

The Index for Inclusion – an approach to school improvement

The Index for Inclusion is a whole school improvement tool which promotes learning and participation for all. It encourages schools to use a participatory approach to self evaluation, whilst exploring the interplay between policy, practice and culture. In 2011 thirty five Norfolk schools piloted the use of the index. The positive impact expressed by the schools led to the County Council's decision to invest in the index and provide a copy of the index to all schools in Norfolk.

Instead of simply sending out the Index for Inclusion publication our own research has demonstrated that providing an opportunity to talk about what is in the book and some guidance on how to start using it, is far more effective. As part of our role as convener of partnerships, Norfolk County Council is delighted to broker the introduction of 'index forums' to which all Norfolk schools are invited. The forums are being hosted by Norfolk schools as an opportunity to develop 'school to school' improvement using the shared language of the index for inclusion. As a result of this, eighteen schools have volunteered to host an index forum or drop in, each half term for two years, so school colleagues can meet together to focus on using the shared language of the index as part of their approach to school improvement.

Why the index for inclusion? It has been used in over forty countries and has a substantial research base. Professor Tony Booth (author of the 3rd edition,) worked with Norfolk schools to pilot the materials in 2011. A described strength of the index is that it enables school communities to explore the interplay between policy, practice and culture in their setting. The third edition also introduces a values framework and promotes a practical approach to triangulating the information of parents/carers, children, governors and all school staff. The indicators have been mapped against the Ofsted framework thereby promoting thinking and development which compliments the Ofsted requirements.

Distributing the index for inclusion through school based forums, is an acknowledgement that schools improve schools. As Champions of children and families, we share your motivation to offer the very best opportunities for all children and families in Norfolk. The schools who have used the index, have told us, that this is an enabling tool which supports schools to develop according to their own priorities.

Your local index forum will contact you with an invitation for a member of the school community, to attend an index forum. We look forward to hearing where this leads. Further information is available at www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/indexforinclusion

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