

Institution: Bath Spa University		
Unit of Assessment: 23 - Education		
Title of case study: Creating whole school models to transform the practice of lead practitioners working with disadvantaged learners		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Helen Curran	Senior Lecturer in SEN	9/9/2013 - present
Richard Parker	Senior Lecturer in Education Studies	1/9/2010 - 31/1/2020
Professor Rebecca McGuire-Snieckus	Professor of Teaching, Learning and Psychology	15/2/2010 - present
Dr Tilly Mortimore	Senior Lecturer in Education Studies	2/11/2013 - 30/9/2018
Dr Richard Riddell	Senior Lecturer in Education Studies	21/9/2009 - 31/8/2020
Dr Janet Rose	Reader in Early Years	27/9/2010 - 15/7/2016
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>To enhance equity for disadvantaged learners in schools, Bath Spa University researchers in collaboration with partners have demonstrated that it is essential to produce whole school models to support lead practitioners in the transformation of practice. These models have impacted on education policy through a. the innovative development of Emotion Coaching (EC) and Attachment Aware Schools (AAS) and b. the evolution of the role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). These initiatives have helped to shape the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children as well as informing the direction of the current national special educational needs and disability (SEND) review. The research team have also promoted revised school practices, including creating the first SENCO workload model, and amending the roles and improving wellbeing of lead practitioners, both of which have had significant impact on the attainment and behaviour of disadvantaged children.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>A programme of research conducted over the last decade by the research team in the Centre for Research in Education, Inclusion and Communities has addressed the significant gap in knowledge around the nature of the role of lead practitioners in schools who support the most disadvantaged learners, including the practitioners' status and how they implement change. The argument made by this research is that the lead practitioner is often isolated, low status and unable to effect change. A strength of the research is that it has been undertaken in collaboration with, and in response to, partners with whom the team has existing and long-term relationships. The research in this case study focuses on Emotion Coaching (EC) practitioners and SENCOs.</p>		
The Emotion Coaching practitioner		
<p>Co-funded by two Wiltshire Council Local Area Boards and Bath Spa University's Sharing Knowledge, Shaping Practice Partnership Fund, this research examined the introduction of EC to support disadvantaged learners, in an area of rural deprivation (R4). Mixed methods research established that individual practitioners felt isolated and unable to effect change. Parallel research on supporting EC practitioners working with pupils' social, emotional mental health difficulties funded by Somerset County Council Public Health demonstrated that, where interventions and lead practitioner activities were not effectively supported by school leaders,</p>		

impacts on pupil outcomes, on staff self-confidence and the long-term sustainability of the role were significantly reduced (R6).

The SENCO

Further research focussed on the SENCO: the lead practitioner with statutory responsibilities for special educational needs provision in schools (R2). Funded by the National Education Union, BSU and The National Association of Special Educational Needs (nasen), the research team conducted the first national survey of SENCOs post SEND reform (R2): over 1900 responses were received - approximately 10% of SENCOs nationally in 2018. The survey illustrated that 70% of SENCOs felt that they did not have enough time to effectively facilitate their role. Less than half felt that senior leaders at their school understood their role, and less than 25% felt other staff understood their role. Consequently, 78% stated that they were being routinely pulled away from their role, with nearly 75% of respondents stating that they were unable to ensure provision for learners with additional needs. Compounding the issue, the SENCO typically held multiple roles concurrently. A second project based on interviews with SENCOs showed that they were assuming a lead role in driving school change, yet lacked formal status, which affected their ability to effect change (R1; R3).

Whole school models

Our research has led to the creation of flexible whole school models to transform the practice of lead practitioners working with disadvantaged children in schools. Examples of the model in practice include our AAS model (R5) and SENCO workload model (R2). Key elements of the model include:

- a whole school approach (R4; R5)
- senior management ownership (R5; R2)
- a whole school shared language (R4)
- the lead practitioner as translator of policy (R1; R3)
- a culture of openness around emotional and mental health and disability (R6; R2)
- regular evaluation (R5)

3. References to the research

R1. Curran, H (2019) ["The SEND Code of Practice has given me clout": a phenomenological study illustrating how SENCOs managed the introduction of the SEND reforms.](#) *British Journal of Special Education*, 46 (1). pp. 76-93

R2. Curran, H, Moloney, H, Heavey, A & Boddison, A (2018) [It's about time: The impact of SENCO workload on the professional and the school Bath Spa University. \[research report\]](#)

R3. Curran, H, Mortimore, T and Riddell, R (2017) [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities reforms 2014: SENCOs' perspectives of the first six months.](#) *British Journal of Special Education*, 44 (1). pp. 46-64

R4. Rose, J, Gilbert, L and McGuire-Snieckus, R (2015) [Emotion coaching - a strategy for promoting behavioural self-regulation in children/young people in schools: a pilot study.](#) *The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, XIII. pp. 1766-1790

R5. Parker, R, Rose, J and Gilbert, L (2016) [Attachment Aware Schools: an alternative to behaviourism in supporting children's behaviour?](#) In: Lees, H.E and Noddings, N, eds. *The Palgrave international handbook of alternative education*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 463-483

R6. Rose, J, Temple, S, McGuire-Snieckus, R, Wood, F, Vatmanides, O, and Parker, R (2016) [Somerset Emotion Coaching Project Evaluation Report.](#) Bath: Institute for Education and Bath Spa University

Funding:

- Rose (PI) and Parker (Co-I) *Melksham 0-19 Resilience Project* (2010) Melksham Community Area Board, Wiltshire Council, GBP5,000

- Rose (PI) and Parker (Co-I) *Emotion Coaching* (2011) Wootton Bassett Community Area Board, Wiltshire Council, GBP5,000
- Rose (PI) and Parker (Co-I), *Somerset Emotion Coaching* (2015-2016), Somerset County Council, GBP75,000
- Curran (PI), *National SENCO Workload Survey Project* (2018), National Education Union, GBP5,000

4. Details of the impact

The research team's creation of whole school models to transform the practice of lead practitioners has had a range of impacts.

Influencing national policy and guidance

In 2014, in response to our research, National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) appointed an education representative to its Attachment Guidelines Working group (E1.1). BSU was described as "a leader in the field" on AAS of at the Education Select Committee in 2015 and "inspirational" by the Minister for Children in a speech in March 2016, and the research helped to shape the Department for Education/Department of Health (DfE / DoH, 2015) statutory guidance on promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children (E1).

The research team participated in the drafting of the 2016 Core Framework for Initial Teacher Training: "Providers should emphasise the importance of emotional development such as attachment issues and mental health on pupils' performance, supporting trainees to recognise typical child and adolescent development" (E1.5).

The SENCO workload study, which led to the first workload model, has shaped the work of nasen and the Whole School SEND (WSS) Consortium, who deliver the DfE SEND Workforce contract (E2). The research team was invited by the DfE to present findings, to help inform the current national SEND review:

[The SENCO research] is informing this process [the national SEND review] and the government is giving serious consideration to the next SEND Code of practice having some clear guidance within the document regarding the amount of time that should be allocated to the SENCO role. The 2018 SENCO research, and the recommendations made through the workload model, are likely to form the basis of those recommendations, if they go ahead with the plans as they currently are. (Chief Executive, nasen, E2)

The workload study also justified the direction of the WSS workforce contract to the DfE:

The research was part of the evidence base which we presented to the government, specifically the DfE, in terms of justifying how the funds should be spent over the next contractual year. (Chief Executive, nasen, E2)

Transforming practice in schools

The research team was commissioned in 2014 by the National College for Teaching and Learning to produce training materials for school leaders based on the AAS model and from 2016 initiated a module for Teach First which is attended by 1200 trainees each year (E3). In 2017 in partnership with others, including a number of virtual schools, the research team formed the Attachment Research Community (ARC), with a current membership of over 500 schools; this has resulted in significant shifts in practice in these schools, from behavioural to whole school emotional and social approaches, based on the research (E3). The current chair of ARC, wrote:

The research, and the ongoing support of colleagues from Bath Spa University has had a huge effect on the development, sustainability and impact of ARC, both on national policy and on the individual implementation of attachment awareness in schools (E3.3).

The team created the first ever SENCO workload model which provides guidance for school leaders regarding SENCO role facilitation based on context (E4). Based on this model, WSS created the Effective SENCO Deployment project (ESDP), guidance for senior leaders and responding to the national SEND Inquiry 2019, the government recommended the workload

model to senior leaders as a tool to help facilitate the SENCO role in school (E5). This research has influenced the direction of the WSS organisation, including the provision of a SENCO support service.

From a practical perspective the SENCO research in 2018 informed the direction of our work at nasen and WSS, for example the development of the Whole School SEND Effective SENCO deployment project and the creation of the SENCO support service. (Chief Executive, nasen, E2)

Improving the support for and wellbeing of lead practitioners

A major impact of the research has been on the roles and wellbeing of the lead practitioners. As a result of reading the research, 69 SENCOs reported that they held a meeting with their Head/senior manager to discuss their role. 212 SENCOs reported that the research led to a personal re-evaluation of their role and 60 SENCOs reported that they used the workload model to secure extra time for their role (E4). Feedback included:

The survey really helped me to raise awareness of the national situation. As a direct result I now have an assistant three days a week (E4).

SENCOs reported that workload model and recommendations impacted positively on their practice through developing networks and collaboration with schools, structuring discussions with senior managers regarding workload, and identifying advocates in school (E2; E6).

The first EC projects included 127 adult participants from 11 schools (approximately 3,800 pupils in two local areas). 96 adults from 69 schools (approximately 35,000 pupils) participated in later EC schemes (E7). The AAS programmes in Bath and North East Somerset included over 30 schools (approximately 2,900 pupils), in Stoke 12 schools (approximately 5,000 pupils) and Leicestershire 24 schools (approximately 8,000 pupils). Data from 40 schools, involving over 200 teachers recorded that 74% of staff reported themselves to be more confident in dealing with challenging behaviours, having decreased levels of stress, and citing improved relationships with pupils, parents and other staff, demonstrating the impact of a whole school approach (E8).

Improved support and outcomes for children

The lead practitioner model has impacted on both attainment and wellbeing of pupils.

It enables a whole school, consistent approach which meets all children's needs (Teacher, E8)

The AAS work recorded a 49% decrease in sanctions, 54% decrease in exclusions and significant improvements in terms of pupil attainment. For pupils identified as at risk of underachievement, teachers reported a 33% improvement in reading performance, 15% in writing and an 18% improvement in maths. 67% (n=107) of staff reported a consistent improvement in terms of pupil behaviour, resulting from the programme; 32% said that pupil behaviour had sometimes improved (E8):

It took a series of children with needs that we just found hard to identify until we started to apply attachment theory thinking. And it just unlocked these children and made us able to understand what was going on with far greater clarity. As a result we got to make much more progress with them. (Headteacher, E8)

The SENCO workload model led to better provision and better outcomes for children:

Through the research SENCOs now feel better supported, they have more time, and this means that there will be a better experience and better outcomes for children with SEND, thus improving provision. (Chief Executive, nasen, E2)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

E1. Government documents and statements demonstrating the impact of BSU attachment aware schools' programmes on national policy

1. Statement from education representative on the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines Working Group on Children's attachment and [published guidelines](#)

2. [Department for Education / Department of Health \(2015\) Statutory Guidance on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children](#) (see Further Information, page 36)
3. [House of Commons Education Committee Inquiry into the mental health and wellbeing of looked after children oral evidence transcript](#) - 16 December 2015
4. [Minister for Children speech to National Association of Virtual School Heads Annual Conference](#), March 2016
5. DfE, (2016) Core Framework for Initial Teacher Training, including reference to attachment awareness for trainees (see Appendix 1 section 5)

E2. Testimonial by the Chief Executive of The National Association of Special Educational Needs (nasen) discussing the impact of the research on nasen, Whole School SEND and the Department for Education

E3. Government and professional organisation documents and emails, demonstrating impact of attachment awareness programmes on teacher training and schools

6. Teach First: Attachment Materials (28 June, 2016). Developed for Teachfirst Summer Institute 2016 Attachment and the Implications for Learning and Behaviour session
7. [Training materials on attachment for school leaders commissioned from BSU by National College for Teaching and Leadership \(2014\)](#)
8. Testimonial from Chair of Attachment Research Community on the impact of the Formation of the ARC) for schools, 2017

E4. SENCO Workload Report: [National SENCO Workload Survey 2019: One year One](#). Includes the workload model and evidence illustrating the impact of the model on lead practitioners

E5. SENCO Deployment guide developed for senior school leaders and government response to SEND inquiry which demonstrate impact on schools

9. [SENCO deployment guide, developed by Whole School SEND](#). The guidance is for school leaders, based on our research, with reference to the BSU SENCO workload model to support SENCO school deployment.
10. [Government response to the 2019 SEND Inquiry](#) citing the Effective SENCO Deployment project and the BSU/nasen workload guidance to help schools make the best strategic use of their SENCO (p14)

E6. [Statement from lead practitioner on the impact of the SENCO workload model](#)

E7. [Description of the impact of mental health and emotion coaching project on lead practitioners in Somerset on Somerset Public Health website](#)

E8. Rose, J, McGuire-Snieckus, R, McInnes, K and Gilbert, L (2019) '[Attachment Aware Schools: the impact of a targeted and collaborative intervention.](#)' *Pastoral Care in Education*, 37 (2). pp. 162-184 (article reporting on evaluation of impacts of attachment aware schools' programmes on children and young people)