities develop each other.				
	11	Staff link what happens in school to children's lives at home.				
A2: Establishing inclusive values	1	The school develops shared inclusive values.				
	2	The school encourages respect for all human rights.				
	3	The school encourages respect for the integrity of planet earth.				
	4	Inclusion is viewed as increasing participation for all.				
	5	Expectations are high for all children.				
	6	Children are valued equally.				
	7	The school counters all forms of discrimination.				
	8	The school promotes non-violent interactions and resolutions to disputes.				
	9	The school encourages children and adults to feel good about themselves.				
	10	The school contributes to the health of children and adults.				
Dimension B – Producing inclusive policies						
B1: Developing the school for all	1	The school has a participatory development process.				
	2	The school has an inclusive approach to leadership.				
	3	Appointments and promotions are fair.				
	4	Staff expertise is known and used.				
	5	All new staff are helped to settle into the school.				
	6	The school seeks to admit all children from its locality.				
	7	All new children are helped to settle into the school.				
	8	Teaching and learning groups are arranged fairly to support all children's learning.				
	9	Children are well prepared for moving on to other settings.				
	10	The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people.				
	11	The buildings and grounds are developed to support participation of all.				
	12	The school reduces its carbon footprint and use of water.				
	13	The school contributes to the reduction of waste.				

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►

Agree  
Agree and  
disagree  
Disagree  
Need more  
information

B2: Organising support for diversity	1	All forms of support are co-ordinated.				
	2	Professional development activities help staff to respond to diversity.				
	3	English as an additional language support is a resource for the whole school.				
	4	The school supports continuity in the education of children in public care.				
	5	The school ensures that policies about 'special educational needs' support inclusion.				
	6	The behaviour policy is linked to learning and curriculum development.				
	7	Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased.				
	8	Barriers to attendance are reduced.				
	9	Bullying is minimised.				
<b>Dimension C – Evolving inclusive practices</b>						
C1: Constructing curricula for all	1	Children explore cycles of food production and consumption.				
	2	Children investigate the importance of water.				
	3	Children study clothing and decoration of the body.				
	4	Children find out about housing and the built environment.				
	5	Children consider how and why people move around their locality and the world.				
	6	Children learn about health and relationships.				
	7	Children investigate the earth, the solar system and the universe.				
	8	Children study life on earth.				
	9	Children investigate sources of energy.				
	10	Children learn about communication and communication technology.				
	11	Children engage with, and create, literature arts and music.				
	12	Children learn about work and link it to the development of their interests.				
	13	Children learn about ethics, power and government.				
C2: Orchestrating learning	1	Learning activities are planned with all children in mind.				
	2	Learning activities encourage the participation of all children.				
	3	Children are encouraged to be confident critical thinkers.				
	4	Children are actively involved in their own learning.				
	5	Children learn from each other.				
	6	Lessons develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between people.				
	7	Assessments encourage the achievements of all children.				
	8	Discipline is based on mutual respect.				
	9	Staff plan, teach and review together.				
	10	Staff develop shared resources to support learning.				
	11	Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all children.				
	12	Homework is set so that it contributes to every child's learning.				
	13	Activities outside formal lessons are made available for all children.				
	14	Resources in the locality of the school are known and used.				

Three things I like best about this school:

Three things I would most like to change:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_



## QUESTIONNAIRE 2: MY CHILD'S SCHOOL

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►

Agree

Agree and  
disagree

Disagree

1	My child usually looks forward to coming to school.			
2	My child has good friends at the school.			
3	I feel part of the school community.			
4	The school keeps me well informed about what is going on.			
5	I have been asked to make a contribution to lessons.			
6	I think this is the best school in the area.			
7	The school and the playground are attractive.			
8	The toilets are clean and safe.			
9	The children get on well together.			
10	The teachers get on well together.			
11	Adults and children get on well together.			
12	The teachers and parents get on well together.			
13	All families are equally important to the teachers at the school.			
14	I have friends among the other parents.			
15	I like the teachers.			
16	The teachers take an interest in what I tell them about my child.			
17	It's good to have children from different backgrounds at the school.			
18	Just by being at the school my child learns how to get on with people.			
19	My child learns what democracy means just by being at this school.			
20	My child learns the importance of caring for the environment.			
21	My child eats healthily at the school.			
22	I have been involved in making the school a better place.			
23	Any child who lives near to this school is welcome to come here.			
24	When my child started at this school there was an effort to make me feel involved.			
25	Every child is treated with respect.			
26	Disabled children are accepted and respected at the school.			
27	Boys and girls get on well together.			
28	Being gay or lesbian or transgender is seen as an ordinary part of life.			
29	You are respected irrespective of the colour of your skin.			
30	You are an equal part of the school whatever your religion or if you have no religion.			
31	People do not look down on children because of what they wear.			
32	You are respected for your effort not for the scores you get on tests.			
33	Children avoid calling each other hurtful names.			



Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►

Agree Agree and disagree Disagree

34	Bullying is not a problem.			
35	If anyone bullied my child I know that I would get help from the school.			
36	If children have been away for a day a teacher wants to know where they have been.			
37	Teachers do not have favourites among the children.			
38	I think the teachers are fair when they praise a student.			
39	I think the teachers are fair when they punish a student.			
40	When children are interrupting lessons other children help to calm them down.			
41	My child learns how to settle disagreements by listening, talking and compromise.			
42	The school sends children home if they have behaved badly.			
43	Lessons make good use of what my child has learnt outside school.			
44	The school has a good system for supporting children when they have a problem.			
45	My child learns a lot at this school.			
46	Children are often trusted to learn on their own.			
47	The school is good about saving energy.			
48	My child learns to care for the environment in the school and the area around it.			
49	The children help each other when they are stuck with their work.			
50	My child knows how to get help with his or her work when it is needed.			
51	The school is a place where people really listen to each other's ideas.			
52	My child always understands what to do next in lesson.			
53	My child usually understands what to do when he or she is given homework.			
54	Homework helps my child to learn.			
55	At lunchtimes my child sometimes joins in clubs or practises a sport.			
56	After school my child sometimes joins in clubs or practice a sport.			

These are the three things I like best about this school:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

These are the three things I would most like to change about this school:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTIONNAIRE 3: MY SCHOOL

Please note that in this questionnaire when we use the word child or children we mean to include older children and young people too.

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►		Agree	Agree and disagree	Disagree
1	I look forward to coming to school.			
2	I feel part of a big community.			
3	The school and the playground look attractive.			
4	The toilets are clean and safe.			
5	The children get on well together.			
6	The adults get on well together.			
7	Adults and children get on well together.			
8	I have some good friends.			
9	I like my teachers.			
10	The school helps me to feel good about myself.			
11	The school helps me to feel good about the future.			
12	We are encouraged to stand up for what we believe is right.			
13	It's good to have children from different backgrounds.			
14	Just by being at the school you learn how to get on with people.			
15	I have learnt what democracy means by being at the school.			
16	I have learnt how my actions affect others in the school.			
17	I have learnt how my actions affect others around the world.			
18	I have learnt how my values affect the way I act.			
19	I eat healthily at school.			
20	My family feel involved in what goes on at the school.			
21	When teachers say they are going to do something they do it.			
22	People admit when they have made a mistake.			
23	There is a comfortable place inside the school I can go to at lunchtimes.			
24	I have been involved in making the school a better place.			
25	Any child who lives near to this school is welcome to come here.			
26	When I first came to the school I was helped to settle in.			
27	You are respected regardless of the colour of your skin.			
28	You feel equal part of the school whatever your religion or if you have no religion.			
29	Children do not look down on others because of what they wear.			
30	Boys and girls get on well together.			
31	Being gay or lesbian is seen as an ordinary part of life.			
32	Disabled children are respected and accepted.			
33	Children avoid calling each other hurtful names.			
34	If anyone bullied me or anyone else, I would tell a teacher.			
35	Teachers do not have favourites among the children.			

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►

Agree Agree and disagree Disagree

36	If I have been away for a day a teacher wants to know where I have been.			
37	I think the teachers are fair when they praise a child.			
38	I think the teachers are fair when they punish a child.			
39	Teachers know how to stop children interrupting lessons.			
40	When children are interrupting lessons other children calm them down.			
41	We learn how to settle disagreements by listening, talking and compromise.			
42	In lessons children often help each other in pairs and small groups.			
43	In lessons children share what they know with other children.			
44	If I have a problem in a lesson, a teacher or teaching assistant will help me.			
45	I enjoy most of my lessons.			
46	I learn about what is going on in the world.			
47	I have learnt about the importance of human rights.			
48	I learn how suffering in the world can be reduced.			
49	I learn a lot at this school.			
50	At times children are trusted to learn on their own.			
51	We learn how to save energy at the school.			
52	We learn to care for the environment in the school and the area around it.			
53	We learn to respect planet earth.			
54	When teaching assistants are in the classroom they help anyone who needs it.			
55	Teachers are interested in listening to my ideas.			
56	Children are interested in listening to each other's ideas.			
57	In lessons I always know what to get on with next.			
58	I know myself when I have done good work.			
59	Teachers don't mind if I make mistakes in my work as long as I try my best.			
60	My work is displayed on the walls in the school.			
61	When I am given homework I usually understand what I have to do.			
62	I find that homework helps me to learn.			
63	At lunchtimes or after school I sometimes join in clubs or do sports practice.			

These are the three things I like best about my school:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

These are the three things I would most like to change about this school:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions about school access

DIMENSION B Producing inclusive *policies* B.1 | Developing the school for all  
INDICATOR B.1.6 | The school seeks to admit all children from its locality

- a) Is the wish to include all children from the locality publicised as school policy?
- b) Is the comprehensive and community nature of the school reflected in its name?
- c) Are all children from the locality encouraged to attend the school irrespective of attainment, impairment or background?
- d) Are traveller children who visit the area actively welcomed to the school?
- e) Does the school seek to overcome barriers to participation for the variety of ethnic groups in the locality?
- f) Are children of asylum seekers and refugees encouraged to attend the school?
- g) Are children of families temporarily resident in the area encouraged to join the school?
- h) Are families from the locality with children currently in special schools encouraged to send these children to the school?
- i) Do staff advocate for the rights of children with impairments to attend their local school?
- j) When a child who has had difficulties at another school joins the school do staff avoid suggesting that membership of the school is only provisional?
- k) Does the school discharge its legal duty to ensure that children in public care are given first priority to attend the school?
- l) Does the school make known its interest in welcoming 'looked-after children' to the school?

- m) Does the school comply with the law requiring them not to hold interviews or use information from conversations with parents, siblings or comments from anyone who knows a prospective entrant?
- n) Does the school avoid asking for donations from families before a child can join the school?
- o) Where the faith status of a school creates a balance of ethnicities unrepresentative of the surrounding communities does the school make strong relationships and work with other schools in the area?
- p) Where a school has an attachment to a particular faith does proximity to the school take precedence for admission over the religious attachment of a child's family?
- q) Do schools with an allegiance to a particular faith avoid restrictions on the appointment of staff of a particular faith group?
- r) Does a school with a faith attachment minimise religious division, for example, by not favouring a particular branch of Christianity or Islam?
- s) Is there an increase in the proportion of children from the locality included within the school?
- t) Is there an increase in the diversity of children from the locality included in the school?
- u) \_\_\_\_\_
- v) \_\_\_\_\_

## *Discussing evidences*

Because people may have reasons for minimising or exaggerating problems, the group need to challenge each other gently to provide evidence for their views: what they have read, seen or heard to support their opinions.

The group should agree on an indicator where they think the setting is performing well and another where they think there is considerable room for development.

In each case they should provide the evidence to support their view, for example through the following questions:

- What is the extent of agreement on this indicator?
- What evidence is there to support the views about this indicator?
- What evidence is there that other indicators, in the same or different dimensions, reinforce this view?
- What additional information might be useful?

## *Identifying school priorities*

How much important are the issues you identified in terms of

	<i>Urgency</i>	<i>Feasibility</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Total</i>
Issue 1 .....				
Issue 2 .....				
Issue 3 .....				
Issue 4 .....				
Issue 5 .....				
.....				

*Urgency*                      1 = Not Important 2 = Somewhat Important 3 = Very Important 4 = Essential

*Feasibility*                      1 = No Chance 2 = Very Little Chance 3 = Some Chance 4 = Very Good Chance

*Impact* they would have    1 = Very low 2 = Low 3 = Strong 4 = Very strong



## An example of action sheet

### Action sheet for indicator A.1.3: 'Practitioners work well together'

What do we want to achieve?	What steps can we take?	Who will do this?	What will it cost?	When will we review this?	What are we looking for?	What happened?
To work better together (plan for September to December)	1. Have a monthly whole staff meeting.	Mary to write up a list of dates. All to try to attend.	1 hour extra hall hire monthly	December	Most staff attending each meeting.	Brilliant attendance, but costs increased with decision to pay for extra hours. This had to go to management committee.
	2. Plan activities in pairs.	All staff to identify one activity per week and plan with a partner.	Nothing	October	Staff running activities jointly.	This didn't get going properly, as no time allocated in original plan. Also, hard to make sure that it was happening, so see 6.
	3. Run activities in pairs.	All staff to identify one activity per week and run it with a partner.	Nothing	October		
	4. Staff stay behind at end of Friday session for coffee.	Jane to buy coffee and nice biscuits. Informal note kept of whether people stay.	Coffee etc.	October then November	Majority of staff to stay.	Staff who do not work Friday missed out, so coffee sessions now on Weds as well.
	5. Staff social event at Xmas.	Jane to ask around and then plan event.	The sky's the limit!!	At the staff meetings	A brilliant night out for the majority if not all.	It was very hard to find something that all could get to, but we did it.
<b>Adjustment to action sheet</b>						
	6. Staff to plan one activity a week in pairs.	All staff to let Mary know what they are doing for this and when. Mary to keep a record.	1 hour O/T per person per fortnight	November	Record of each weekly planning session.	After a few hiccups this got going. Chance to do proper planning helped everyone.
	7. Staff to run one activity a week in pairs.	All staff to log what they have done in the day book.	1 hour O/T per person per fortnight	November	Log showing sessions and what happened.	Paired activities were not very good at first but got better. Some pairs found it hard.



## INCLUSIVE ACTION SHEET

1. Our Value(s)

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2. Priority (description)

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3. Who will work with us to achieve it (inside/outside the school)?

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4. Who is responsible?

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For what?

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5. What kind of resources we need? (space, time, materials, equipment, language, money...)

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6. By what date we think the objective will be achieved?

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7. What are the phases... and the milestones of the project?

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8. What will help us understand that the priority has been achieved?

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9. How will we communicate about the project and make visible the advancements of the process?

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10. What will we do to celebrate *milestones*? And the final achievement of the priority?

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## Caring for communication

A local authority obtained funding for school teachers' training on the *Index*. Towards the end of the first session in one setting, the practitioners went through the *Index* questionnaire and then selected an indicator from each dimension where they felt that the setting should do further work. In relation to Dimension C, several of them had to highlight a concern about the extent to which they were encouraging the children to talk with each other and adults picked out indicator C.1.2 'Activities encourage all children to communicate'. When they looked in detail at the questions associated with the indicator, they felt that there was much to build on in their practice but there were areas in which they could do more. They talked about when it was that children sat and chatted with them and each other during the daily routine (C.1.2g) and also had conversations about what open ended questions were (C.1.2j) and what it meant to encourage the development of language for thinking and learning (C.1.2h).

While all of them were concerned to give the children space to play and learn and relate to others without too much adult interference, there was productive discussion about how adults could foster, and remove barriers to, learning and relationships as well as engage in activities with children which extended their ideas and helped them to consider their own and other people's feelings.

Before the next session they did some observations of a day in the setting. They found, that although there was a lot of talk in the playgroup most of the adult talk involved giving directions. They found that some of the children talked to each other while others said very little. At the next session of the course they drew up an action sheet on ways to extend and deepen opportunities for discussion in the setting.

- They decided that they needed some further discussion in encouraging language use and booked a session with the local authority advisers on 'promoting the language and communication environment'.
- They decided to rearrange snack time as they felt that this could provide a good opportunity for relaxed talk. They decided to sit children in smaller groups together with their key worker.
- The group agreed to reflect on the quality of the conversations they had with children as they joined in activities and to share with each other at their weekly meeting how to let children lead communication with adults more frequently.
- They agreed to share occasions when they had stimulated conversations with other children, for children who were shy or reluctant to speak with others.
- They decided use the time they spent with parents to raise the issue of what children liked to talk about at home to try to bridge the gap between home and setting.

At the following session of the course they reported on how things were going.

They found that for some of them it was difficult to get out of the habit of asking questions to which they already knew the answer. They discussed how they could connect their working practices with how they were at home with their own children or other children they knew well and how 'professional' conversation could impede the talk of children. They spoke about how they were identifying more strongly with the way parents viewed their own children and were finding ways to link activities in the setting to what happened at home through an exploration of indicator A.1.6, 'Practitioners link what happens in the setting to children's lives at home', which they had selected as their indicator from Dimension A. They mentioned examples of when they asked questions of children to which they genuinely wanted an answer and how their engagement in activities with children, as participants, generated more informal talk.

At subsequent sessions, as they began to work in implementing concerns in the other dimensions, they reported that children were more often coming to staff to tell them about their ideas during play and to show them the way they were making a model or building something. Staff were more frequently invited to become part of role play and children spoke more about what had happened at home. As one practitioner put it: 'We feel that we know the children better.' After the extra session on language, a practitioner said: 'We found it useful but we were already doing most of the things suggested in the course, following our work with the *Index* and the way we are taking more opportunities to share our ideas.'