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# The Difference INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP COURSE

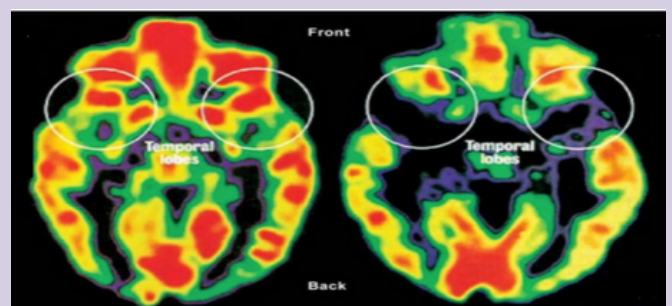
## Practice and Systems to support staff interactions with students.

Rebekah Chew, Director of Inclusion at Thomas Aveling School, talks through her experience on the **Inclusive Leadership Course** and the positive impact for staff and students in her school.

When I knocked on my Deputy Headteacher's door and told him I wanted to lead inclusion he thought I was joking. I wasn't. As a senior leader, I was renowned across my trust for my love of teaching and learning – I lived and breathed it. When our School Improvement Plan indicated that inclusion was a growing focus, I knew this was the opportunity I needed to strategically rethink and reshape our whole school practice. With the increasing visibility of issues such as peer on peer abuse (highlighted by the Everyone's Invited movement), student trauma, and heightened mental health issues, along with the ever present 'catch-up' narrative, it is more important than ever to get inclusion right. I knew I was going to need support and for me, this came in the shape of The Difference Inclusive Leadership Course.

One of the most compelling moments on the course for me was the sharing of a video that demonstrated the impact on a young child that doesn't receive facial expression or attention from a parent for a few minutes. The child in the video almost instantly becomes distressed and eventually cries. This was then linked to an exploration of trauma on the developing brain of a child experiencing it.

My own brain made the connection between this and the most vulnerable children in my care. I began to question and understand the challenges in school for children whose brains aren't ready or fully nurtured.



To find out more about  
the **Inclusive  
Leadership Course**  
use the QR code  
or go to  
[bit.ly/TheDiff-ILC](https://bit.ly/TheDiff-ILC)



# Practice and Systems to support staff interactions with students.

I went back to school and back to my team. I shared the clip. We began to question how we might, practically and realistically, target an improved awareness of the needs of our vulnerable learners. We were adamant that any new changes had to be easy to understand, and require minimal workload. We also wanted to actively avoid a "fizz bang pop" or "jazz hands" roll out that is so often mistaken for strong professional development. We wanted to weave simple, effective changes into the fabric of our inclusion.

In the end, our solution was simple. We adapted the use of our MIS system as well as our electronic monitoring and reporting system, using a pictorial code to notify staff members where children had previously been known to children's services or experienced trauma. For each child we co-produced student-passports with notes to inform day to day teaching: including strengths, effective strategies for support and potential triggers. We were sure to follow GDPR and Safeguarding guidance. A simple system, that didn't add additional workload to teachers [other than reading and being aware], also created strong buy-in and increased compassion for the children who had faced challenging life circumstances.

Pupil Voice Surveys soon after indicated that vulnerable children felt more 'seen' in school.

As a profession, we can only ever know about a small fraction of child protection issues that any given cohort of pupils have or will experience.

It was therefore very important that the training which staff completed could benefit every pupil, whether we knew about their past experiences of trauma or not.

As my own learning progressed, I began to feel less isolated – both in my school and across the wider network of the participants on the course. I began to understand ways to explain my work more compellingly. This created wider buy in, and placed inclusion at the forefront of our work. Growing staff expertise also supported us to move away from 'siloesd safeguarding'. Instead appropriate information is confidently shared more effectively and in a timely way. If the Form Tutor needs to know about student experiences, they are now told.

Being in a room with 30 or so other senior leaders, all brimming with ideas and seeking feedback, was a powerful experience. There are lots of challenges we face in our schools – new, frightening issues that we are often facing or the first time. Being part of the Difference community has helped me to really feel for the first time that these are shared issues.

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