

A Leadership Blueprint to Eliminating the use of Physical Intervention and Seclusion from a School Setting

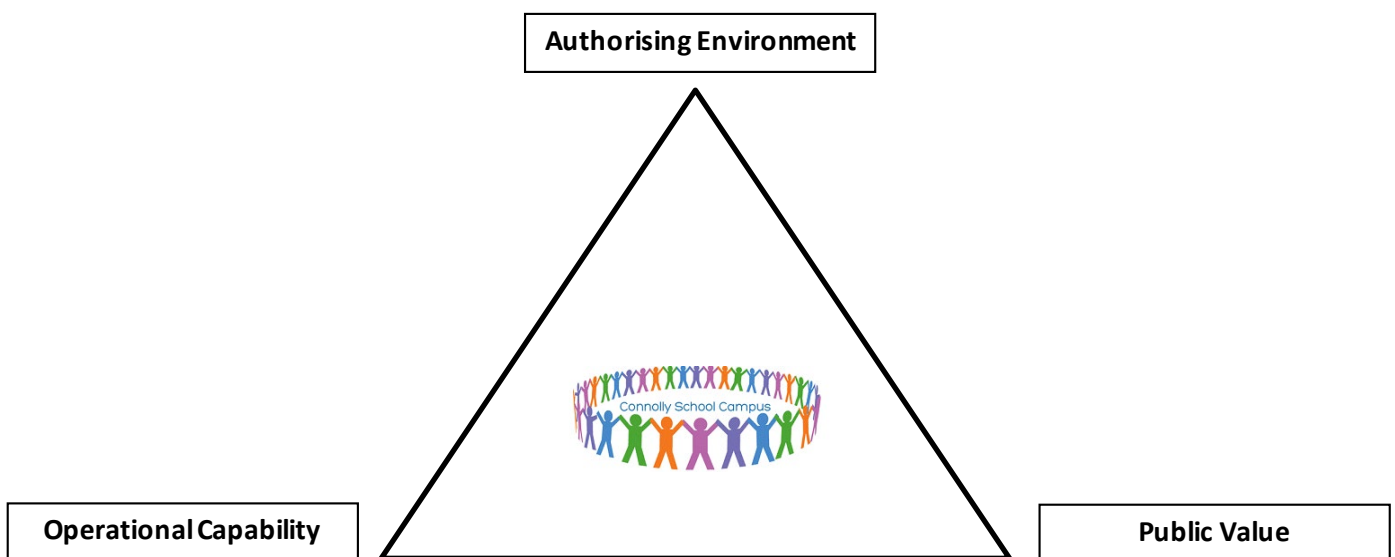
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Background and Context

Connolly Campus School is an SEBN primary school situated in Blackburn, West Lothian. The school is part of the West Lothian Council Inclusion and Wellbeing Service (IWS). The IWS supports children and young people across the education authority who have SEBN and other Additional Support Needs (ASN). The IWS includes an Early Intervention Service, Connolly Campus School and the Skill Centre (formerly Burnhouse School). IWS was formed in August 2016 bringing together previously separate teams supporting children and young people with ASN into one co-ordinated team. Historically, all aspects of the now IWS operated independently of each other with their own referral processes, vision and values.

The following sets out the leadership journey and challenges required to change whole-school practice in relation to physical intervention and seclusion in a social and emotional needs school setting. The leadership blueprint for this change process is set out below using Moore's Strategic Triangle.

Moore's Strategic Triangle



(Moore 1995; Feldman and Khademian 2002; Coats and Passmore 2008)

Using this approach to strategic change, we asked ourselves a series of challenge questions relating to the strategic triangle:

1. Public Value - Is it substantively valuable?

- a. Would a change in practice lead to a better life and better experience of school for our children and staff?
- b. Is it operationally feasible?

2. Operational Capability - What are the current capacities of our team, including partnerships with other organisations?

- a. Do new capacities need to be developed within the school or sourced from partner organisations?

3. Authorising Environment - Is it politically sustainable?

- a. What 'sources of legitimacy and support' will be needed to authorise the school to implement this strategy and what resources will be necessary?

1. Public Value

As a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) we were fully aware of the need for change in our practice in relation to the use of PI and seclusion. We spent a time analysing the data from the use of PI and it was clear its use had become standard practice in managing challenging situations, bypassing possible opportunities to de-escalate situations earlier using different techniques. The data also highlighted the impact the use of PI was having on staff wellbeing with high levels of staff absences and personal injury following PI use in incidents. In observing incidents, children were expecting the PI use and escalated their behaviours in response. This led to the situations becoming very challenging and higher risk for all involved. Relationships between staff, children and families were being adversely affected through the use of PI and its use was increasingly out of step with the aspirations of our SLT.

- a. Would a change in practice lead to a better life and better experience of school for our children and staff?

In asking this question we were challenging each other if we could make the school a better place for us all to be if we changed how we managed relationships and challenging situations. In asking this question, we were unclear of exactly what our model should be at the end of the change process but we were fully aware that the status quo was unacceptable. The current approach was leading to negative outcomes for all concerned and a new way required to be scoped out and developed.

- b. Is it operationally feasible?

A change was operationally feasible but there was an operational capability challenge that would have to be addressed first. This will be covered in the next section. All staff had been trained by CALM Training, a specialist training provider in behaviour support, and trained to use PI safely. It was clear we required a transition period to move from long-term practice of PI and seclusion use to a new way of working. As an SLT we decided to stop using PI and seclusion from late-May 2018 after asking each other the question: What would happen if we stopped using CALM techniques? This led us into a period of observation and analysis as we monitored the impact of the change on the children and staff. We re-focused on de-escalation and worked as a team on the techniques we would use as an alternative to PI use. This was a challenging period as we transitioned from one operating model to another one and the data still highlighted a significant number of negative incidents between children and staff. Attainment data remained low at this stage and the children found it very difficult to resume learning after challenging incidents. The current situation was not sustainable and hope of better outcomes for everyone connected to the school was the driver for change.

There was an appreciation that things may get worse before they improved given the embedded practice and procedures and when we returned after the summer for the 2018/19 school session, we remained optimistic of the positive changes now underway but aware the scoping had not fully concluded and further improvements were likely to be required.

The data provided from our GIRFEC Lifegrids captured the learner voice in the change which highlighted very clearly how the children felt about the use of PI and this served as the most powerful driver for the change in practice. See Impact section below.

2. Operational Capability

In preparation for the change we considered the operational capability of the team. From observation and analysis of incidents it was clear that some of the staff team had become de-skilled on de-escalation techniques. There was an over-reliance on the use of PI as a strategy and further CLPL was required to empower, enable and equip the full team with the skills required for a new way of working with our learners. Towards the end of the 2017/18 school session, the SLT met with representatives of CALM training and discussed the aspirations to move away from the use of PI. CALM Training were very supportive of proposed changes and a trainer facilitated a training programme on de-escalation with the staff team.

An initial action plan from May to June 2018 focused on the following key areas:

1. Development of our vision;
2. Undertake a consultation with all children, parents and staff to agree on our top 5 agreed values;
3. Development of the Connolly Campus School Charter as a framework for our positive relationships approach;
4. Development of a simple flow-chart to manage challenging situations;
5. Develop our curriculum rationale.

All actions were in place before the end of the 2017/18 school session following a period of self-evaluation and development work.

We embarked on a recruitment programme to replace a number of staff who had moved on from the team. This process allowed us to reflect on the specific staffing needs of the school going forward and we were fortunate to have a number of very high quality applicants who then joined our team right at the beginning of our new model being implemented.

Early in 2018/19 session, it was clear that further improvements were required to fully realise our ambitions for supporting our learners safely. The incident data from September 2018 highlighted the need for further actions to be put in place and from the day the plan was implemented, the number of incidents fell, month on month, to the medium-term trend now sustained through 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 to date.

A full team meeting was held on the in-service day in September with colleagues from across the wider Inclusion and Wellbeing Service in attendance together with the Connolly Campus School team. The meeting was emotionally difficult as the day before the September break had been particularly challenging. However, the session gave the team time to heal together and work together to avoid a repeat of the challenges the week before. The team developed a new action plan which was to be implemented between September and November with the actions coming from colleagues across the team. This one meeting galvanised the team to push on with the changes we had already made and reaffirmed our commitment to negating the need for PI and to fulfil our vision and values we had agreed on as a team.

The action plan set out the following action points:

1. Improve the safety of the school building;
2. Improve procedures for managing serious incidents;
3. Further develop our positive relationships policy and approaches;
4. Further develop our curriculum offer and partnerships.

1. Improve the safety of the school building

This action point related to the infrastructure of the school to support our ambitions. The building had a number of weaknesses and to improve the safety the following improvements were made:

- Installation of magnetic locks in key areas of the school;
- Locks installed in all doors to maintain safety of all learners;
- Locks installed in all cupboards in the corridor area;
- Water turned off in sinks in corridor area;
- Procedures for door locking when rooms not in use;
- Removal of extra glass panels beside classroom doors.

All of these items were in place by the end of September and instantly made a positive impact on the wellbeing of the learners and staff.

2. Improve procedures for managing serious incidents

It was clear from the team that we needed to further develop our protocols for managing serious incidents and a revised protocol was worked on and put in place for the day after the in-service day. We agreed on the in-service to continue with our approach to leave PI use behind. The in-service was very much a crossroads point in the transition away from using PI. This was a values-based decision and one we all signed up to as a team as part of drafting up the action plan.

3. Further develop our positive relationships policy and approaches

The key actions to support our new approach under our positive relationships policy was as follows:

- Significantly enhance the pathway of learners to attend their mainstream schools;
- Establish a P7 Hub as an Enhanced Transition model;
- Allocation of a key adult for each child;
- Trial a 'hot choc' Wednesday as part of the Pivotal Programme;
- Team building activities for staff and pupils including health and wellbeing afternoons.

4. Further develop our curriculum offer and partnerships

Our curriculum offer also needed to adapt to be more engaging for learners and support our new approach to managing positive relationships.

- Significantly expand our outdoor learning programme
- Introduce consequential thinking (Youth Justice model) across the school

All the action points were implemented at a brisk pace as the change was essential to make the changes successful. As part of the curriculum development work, we actively sought out new partnerships to support our curriculum delivery. These new partnerships further enhanced learner engagement as the curriculum became more personalised and tailored to the needs of the individual learner. The Pupil Passport became the core document for our curriculum design activities with the individual needs and aspirations of the learners captured in discussions between the learner, a trusted adult and the parent/carer.

We sought out further training for the team with a Principal Teacher becoming a trainer for Management of Actual and Potential Aggression (MAPA). All of the team were trained in all MAPA levels up to safe disengagement from incidents. The units on safe holds were not part of the training and this has been an important part of the philosophy surrounding this training programme.

3. Authorising Environment

To make the transition away from PI use, there needed to be strong political support and authorisation for the changes to be made. The proposed changes were first raised when the HT took up the post in Easter 2018 with the local authority ASN Managers group. This group was invaluable in enabling the changes to be progressed with insight and support from the Principal Educational Psychologist, ASN Manager and ASN Principal Officer. The change in practice was in line with what colleagues in social work had made in relation to residential houses and an alignment in approach between social work and education on PI was an important step forward.

Local policy also enabled the change away from PI to be a successful one and various national agenda items were also highlighting the need for change, notably the work of the Children's Commissioner with the Special Investigation into the use of PI in schools: No Safe Place: Restraint and Seclusion in Scotland's Schools (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2018). The associated Scottish Government

As a school, we were at the beginning of our journey towards the Bronze Rights Respecting School Award. The use of PI was not in line with us realising the ambitions we hold for each of our learners and the Rights of the Child were helpful in shaping our values and approaches as we changed our practice.

A change in practice also supported the ideals we all hold in relation to the presumption of mainstream agenda. We exist to support our learners develop the self-regulation skills they require to ultimately be successful in their local school. For us to support our learners best, we needed to develop new programmes to support learning about emotions and self-regulation rather than the use of PI and seclusion. The change in approach and the associated action plan supported our ability to better prepare learners to progress from our specialist SEBN school to mainstream education successfully.

The SLT undertook a practitioner enquiry around the use of physical intervention including a literary review to search for practices and approaches. The primary focus on this literary review was to find academic research that could support our aspirations to eliminate the use of PI. However, this merely highlighted that PI was out of place in our school setting with all exemplars in research coming from secure hospital environments. One piece of research did have an impact at the authorising stage which was around the learners voice in social and emotional school settings and the pathway, or lack of, back to mainstream education. The article entitled 'They Won't Let Me Back'. Comparing student perceptions across primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) by Rheanne Jalali and Gavin Morgan. PRUs in England operate in a similar context to our own school and we used this research to explore what we ultimately wanted for our learners. We developed a process to capture our learners voices derived from this research, entitled GIRFEC Lifegrids. This gave us very strong data on the aspirations of our learners and what they wanted from our school and their next steps. What was very clear was our learners did not like or want PI and seclusion to continue. They wanted to be successful in school and have time in mainstream and this made the change process very clear. PI use was not preparing the learners to be included in mainstream and instead it was preventing our learners from understanding their thoughts and feelings and learning pro-social ways of managing relationships. It was clear that PI use was further excluding an already excluded group of learners and their comments on the need for change were instrumental in increasing the pace of the change process.

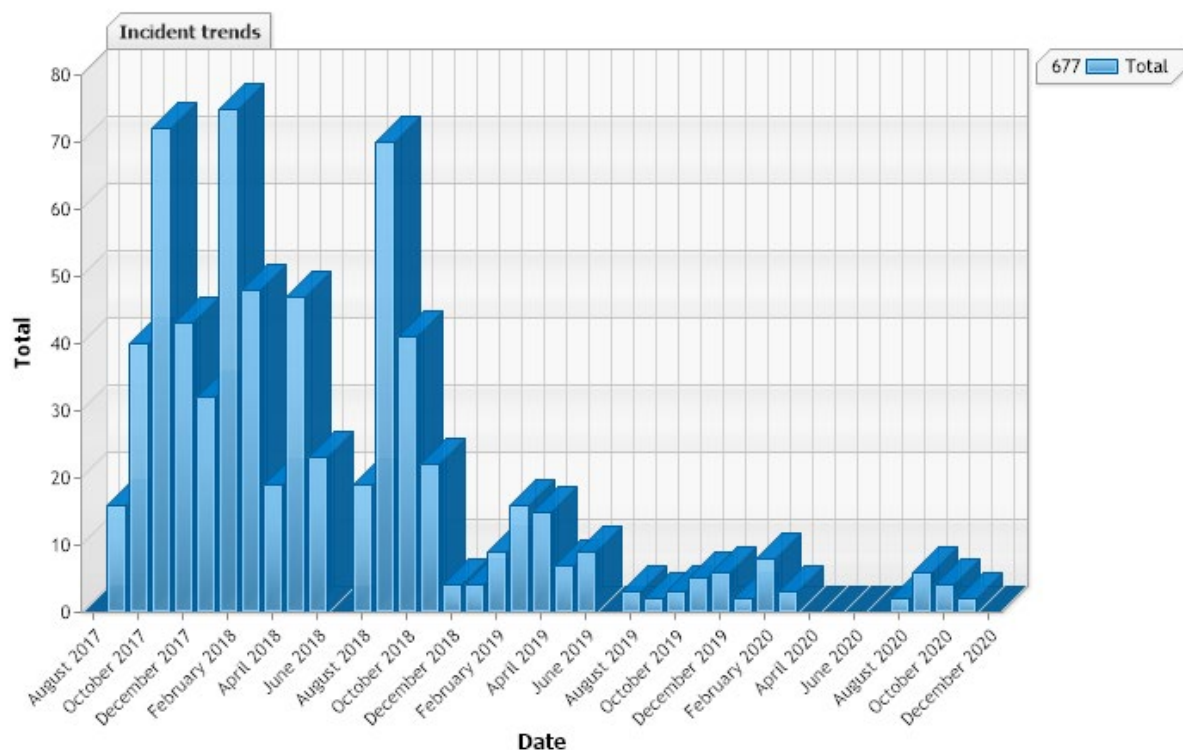
The SLT also visited similar schools in Scotland and also a PRU in Lancashire to scope out innovative practice to eliminate the use of PI and seclusion. This experience was helpful in seeing in beyond our own context and provided different contexts to compare and contrast against.

4. Impact

We are now two and a half school sessions on from when the initial decision was taken to change our approach and to eliminate PI and seclusion from our operational practice. The impact of the decision over time has been transformational on our learners, their families, our staff team and our learning community. The impact can be measured very positively against the following metrics: Health and Safety Recordable Incidents (Sphera Records), Learner Voice (GIRFEC Lifegrids), Staff Attendance Levels, Staff Feedback, Pupil Attendance Levels and Attainment Levels over time and the number of learners progressing to a mainstream placement.

Health and Safety Recordable Incidents

All health and safety incidents are recorded in the local authority reporting system, Sphera. The trends over time show a sustained improvement in the number of incidents.



The mean number of incidents in 2017/18 was – 39, when PI and seclusion were part of the policies and procedures used by the school. The mean number of incidents in 2018/19, when we moved away from the practice of PI and seclusion, was 22. There was a peak of incidents in September 2018 (70) which highlighted the need for further changes and improvements to fully move away from PI and onto a new and better way of supporting our learners. As we embedded our changes, the mean of incidents in 2019/20 (not counting the lockdown months) was just under 7 incidents per

month. Since resuming for the 2020/21 session, the mean is just under 3 (three) incidents per month. The data over time shows a sustained improvement in making our school a safer and happier place to be for our learners and our staff.

Learner Voice

The comments from our learners, captured in the GIRFEC Lifegrids, became the core driver for change throughout the change process. The following comments were made which were placed at the heart of the action planning process. They capture the thoughts and feelings of our learners towards PI and seclusion and make reference to the changes implemented in the 2018/19 school session. The following extracts were taken from May 2018 through to June 2019.

“I am never in the chill zone anymore” – reference to seclusion

“I am given choices” - increased personalisation and choice in the curriculum

“I don’t like being moved but I don’t like being angry either” – reference to PI

“I would rather hands were not put on children, no grabbing, it’s the same for children.” – reference to PI

“The chill zone makes it worse, it’s cold.” -reference to seclusion

“I understand why adults move children but both adults and children get hurt” reference to PI

“The chill zone doesn’t make me calm down, it annoys me more.” – reference to seclusion

“I have enjoyed art therapy and counselling” – reference to therapeutic approaches introduced

“I am good at calming myself down, if I walk that helps me” – reference to individual coping and learning strategies

“Use of chill zone as a cosy room if people need to leave the classroom” – reference to the re-purpose of seclusion space

“I think I am responsible, my report card says my aggression has calmed down over the last 2 years. I don’t like my past self but I like my new self.” – reference to learning strategies and understanding feelings and emotions

“I feel safe in school as teachers are always there, I feel listened to by everyone” – reference to cultural change

“I would change the chill zone, I would add bean bags and books” – reference to the pupil council discussions on re-purpose of seclusion and space

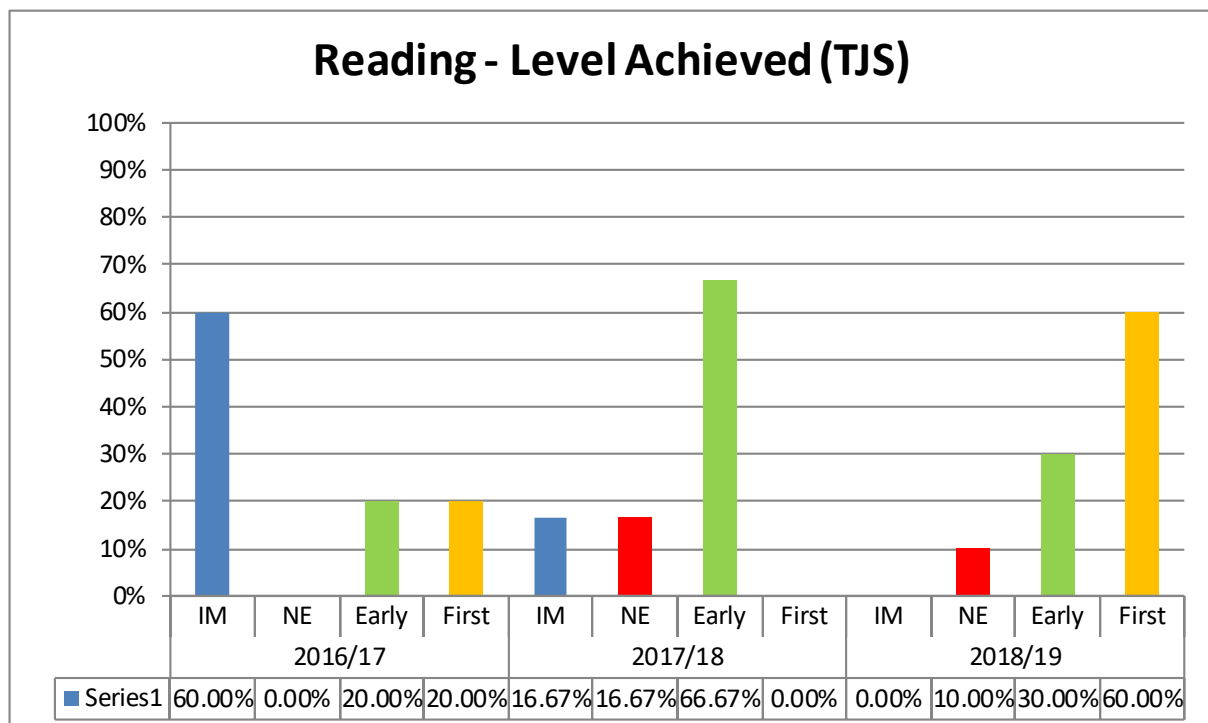
“People take care of me” – reference to ethos and culture

Pathways to Mainstream

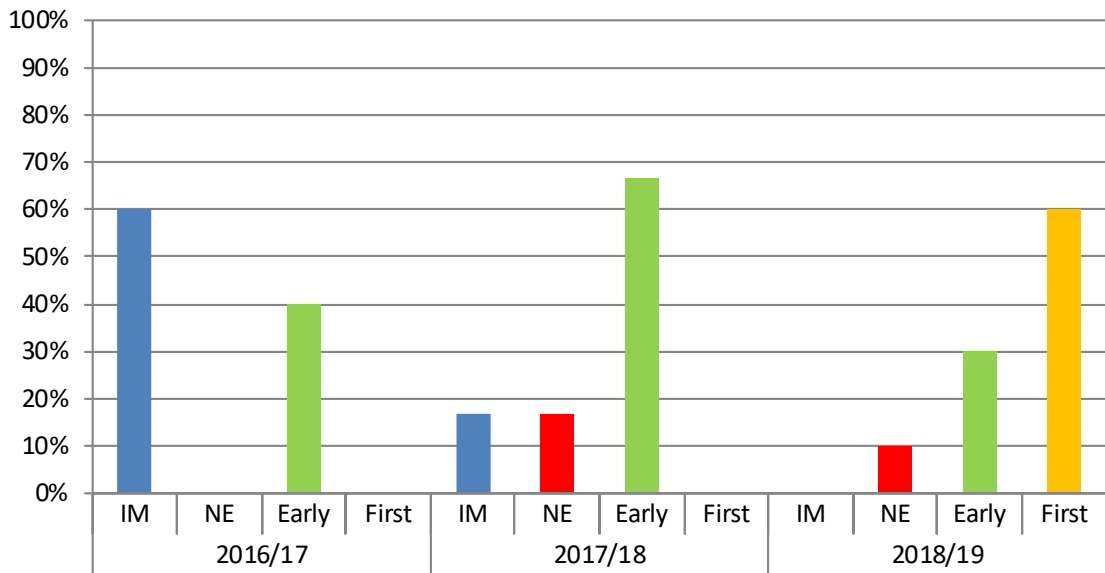
Almost all learners, prior to the lockdown period (18 out of 20), spent time in their mainstream school. This was made possible by following the strategic change programme with learners learning pro-social skills and being able to identify and use strategies to cope with feelings and emotions. The school has been very successful in supporting learners onto mainstream full-time with an increasing number making a successful transition year on year.

Attainment

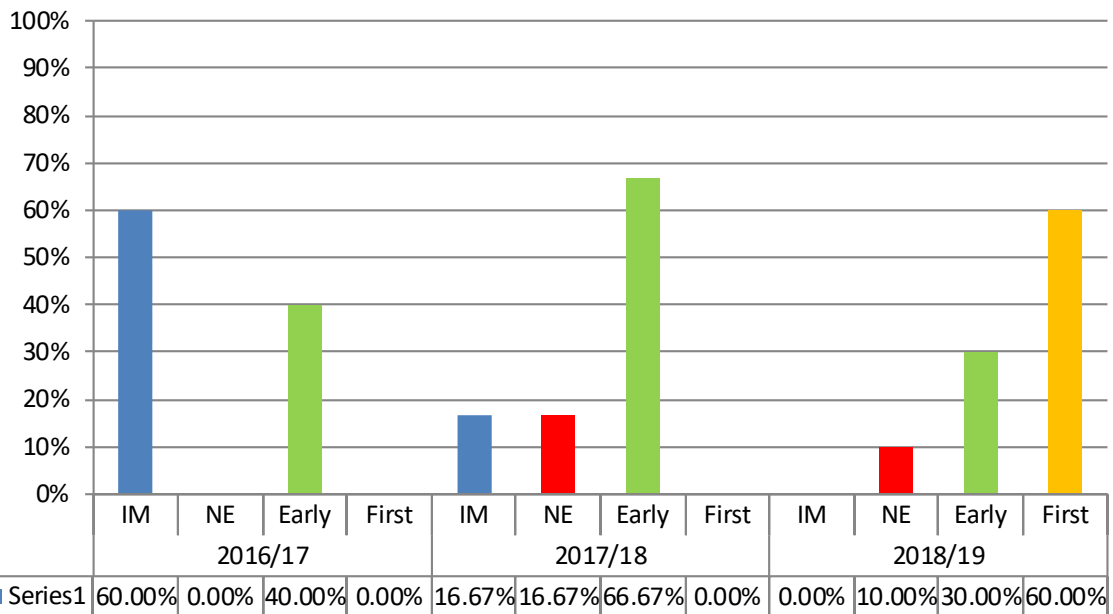
Attainment of all our learners has improved during the change programme with most learners working on individual milestones in 2016/17 and by 2018/19, most learners were working on CfE First level for Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking and Numeracy. Learners are returning to learning quicker than at any time in the past maximising teaching and learning time for all learners. With less time being lost with challenging incidents, learners are progressing and achieving at higher levels.

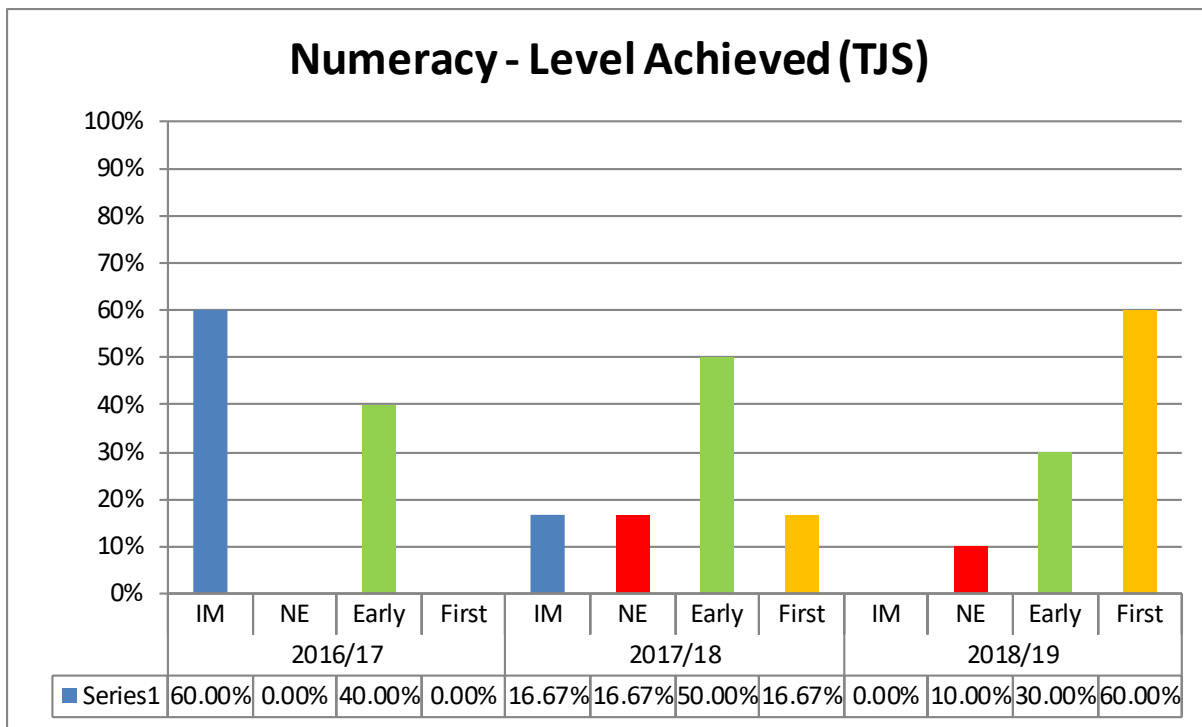


Listening & Talking - Level Achieved (TJS)



Writing - Level Achieved (TJS)





Education Scotland HMI Inspection

Connolly Campus School was inspected in January 2020 with the report published in June 2020. The approach taken to eliminate PI and seclusion from practice was highlighted in the Summary of Inspection Findings as practice worth sharing more widely:

“The approaches to the use of safe holds, physical intervention and seclusion.

From the start of the headteacher’s appointment at the school, there has been a move away from the use of physical interventions, safe holds and seclusion in managing behaviour. To address this situation the headteacher instigated CLPL opportunities for staff to understand nurture and trauma informed approaches to equip staff and enable children to feel safe, included and involved in the school.

A core component of this work was analysing data around the use of physical interventions, safe holds and seclusion as well as attendance and exclusion rates. Evidence in the school demonstrated that previously, using safe holds had become the default position for staff when managing challenging behaviour. To address this, the headteacher has successfully led the staff team in engaging in practitioner enquiry, professional reading and research to find other approaches. This resulted in the development of ‘GIRFEC lifegrids’. These grids enable children and their families to influence the change agenda around the use of physical intervention, seclusion and safe holds. Working with children and staff, the school developed a rights-based approach to managing challenging behaviour, that does not include the use of seclusion, physical intervention and safe holds. As a result of this approach, current data indicates that children’s wellbeing has improved, as has their attendance at school. The rates of exclusions have decreased significantly, as have the

number of challenging incidents. Children are more readily reengaging in learning more often throughout the school day.”

The Connolly Campus School full inspection report is available at:

<https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/inspection-reports/reports-page/?id=2138>

More details about the school can be found on our website

<http://inclusionandwellbeing.westlothian.org.uk> or on our twitter feed @wlconnolly.