

Evaluation of Inclusion 2028

Funded Year 1
(Apr 25 – Mar 26)



May 2026

ASK Research
Partners

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Programme delivery	5
2A - LIS delivery	6
2B - Pupil engagement.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2C - Wider consortium delivery	14
3. Lessons learnt about CPD	31
4. Recommendations for next steps.....	34
Appendix: HEI pilot evaluation details	38

1. Introduction

The Youth Sport Trust was awarded the SEND Inclusion in PE grant by the Department for Education in April 2025 to deliver a three-year programme (named Inclusion 2028) on behalf of a consortium of organisations including Activity Alliance, nasen, British Paralympic Association and Swim England. The delivery of Inclusion 2028 is supported by supporting organisations Association for Physical Education, Sport for Confidence and the National Network for Parents and Carers Forum (NNPCF) alongside a Young Person Collective which brings together a group of young people aged 14-21 with lived experiences of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The primary aim of Inclusion 2028 is to improve the choices and chances for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to create the opportunity for them to thrive in physical education (PE), school sport and physical activity.

By working with a consortium of partners, schools and listening to the voices of young people, the Youth Sport Trust aims to increase the quality and quantity of accessible and meaningful opportunities available for pupils with SEND. The programme also aims to build the confidence and competence of the educational workforce.

Inclusion 2028 is driven by the [54 Lead Inclusion Schools across England](#), managed by Youth Sport Trust, who are recognised for their expertise in engaging young people with SEND to participate and lead through PE and school sport. The Youth Sport Trust's Lead Inclusion Schools were selected in 2025, with some having fulfilled the role in previous rounds of the Inclusion programme but others being new to the role. Their function is to champion inclusive practice across schools and the physical activity sector with a vision of creating high-quality PE and school sport provision for all young people that is:

- **Inspiring:** something that they want to take part in.
- **Accessible:** something that they can take part in.
- **Meaningful:** something that they can feel the benefit from participating in.

Inclusion 2028 aims to support **all** pupils with SEND within all educational settings.

The programme's key objectives are:

1. **Build 'increased':** access to opportunities to participate and empowerment of pupils with SEND through;

- major event inspired programmes (e.g Los Angeles Paralympic Games 2028),
- facilitating communities of practice (e.g for alternative provision)
- recruiting water safety young champions
- improving/increasing opportunities in line with the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidelines for young disabled people.

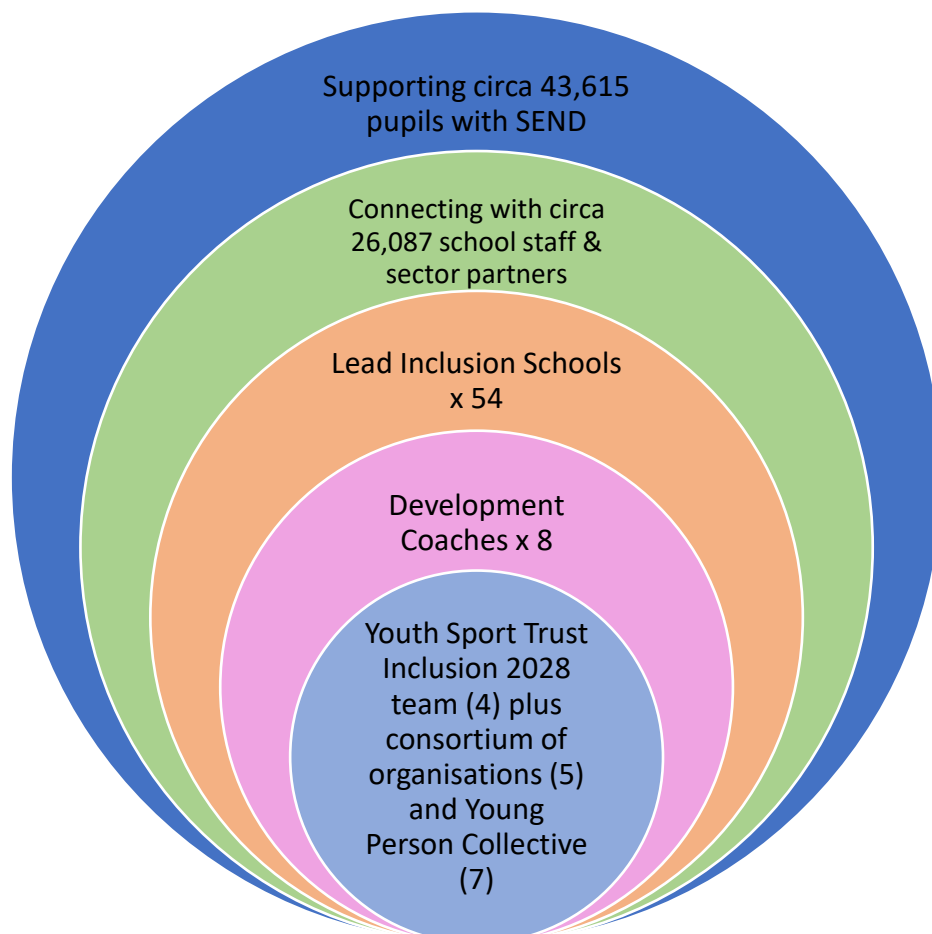
2. **Build 'further':** capacity, capability & effective practice of the workforce generating sector-led improvement. Build further sector led improvement in the capacity and capability of the workforce through providing e-learning, inclusive resources and face to face training for practitioners with a particular focus on those schools who need support most.

3. **Build 'with':** partners to innovate, encourage cross-sector collaboration and strengthen our collective ambition. Build with high-profile partners to encourage cross-sector collaboration through;

- recruiting inclusive school swimming specialists and collaborating with National Disability Sport Organisations
- collaborating with Association for Physical Education to strengthen teacher training and school placements.
- raise awareness of new content and training for teaching assistants

4. **Build 'in'**: young people and parent/carers voices at the heart of future development. Building in the voices of young people, parents/carers through developing a deeper relationship with the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, and establishing a new inclusive youth voice collective.

Youth Sport Trust's Lead Inclusion Schools (LIS) are located across England and receive funding to carry out their roles. There are eight Youth Sport Trust Development Coaches who also have a role as the main Lead Inclusion School contact and provide mentoring and support to other LIS in the network. The overall aim of the 'hub and spoke' method of providing training, advice, and guidance is to share good inclusion practices and enable more pupils with SEND to be engaged in PE, school sport and physical activity, increasing engagement and take-up during school and transitioning into participating in physical activity in the community.



Since May 2022 this function has been supported by an online portal, called the [Inclusive Education Hub](#). This contains information and resources to support inclusive practice and signposts users on to further support (including their LIS) where required after a self-assessment of their practice. Additionally, the consortium partners provide a range of training and support to the programme to widen its impact across the sector further.

ASK Research was commissioned by the Inclusion 2028 Consortium in March 2025 to set up and carry out an evaluation of the Inclusion 2028 programme.

The key research questions are:

- How well does the programme reach its objectives?
- What impacts does the programme have?
- How is the programme having an impact?

Findings in this report cover the first funded year of the programme- 1st April 2025-31st March 2026. Findings are collated from the following sources:

- Three sets of Termly Data Collection (set up and managed by the Youth Sport Trust delivery team) submitted by LIS for the periods covering the Summer and Autumn terms 2025, and the Spring term 2026. Results therefore ‘straddle’ two academic years. Our next report, due in September 2026, will cover achievements across the full 2025/26 academic year.
- Inclusive Education Hub registration data.
- Depth interviews with:
 - Youth Sport Trust Delivery team
 - Consortium delivery partners (through steering group meetings, individual interviews and data collection)
- Surveys of peer researcher findings on water safety
- Case studies produced by LIS
- Surveys and focus groups conducted with trainee teachers in two universities.

For this report therefore much of the data is self-reported and on delivery progress. Further detail on who the LIS have worked with, impacts, mechanisms of change and feedback from partners will be covered in the next report on delivery across the academic year.

2. Programme delivery

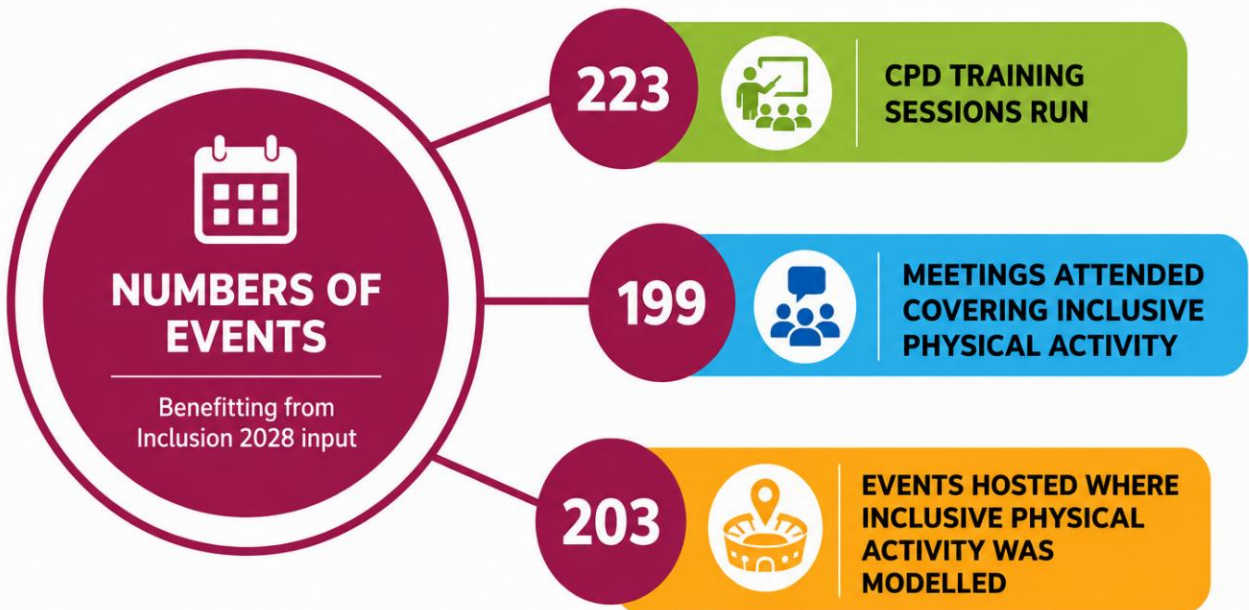
Over this period, LIS leads have delivered a wide range of activities to a large number of beneficiaries. In addition, there has been good take-up of the wider consortium partner offers, including online training, role modelling practice at inclusive festivals, the delivery of water safety activities and the promotion of the importance of inclusion at local meetings signposting to Inclusion 2028’s resource bank.

2A - LIS delivery

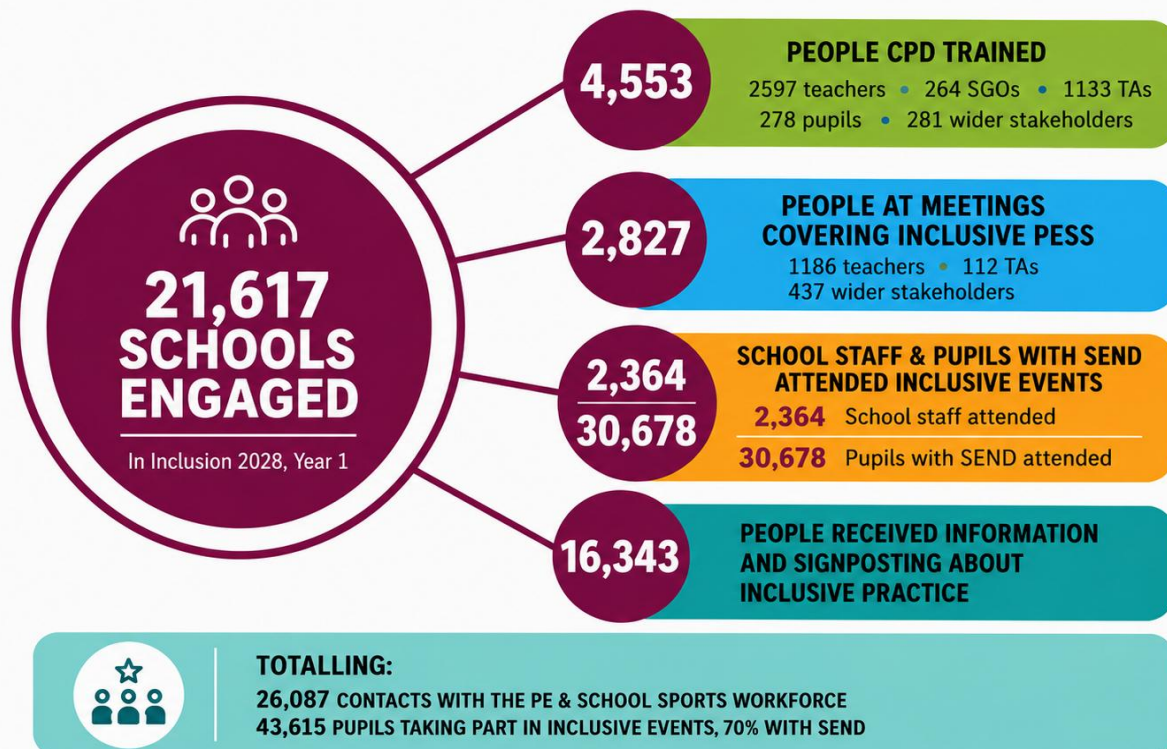
Key performance indicator (KPI) for this period - Upskill 1,000 teachers and teaching assistants (500 each) in inclusive practice.



INCLUSION 2028 DELIVERY: YEAR 1 (APR 25 - MAR 26)



WHO HAS BENEFITTED?



Delivery

During the first funded year of Inclusion 2028, LIS delivery to the school sport workforce has involved:

- Input at almost 200 meetings around inclusive physical activity and practice. These have been attended by over 2,800 professionals working across education and sport.
- 223 training sessions. These have been attended by over 4,500 people including almost 2,600 teaching staff, over 1,100 Teaching Assistants (TAs), 264 School Games Organisers (SGOs), 278 trainee teachers and 281 others who are part of the school sport or physical activity sector.
- Over 200 events where inclusive practice has been modelled. These events were attended by over 2,300 staff. These staff were from 823 schools, involving 1123 teaching staff, 1018 TAs, 70 SGOs and 110 trainee teachers. Participants were shown how to effectively run inclusive events and the considerations involved.
- In addition, LIS report having worked with National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) to support them in making their offers more engaging to schools and inclusive of pupils with SEND.

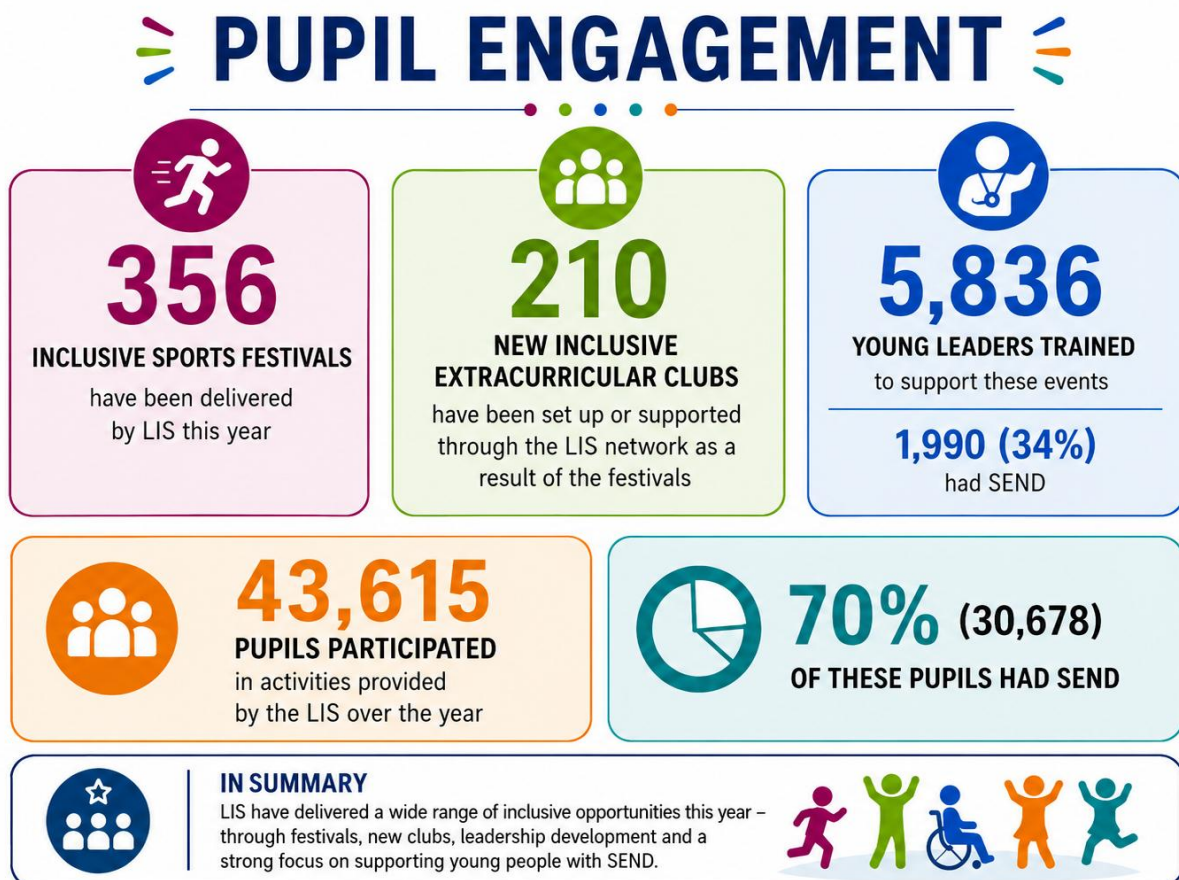
LIS report their activity has generated over **26,000 contacts with members of the school workforce and sports sector, representing engagement with staff from over 21,000 schools and settings across England** (including repeat engagement with some schools) including 4906 teachers and 2423 TAs directly.

This means the programme has significantly overachieved against its target to upskill 1,000 school staff.

2B - Pupil engagement

The KPIs for this period were:

- 50 schools training 500 young leaders (30% with SEND) to engage 5000 pupils (70% with SEND) in inclusive physical activity.
- 200 new extra-curricular inclusive clubs established by young leaders in their schools for peers.



Delivery

356 **Inclusive Sports Festivals** have been delivered by LIS this year and as a result of the festivals the LIS network have set up or supported the establishment of 210 new inclusive extracurricular clubs. A total of 5,836 young leaders have been trained up to support these events, of which 1,990 (34%) were pupils with SEND. A total of 43,615 pupils participated in activities provided by the LIS over the year. Seventy per cent of these were pupils (30,678) with SEND.

This means the programme has significantly overachieved against its target to train 500 pupils as young leaders, to engage 5,000 pupils in events and set up 200 new extra-curricular clubs.



Case Study 1:

The difference being involved in PE and school sports can make



Background

Madison is a primary-aged young person in care who has experienced significant instability throughout his life, resulting in limited access to extracurricular opportunities such as sport. He has a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and attends a school in Suffolk supported by their Lead Inclusion School (LIS). His teacher reported that he has very low self-esteem when interacting with new adults or peers, often becoming withdrawn, isolating himself, and refusing to participate due to anxiety. In new settings, he struggles to express his needs or explain when something is upsetting or unclear, which can lead to his needs going unmet.



The support and opportunities

This year the LIS has arranged a number of different sports opportunities for Madison to try. These include weekly tennis sessions with a specialist LTA tennis coach from his local club, two terms of table cricket and attendance at a SEND Festival. Being involved in the programme has provided a supportive and structured environment allowing him to gradually develop his social skills and take part in positive activities. It was important to have the opportunity to take part in a range of different sports and have a tailored package of support in place for him. This approach not only helped him to build practical skills but also supported the development of his confidence, allowing him to engage at his own pace and succeed in a way that suits his needs.



The difference it has made

Madison has made meaningful progress across several areas of his development. The sessions helped him build confidence in a supportive environment, develop an interest in sport, and improve his social, emotional and communication skills. Crucially, he is now able to speak to unfamiliar adults within a sporting context—something he previously found overwhelming. Overall, the programme has increased his confidence, independence and willingness to try new experiences, while giving him a sense of achievement and pride that has improved his self-esteem and wellbeing.



Looking ahead

As he now prepares to transition into his secondary placement the progress he has made through the programme will play an important role in supporting this move. His involvement in sport has helped him to build transferable skills, including confidence, communication, and the ability to engage with others in new environments. These skills will support him in setting into his new setting and forming positive relationships. Additionally, the programme has helped identify sport as a key strength and a preferred activity for him, which can be used as a valuable tool for relationship building in his next placement. By sharing this insight, his future carers and support network will be better equipped to engage him in ways that help him feel comfortable, confident, and understood.



Case Study 2: Developing leaders with SEND



Background

The LIS in the Yorkshire area was asked to support a high-achieving local secondary school. They had a very strong PE department and wanted to further develop their support for pupils with SEND but were not sure where or how to start. They already operated a leadership academy and wanted to develop this opportunity for pupils with SEND.



What they did

The LIS introduced the school to the power of using pupil voice to shape inclusive provision. They surveyed 1284 pupils across the mainstream setting on their levels of physical activity and wellbeing. From responses they identified Year 10 pupils who either had SEND, low activity levels or low wellbeing.



The results

The results have been that the secondary pupils who became leaders have increased their confidence, empathy and leadership skills. Pupils taking part have increased their engagement with and enjoyment of being physically active.



Looking ahead

The LIS says that what helped this be a successful initiative was the strong PE department and staff buy-in, including from the Headteacher who joined in with activities. By using feedback from the pupil voice exercise they were able to make a case for why this activity was needed, and they have been able to refine who they target for involvement. They plan to extend the work to three further schools next year.

My Personal Best (My PB) is a Youth Sport Trust programme which links pupils' soft skills and personal development with physical education. Inclusion 2028 is running a version adapted specifically for Alternative Provision (such as PRUs).

The KPI for this period was to deliver resilience, leadership and self-belief training to support young people to thrive in an additional 10 Alternative Provision (AP) schools/units across England, engaging between 60-100 young people (70% with SEND).

Delivery

Ten AP settings are taking part in this programme with eight having made sufficient progress to provide data on delivery (as two were recruited later). Their feedback suggests that:

- Around 250 pupils take part in My PB activities each week, ranging from 3 pupils weekly in one setting to 103 in another. All of these pupils have SEND.
- Across these settings 86 staff are involved in delivery – 9 senior leaders, 25 teaching staff and 52 support staff (such as TAs).

This means that the programme has achieved its target to recruit ten settings and overachieved on the target to engage up to 100 pupils.

Self-reported effects

Respondents agree or strongly agree that the resources they are provided with to support delivery are useful and that My PB has had a positive effect on how they deliver physical activity to pupils. These reported changes have included:

"It has made my sessions more structured, giving them a focus that isn't sport related for our children that do not enjoy sport." – PE Teacher

"Incorporating life skills in each activity getting them to think about life skills in all environments." – PE teacher

"Helped us with engagement, clarity of boundaries / expectations, improved attendance." – Alternative Provision Lead

Delivery staff most commonly reported perceived improvements in resilience, connectedness to school and physical activity. My PB delivery staff reported:

"Increased participation in extracurricular and increased engagement in PE lessons." – Alternative Provision Teacher

"Physical activity levels have risen and students now use the daily mile to focus on resilience¹." – Alternative Provision Lead

¹ See

https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/journal_contribution/Rewriting_the_story_physical_education_in_alternative_provision/32687997?file=65594712

Other effects delivery staff reported include:

“It has helped address some of the challenges with regards to behaviour and how we can better support our learners.” – Alternative Provision Lead

“Less CPOMS [safeguarding] incidents, specifically in PE.” – PE Teacher

*“Students are more willing to help each other and work with each other on achieving personal bests and improving on their personal best targets.” –
PE Teacher*

“Increase in conversations about how they feel or what they have achieved.” – Alternative Provision Teacher

“It has definitely improved self-belief of a few students within school and PE.” – PE Teacher

*“Students are more settled and look forward to working on their targets.” –
Alternative Provision Teacher*



Case Study 3: MYPB in practice



Background

Evidence suggests more mainstream settings are establishing Internal Alternative Provision (IAP) rather than using external providers. Inclusion 2028 therefore sought to engage an IAP in its delivery this year.

Uppingham Community College is a mainstream setting in Rutland which has recently begun implementing the My PB approach within its IAP.



What they did

The early focus has been on supporting students to improve their decision-making both within and outside of lessons. The aim has been to help young people recognise their mistakes, understand the impact of their behaviour and, over time, take greater accountability for their actions. Developing these skills was considered particularly important for this group of students, as improved reflection and self-regulation can reduce behaviour incidents and lead to more positive interactions across the school environment. Encouraging students to pause and think before reacting is intended to support not only their academic engagement but their wider personal growth.



Who and how

The programme initially targeted twelve students who had been referred through the school's pastoral system. These pupils were identified as needing additional support with behaviour, self-management or emotional regulation. The work was delivered by the Head of the IAP alongside one member of the IAP support team. MyPB has been integrated into the range of interventions offered through the IAP. The focus on a "head, heart and hands" framework in PE aligns well with the life skills emphasis of MyPB, helping create consistency in language and expectations across departments.



How it works

The approach has been embedded through practical activities such as gym sessions and gardening. During these sessions, staff explicitly highlight the life skill being focused on, such as setting goals, resilience and being thoughtful towards others, discuss what it looks like in practice and how it applies to the activities they are doing. Students are encouraged to give examples, share experiences and reflect on how these skills could be transferred to other lessons or situations outside of school through group conversations, one to one discussions and informal reinforcement.



Early impact

Although it is still early in the programme's development, initial signs show that students are beginning to understand the purpose and relevance of the life skills explored through MyPB and relate them to their own experiences in school. While it is too early to comment on longer-term behaviour change, this growing understanding represents an important first step.

One key learning point has been the value of focusing on one life skill at a time to ensure students fully understand it. Staff also highlighted the importance of using practical examples and linking skills to real situations students encounter, helping them see the value of the skills and engage more fully in the reflective process.



Looking ahead

The school plans to continue embedding MyPB into all its AP interventions and develop its use as students become more familiar with the approach. Over time, there is potential to align the approach more deeply with classroom practice beyond the IAP and involve families.

2C - Wider consortium delivery

Inclusive Education Hub

The KPI for the first year of Inclusion 2028 was to provide free to access content and resources created by sport & education sector experts, reaching a total of 4000 practitioners.

Delivery

Launched in May 2022, the [Inclusive Education Hub](#) is an online resource used to inform and support inclusive PE and school sport practice, hosted by the Activity Alliance. It is part of the universal offer that any school or provider staff can access for free. Once users register with the hub, they complete an Inclusivity Self-Assessment questionnaire for their setting that determines which resources they are then signposted to. Over this year the Inclusive Education Hub has had 822 new users sign up, taking the total users to 4464 practitioners engaging with the platform. This means the programme has achieved its target for this period.

Inclusion Live 2026

The KPI for this delivery period was to deliver Inclusion Live 2026 to 1000 practitioners.

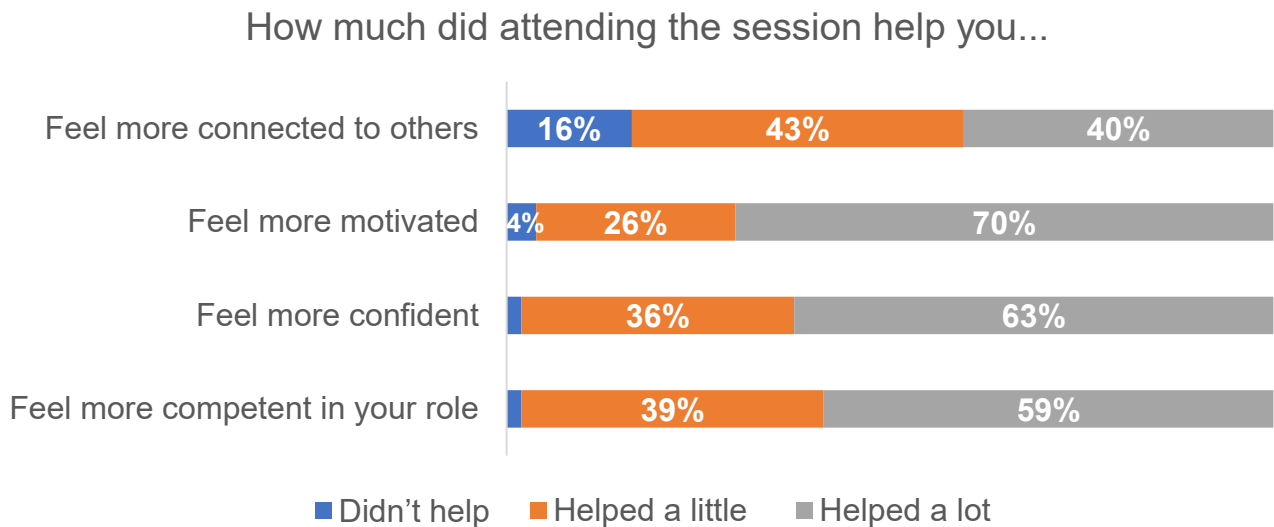
Delivery

Held in January 2026 the six Inclusion Live sessions (Inspiring inclusion through major sporting events, Unlocking the power of school swimming for young people with SEND, Creating inclusive environments for neurodivergent young people, Embedding strength and balance in the daily lives of young people, designing an inclusive PE curriculum for every young person and creating sustainable enrichment opportunities for young people with SEND) were attended by 1,409 people. Again, this is part of the programme's universal offer in that anyone is able to register to attend and recordings of sessions are viewable after the event. This means that the programme achieved its KPI for this period.

Self-reported effects

Link to an online feedback survey was distributed by presenters at the end of each session, and as is often the case with busy staff using this method, response rates were low. From the 104 feedback surveys received (7% response rate) we can see that the majority of attendees are PE teachers, followed by School Games Organisers and sports coaches but also includes other teaching staff, TAs and Local Authority (LA) representatives.

Feedback suggested attendees viewed the sessions positively. Speakers were described as knowledgeable and engaging. They valued that the sessions were free and easy to access, interactive and fit in with the working day (as well as being available afterwards). Attendees also valued hearing from people with lived experience, including sessions co-hosted by young people, and examples drawn from real-world settings. They found the event to be thought-provoking and actionable, which is reflected in their ratings of the sessions and details of their key takeaways.

Figure 2: Inclusion Live registrants' views on the session

Source: survey of Inclusion Live 2026 participants (based on 104 responses)

The Inclusion Live week reinforced that inclusive PE, school sport and physical activity is about:

- A strengths-based approach
- Practical, adaptable strategies
- Expanding accessible pathways
- Embedding movement and inclusion across school life
- Listening to young people
- Building confidence among staff.

Feedback from survey respondents suggests that many attendees left the sessions with concrete tools, renewed confidence, and a commitment to embedding inclusion more intentionally in their settings, as detailed in their key take aways overleaf. Feedback from respondents highlighted several consistent themes and intended changes to practice.



INCLUSION LIVE *Key Takeaways*



Inclusion is a mindset, not an add-on – ‘Everyone is born a champion’

- Focusing on what pupils can do, not what they can't
- Adapting provision rather than restricting access
- Recognising that inclusion benefits all pupils, not only those with SEND
- Valuing pupil voice and asking rather than assuming
- Celebrating individual success and personal bests



Clear, practical inclusive strategies and top tips that can be applied immediately

- Use of visual timetables and clear, consistent language
- Creating quiet zones or calm spaces during PE
- Running mini sensory circuits to support regulation
- Providing movement breaks across the school day
- Providing pre-event familiarisation (e.g. videos, lesson breakdowns)
- Using inclusion cards and communication tools
- Avoiding unnecessary repetition or over-complicating instructions



Learning about expanding pathways and inclusive extracurricular opportunities

- Disability football pathways through the Football Association
- Linking to Winter Olympic and Paralympic sports (e.g. curling, hockey)
- Exploring sports such as boccia and lawn bowls
- Developing inclusive extracurricular models
- Celebrating major sporting events inclusively at the whole school level



How to embed a whole-school and partnership approach

- Conducting learning walks to review SEND engagement
- Sharing training and resources with staff
- Identifying further CPD needs
- Embedding inclusive planning with TAs and coaches
- Encouraging joint planning across schools and LAs
- Signposting school staff to available webinars and events



Inclusion through empowerment and use of pupil voice

- Asking pupils and parents how best to support them
- Recognising that every neurodivergent individual is different
- Giving pupils with SEND more control over activities
- Building leadership opportunities for pupils with SEND
- Creating environments where pupils feel safe and heard



Confidence and personal reflection

- Feeling more confident in their practice
- Validation that they are “doing the right things”
- Motivation to try new approaches
- Greater awareness of working memory, regulation and processing time
- To remember to “take time to get it right”

➤ **Inclusion is everyone's responsibility. Small changes create big impact.** ➤

Training modules

In addition to CPD provided by LIS activities, the programme has also delivered a set of standalone training modules for practitioners to sign up to throughout the year. These courses therefore allow school staff to request access based on need.

Inclusive Activity Programme (IAP)

The KPI for this delivery period was to deliver 9 Inclusive PE Training CPDs reaching 280 teachers.

Delivery

Ten workshops have been delivered over the year. 250 practitioners attended the full workshops with an additional 52 registering for access to the modules online, bringing the total number of people accessing the training to 302 in total. 109 of these registered on the Interactive Education Hub and also have access to the Inclusive PE eLearning course. This means the KPI for this period has been achieved.

Inclusive PE e-learning (IPE)

The KPI for this delivery period was to reach 650 practitioners completing the Inclusive PE e-learning.

Delivery

621 members of the school workforce have claimed their free-to-access IPE online training sessions to date. This means the KPI for this period was almost achieved.

Self-reported effects

115 (19%) fed back on the course. Over 80% of those who provided feedback said that the training had increased their knowledge a lot of how to deliver inclusive PE and physical activity, their knowledge of how to and confidence in delivering. They reported finding the training valuable, engaging and easy to use.

They reported that what worked well with the course included:

The clear structure and flexibility – with well set out, manageable, bite-sized sections that are easy to complete alongside work commitments and encourage reflection on practice.

The strong theoretical foundation of the course – participants valued the strong theoretical foundation of the course. Frameworks such as AIM² and STEP³ were viewed as useful and immediately applicable. This element helps build confidence and awareness around inclusive PE and supports better understanding of different pupil needs and experiences.

Use of real-life examples - Case studies and pupil stories are seen as impactful and relatable, helping to connect theory to real classroom contexts.

² Activity Inclusion Model – a framework to help staff focus on what pupils can do and set activities appropriately

³ An approach to delivering AIM, standing for Space, Task, Equipment and People, covering the considerations for how to make activities inclusive

There was however also feedback on how the course could be improved by:

- Providing more practical, real-world examples with specific examples of adapted activities and what works for pupils with different needs.
- Greater interactivity and visual content as the training was seen as text heavy and sometimes too long. Requests for development included more use of video of inclusive PE in action, information presented more visually and more interactive tasks.
- Improved usability of assessments with more knowledge checking throughout and better alignment between content and clear questions.
- More concise and role-relevant content, with some participants feeling it was too general and not sufficiently tailored to their role or setting.
- There was also a suggestion to incorporate in-person practical sessions alongside the e-learning and the chance to see strategies in use in real settings.

The key actions attendees said they would take away to embed in their practice after the IPE training included:

- A shift from ad hoc adaptations to structured, intentional inclusion - primarily involving the use of STEP and AIM more consistently in practice with lessons designed to be fully inclusive from the start.

“I will ensure that all my PE lessons are inclusive to all pupils by having a person-centred approach.” – PE Teacher

- Using pupil voice and co-creating inclusive PE experiences with pupils.
- Adopting a more person-centred and strengths-based approach which ‘sees the whole child’.

“It shifted my thinking from ‘what pupils can’t do’ to ‘how can I help them succeed?’” – PE Teacher

- Improving differentiation, adaptation and communication in lessons
- Focusing on participation, confidence, and enjoyment rather than on competition
- Feeding what they have learnt into a whole school and wider practice change.

Supporting PE: An introduction for Teaching Assistants (e-learning module):

The KPI for this delivery period was to engage 500 TAs in the e-learning TA modules.

Delivery

742 Teaching Assistants (TAs) have registered to undertake the training for TAs supporting pupils with SEND in PE and physical activity over the year. This means the KPI for this period was achieved.

Self-reported effects

276 TAs (37%) completed feedback surveys in this period. Over 70% said the modules greatly increased their confidence in supporting pupils in PE and school sport. Respondents also reported increased knowledge of how to support pupils, a better understanding of the TA role within PE lessons, and greater awareness of strategies and adaptations for pupils with SEND.

Feedback on the value and accessibility of the modules was strong. 83% of respondents said taking the course had greatly increased their belief that TAs should be allocated to supporting pupils with SEND in PE and school sports, and 72% say they have increased their ability to hold conversations with colleagues, including members of the Senior Leadership Team about the important role of TAs in PE.

Following the training, over 70% of TAs believed PE lessons in their setting would become more inclusive of pupils with SEND. They also felt this would support greater physical activity among pupils.

The key changes that TAs say they will make following the training are:

- A stronger focus on inclusion for all pupils - Ensuring every student can take part, regardless of ability, confidence, or SEND needs, by adapting and differentiating activities so pupils work towards the same goal but follow their own path to success. They will actively identify and support pupils who may be struggling, disengaged, or anxious, encouraging participation at a suitable pace and promoting a sense of belonging, confidence, and enjoyment in PE.
- Consistent use of inclusive frameworks (such as STEP and AIM) to plan and adapt lessons in real time while regularly reviewing whether activities are accessible and appropriate for all pupils throughout.
- Increased TA involvement and active participation in PE – by taking a more hands-on role in lessons, joining in activities to model and motivate pupils and leading small groups or targeted interventions rather than just supporting one pupil.
- Greater collaboration and communication with teachers - by discussing lesson plans to understand objectives and student needs in advance, sharing ideas for adaptations and strategies to use and encouraging a more team-based approach to delivering PE. They said they felt more confident in voicing suggestions and contributing to planning.
- Better preparation and organisation – by ensuring equipment and resources to support a wide range of needs are ready before lessons start, adapting or sourcing additional equipment to improve accessibility, planning how to make the best use of available space, and creating a smoother start so pupils can engage immediately. They also commit to collecting pupil feedback on how effective the sessions they support are.

In terms of further advice or support needed TAs suggested adding more practical, usable ideas that can be applied immediately in lessons with examples of what this looks like in practice rather than outlining the theory. For example, providing step-by-step guides to adapting individual activities and providing deeper, needs-specific guidance in addition to

the general inclusion principles. The TAs also highlighted the need for targeted training on supporting pupils with particular types of needs (including ASD in busy/noisy environments, ADHD, physical disabilities and dysregulated pupils).

They also fed back more generally on the wider need for

- More resources, time, and better communication (with teaching staff) for PE to be more inclusive.
- More staff, including TAs in PE and more CPD time for them on inclusive practice.
- More training on how to support those with behaviour and dysregulation issues to engage in learning.

Swimming & water safety

The KPI for this delivery period was to deliver School Swimming and Water Safety training reaching 225 school swimming staff.

Delivery

Swim England have delivered eight in person training events which have been attended by 85 practitioners and one online workshop trained 218 school swimming teachers. These combined opportunities have trained a **total of 303 practitioners in inclusive school swimming and water safety this year**. This means the KPI for this period has been achieved.



Case Study 4: Water safety training



The initiative

After having water safety training from Swim England, Brannel school (LIS in Cornwall) delivered a fully inclusive water safety event for all Year 7 pupils through the Splash initiative (<https://slsgb.org.uk/>), in partnership with Surf Life Saving GB. Every pupil attended a full-day experience at the beach, learning essential water safety skills in a real-life environment. In addition, the activity provided CPD for staff, including the Head of Year, TAs, pastoral lead and support staff. This whole-school approach ensured consistency, strong pastoral support, and increased staff confidence in supporting pupils with diverse needs as well as enabling them to deliver water safety within the whole school.



Impact

The event therefore appeared to have increased pupil confidence in and around water, improved staff confidence in delivering and supporting inclusive activities and created stronger relationships between staff and pupils through the shared experience.



Outcomes for pupils with SEND

Pupils with SEND have shown clear development in confidence, resilience, and engagement. Many who were initially anxious about the beach environment or water-based activities grew in confidence throughout the day. Pupils with SEND were able to access the experience meaningfully, supported by trained staff, and felt included as part of the wider cohort. The programme has also increased awareness of water safety and encouraged more positive attitudes towards physical activity and outdoor learning.



Next steps

Next steps for the school include: Embedding water safety as an annual programme for Year 7, continuing to develop staff CPD around inclusive physical activity and exploring additional inclusive outdoor learning opportunities as well as strengthening partnerships with external providers.

Water safety champions

The KPI for this delivery period was to recruit 66 Water Safety Young Champions (50% with SEND) to promote and champion water safety in schools.

Delivery

Over this year, 16 schools have started their water safety journey. Fifty water safety champions from 6 settings, over half of whom have SEND, have been trained up to deliver water safety activities to their classmates. Over 600 pupils have taken part in activities in these settings with around one in five participants being pupils with SEND. The activities were developed by Swim England and included a water safety code game, a beach flag game and water safety quiz. Remaining schools will carry out their activities during drowning prevention week in June 2026 with data being included in our Year 2 report. This KPI has almost been achieved over this period, with delivery only moved to align with drowning prevention week so that they are more impactful.

Self-reported effects

As part of a small-scale pilot the evaluation team trained up a group of 13 peer researchers including those with and without SEND, from two schools – one primary and one secondary. Their role was to collect feedback on how the water safety resources were received by pupils and the effects use of these had. In these two schools a total of 68 pupils had received water safety training. We acknowledge this is small scale so findings should be interpreted with caution.

All of the pupils consulted said that the sessions had taught them something new, increased their understanding of water safety and all said that they thought they were now safer in and around water as a result.

“[We] learned not to be alone around water, how to get help and what different safety flags mean”. - Primary school pupil

“We have learnt many different things – how to stay afloat, all about riptides, and warning flags at beaches.” - Secondary school pupil

For the secondary school in particular this session had been seen as highly important as they live close to the sea. Their teacher reported:

“We compiled all of our findings and made questionnaires to hand out to our sixth form to see their understanding. Surprisingly it was quite low. With the questions the majority got wrong we designed and created posters to put around the school and sixth form to show the dangers in the water and promote water safety. I have really enjoyed teaching this topic especially on the run up to summer knowing my students will be more aware and responsible while out and about with their friends. It was also a great opportunity to get the wider school involved with the surveys and posters - bridging a gap between two year groups who don't usually get the opportunity to interact and a bonus making sure they have some water safety knowledge before going off with their friends this half term. The

students in my class told me they really enjoyed this topic as it was something new and will take this information on with them as they go through life.” - Secondary school teacher

Strength and Balance

The Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines for children and young people with SEND outlines that they should be doing 20 minutes of physical activity per day and strength and balance activities three times a week. It is recommended that children and young people with SEND regularly complete challenging, but manageable, strength and balance activities which are particularly beneficial for muscle strength and motor skills⁴.

The KPI for this delivery period was to co-create strength and balance activities with young people with SEND.

Delivery

Drawing on their expertise in occupational therapy and the physical activity sector, Sport for Confidence collaborated with the Inclusion 2028 Young Person Collective to co-design strength and balance activity cards. These exercises are intentionally simple, allowing them to be done in a variety of settings such as a school hallway, a living room at home, or a local park. The bitesize format makes them perfect for quick movement breaks during lessons or to support everyday transitions at home.

The cards were co-created with young people with lived experience through the Inclusion 2028 Young Person Collective, ensuring the activities, imagery and themes feel relevant and accessible. Alongside simple physical activities, the resources also explore strength and balance from a broader perspective, recognising strength not only as physical ability but also strength of character and voice, and balance not just as physical stability but also emotional and social wellbeing. As a result, each card includes a positive thought and/or action alongside the physical activity.

“Working with the Inclusion 2028 Young Person Collective has been incredibly rewarding. By creating these cards alongside other young people, I hope they help schools and parents feel more confident in supporting inclusive physical activity for every child, including those with disabilities.” Grace, member of the Young Person collective

This co-development means that the KPI for this period was achieved.

To support implementation two toolkits were also produced – one for school staff alongside a complementary toolkit for parents/carers. These provide practical ideas that teachers, parents and carers can use to introduce bite-sized movement breaks in a range of settings, from classrooms to assembly halls or at home. By incorporating movement into existing routines, these resources aim to support environments where movement enhances

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-for-disabled-children-and-disabled-young-people-methodology/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines-for-disabled-children-and-disabled-young-people-methodology>

learning, wellbeing and inclusion for every child as their impact is extended beyond just PE and the classroom.

The resources can be viewed here, along with the session from Inclusion Live week that launched their use: <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/school-support/free-resources/stronger-every-day>

Higher Education Institution (HEI) pilot

The KPI for this delivery period was to recruit two HEIs identified to participate in an innovation project which seeks to improve trainee teachers knowledge and confidence in delivery inclusive provision.

Delivery

This year the Inclusion 2028 programme has sought to develop the knowledge and understanding of trainee teachers on being inclusive. The aims of this pilot are to:

- develop trainee teachers' confidence and competence in inclusive teaching practice-specifically in the subject of PE.
- deepen relationships locally, co-creating (between school and ITT provider) action plans which promote meaningful school placements, exposing trainee teachers to young people with SEND and inclusive practice.
- expand the opportunities for trainee teachers to access mentoring, inclusive CPD (e-learning and face to face) and resources.
- share case studies and best practice with government and the wider sector

As part of this the consortium members have pulled together an information sheet to signpost to advice and support for students (see overleaf).

Additionally, two HEIs were selected for the Inclusion 2028 programme to work with this year. They were chosen as providers with good existing links with their local LIS and a desire to improve their training in inclusive practice and students' experience of SEND. Plymouth Marjon students (PMJ) were from Years 1, 2 and 3, while Liverpool John Moores (LJM) students were all studying on a one-year PGCE course.

The institutions were offered a range of options in terms of how the providers could be supported by the programme and what students could access. Each university chose different options.

Plymouth Marjon University chose:

- A full-day inclusion conference delivered by Youth Sport Trust, Activity Alliance and an Athlete Mentor with lived experience of a disability. This covered the PE and inclusion landscape, tools for inclusive PE, neurodiversity and focus groups were held to get feedback from trainees.
- In-person workshop from the Association for PE on creating and delivering an inclusive curriculum
- Access and signposting to Inclusion 2028 resources
- Regular contact and support with the local Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School

Their course includes a school-based placement, which followed this input.

Liverpool John Moores University identified the following support:

- Inclusive PE course delivered by Activity Alliance with in-person support from the LIS
- Practical application experience at Clare Mount Specialist Sports College (LIS for Merseyside) teaching physical activity to pupils with SEND
- Inclusion workshop at a Youth Sport Trust Well Schools conference delivered by the Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School
- Access and signposting to Inclusion 2028 resources
- Regular contact and support with the local Youth Sport Trust Lead Inclusion School.

This means that the KPI for this period was achieved.

Equal Access, Equal Opportunity

Every pupil deserves to belong. Discover practical resources and support to help you deliver high-quality, inclusive PE, school sport and physical activity for all.

Did you know?

1 in 4 disabled young people regularly participate in PE



4 in 5 teachers want more guidance on supporting pupils with SEND



[Inclusion 2028 improves the chances and choices for pupils with SEND in PE, school sport and physical activity.](#)

'Live' support



- Contact your local [Lead Inclusion School \(LIS\)](#) for support with inclusive PE and SEND provision. To find your nearest LIS, email SEND@youthsporttrust.org.



- To book on to an [inclusive activity programme Training course](#) - please contact your Lead Inclusion School.



- To book on to a [BUPA Inclusion in Action: Live Lab](#) - please contact your Lead Inclusion School.

Written resources



[Inclusive education hub](#)

Build confidence with tailored resources



[Understanding neurodiversity](#)

Practical tips co-created with young people.



[Inclusive swimming hub](#)

Tools to make swimming inclusive for all.



[SEND Inclusion Toolkit](#)

Expert impairment specific guidance from National Disability Sport Organisations.



[TOP Sportsability](#)

An inclusive resource that helps young people with SEND build physical, movement and sensory skills through adapted activities.

Recorded Webinars & E-Learning



[Inclusion Live](#)

Expert-led sessions on inclusive practice



[Inclusive PE](#)

Embedding inclusion into everyday practice.
Code: [ipeinclusion2028](#)



[Supporting PE](#)

A Teaching Assistant's start-up to inclusive practice.
Code: [tainclusion2028](#)



[All about Autism](#)

Practical tips to support pupils with autism.

Self-reported effects

To gauge learning from this pilot the trainee teachers at both universities completed surveys in the first and second terms of the 2025/26 academic year. The second survey was sent out to the same students but there was some drop off in response. No Year 3 students from PMJ took part the second time and some students at LJM did not complete both surveys⁵.

The surveys were anonymous, so individual students could not be matched across the two surveys. The findings therefore show overall changes across the groups of students, rather than changes for individual people.

A full analysis of the data is provided as a standalone paper in Appendix 2. Overall, findings suggest students' understanding of inclusive practice developed over the course of the year. Responses suggested a shift from general awareness of SEND towards a more applied understanding of inclusion in day-to-day teaching practice.

Progress made by students

Students were asked in the baseline and again in the follow-up survey to rate their confidence, understanding and perceived capability relating to inclusive practice. Ratings were made on a five-point scale running from 1 = not well at all or not at all (depending on the question) to 5 = very well or extremely (again depending on the question). A higher score therefore indicates a more positive rating.

There were positive changes across all question items. As a cohort, students gave higher scores in the follow-up survey than they had at baseline. The largest changes related to more applied aspects of inclusive teaching, including adapting lessons, ensuring pupils with SEND are fully included, and using pupil voice to inform practice. Details of these changes are provided in Figure 1.

Comparisons between the two universities should be interpreted cautiously, particularly for PMJ where respondent numbers were very small (5 at baseline and 7 at follow-up). Small samples mean that individual responses can have a large effect on average scores and findings may not reflect the wider student cohort.

Despite this limitation, students from both universities reported improvements across most measures relating to inclusive practice between baseline and follow-up. PMJ respondents generally reported higher levels of confidence, understanding and perceived capability at both timepoints, particularly in understanding how to include pupils with SEND in lessons, confidence that lessons fully include pupils with SEND, and use of pupil voice to inform practice.

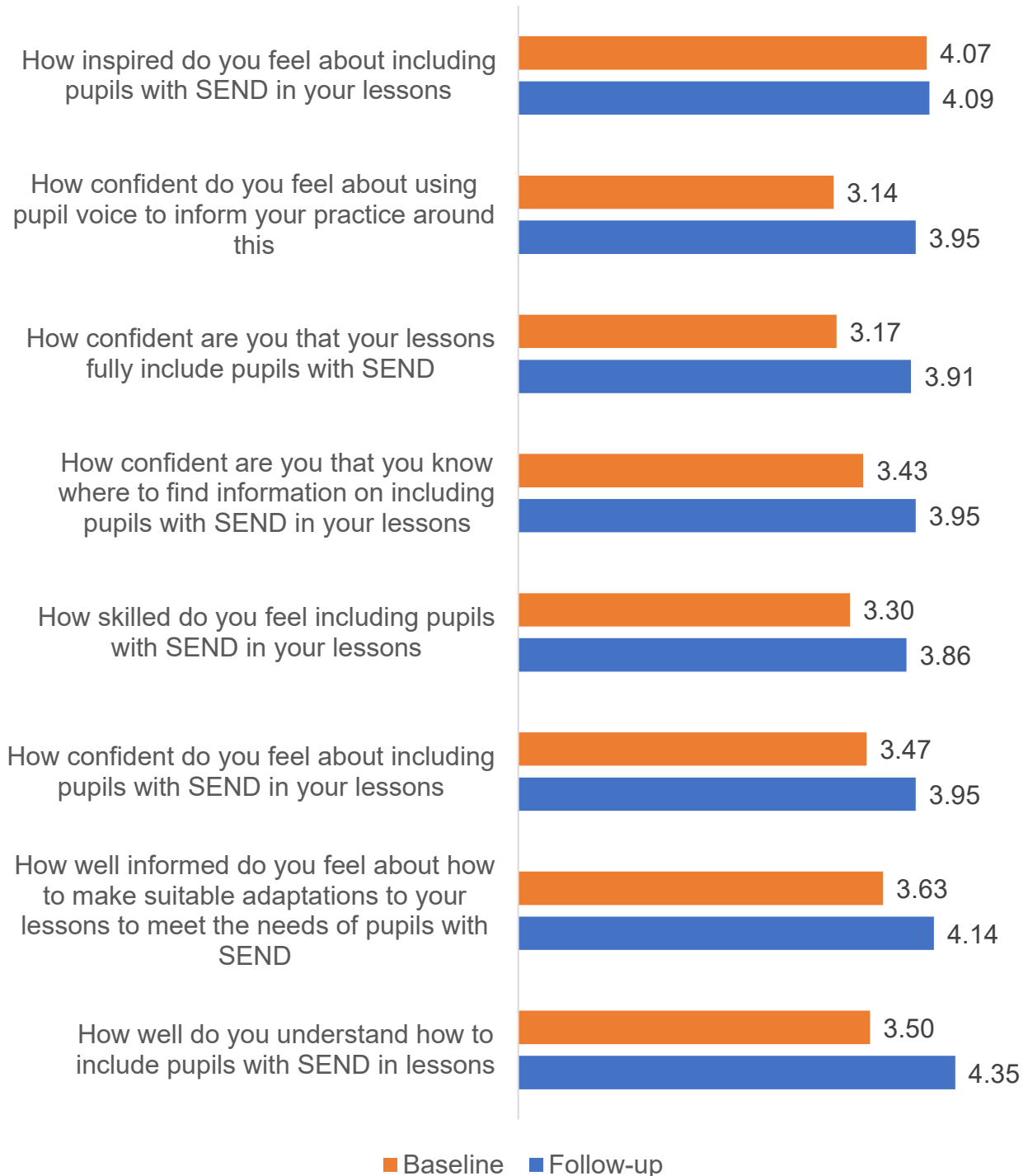
Both universities showed positive movement over time, although the areas of greatest change differed slightly. PMJ respondents showed the largest increase in understanding how to include pupils with SEND in lessons (+1.03), while LJM respondents showed the largest increase in confidence in using pupil voice to inform practice (+1.00). LJM respondents also demonstrated comparatively strong increases in confidence that lessons fully include pupils with SEND (+0.75) and in perceived skill in delivering inclusive practice (+0.56).

⁵ To make the fairest comparison, only the baseline survey responses from Plymouth Marjon Years 1 and 2 students were included in the change data between survey waves .

Levels of inspiration relating to inclusive practice remained consistently high across both universities, with little change over time.

Details of these changes are provided in Table 1.

Figure 1: Changes to student knowledge, understanding and confidence over time (mean scores out of five with a higher score indicating a more positive rating)



Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

Table 1: Mean baseline and follow-up ratings of student's inclusive practice by university (mean scores out of five with a higher score indicating a more positive rating)

	PMJ			LJM		
	Baseline	Follow-up	Change	Baseline	Follow-up	Change
How well do you understand how to include pupils with SEND in lessons	3.60	4.63	1.03	3.48	4.20	0.72
How well informed do you feel about how to make suitable adaptations to your lessons to meet the needs of pupils with SEND	4.00	4.38	0.38	3.56	4.00	0.44
How confident do you feel about doing this	3.40	3.86	0.46	3.48	4.00	0.52
How skilled do you feel doing this	3.60	4.00	0.40	3.24	3.80	0.56
How confident are you that you know where to find information on this	3.60	4.14	0.54	3.40	3.87	0.47
How confident are you that your lessons fully include pupils with SEND	3.40	4.00	0.60	3.12	3.87	0.75
How confident do you feel about using pupil voice to inform your practice around this	3.80	3.86	0.06	3.00	4.00	1.00
How inspired do you feel about this	4.20	4.14	-0.06	4.04	4.07	0.03

Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 5 respondents at baseline and 7 at follow-up for PMJ and 25 at baseline and 15 at follow-up for LJM

Activities experienced

Students from both universities reported having practical experience relating to inclusive practice for pupils with SEND during their course. All five PMJ respondents had both observed and delivered sessions involving pupils with SEND. Among LJM respondents, 12 students had observed sessions and 12 had delivered sessions, with most having experienced both activities.

A sub-set of LJM students (n=15) had also attended inclusive activity workshops and visited Clare Mount Specialist College. Both experiences were rated positively, with all students reporting that they gained at least some benefit. Mean usefulness scores were high, particularly for the Clare Mount College visit (4.5 out of 5), compared with 4.0 for the workshops. When comparing the two experiences, these students were split between those who found both equally helpful and those who considered the Clare Mount College visit the most useful. No respondents identified the workshops alone as the most useful activity.

Following the input from Inclusion 2028, students went on placement. After these placements school staff who had supported trainees asked the programme if they too could be trained in inclusive practice as they had found that the trainees were more informed than them in the area of inclusion.

Students at PMJ attended a one day Physical Education SEND Conference which was hosted by a former Paralympic athlete who is now an Athlete Mentor, with guest speakers from Youth Sport Trust and Activity Alliance. The course included a session setting the policy context and two practical sessions modelling inclusive PE practice. Following the day focus groups were conducted with all participating students asking them to reflect on the day and their course more generally.

Focus groups following the conference suggested students particularly valued practical and applied learning, lived experience, and opportunities to explore inclusive approaches in realistic contexts. Students also described increased awareness of sensory and environmental barriers and viewed tools such as the STEP framework as useful and accessible. Concerns remained around implementing inclusive practice within mainstream schools experiencing constraints such as large class sizes, limited staffing and time pressures.

Looking forward students were keen to experience more modelling, interactive delivery and practical examples linked to real classroom conditions.

Reflections on the course

Students consistently identified practical, hands-on experiences as the most valuable aspect of the course, particularly opportunities to work directly with pupils with SEND through Clare Mount Specialist Sports College, SEND placements, workshops and conferences. Observing and delivering inclusive practice in real settings appeared to help students develop a more applied understanding of inclusive PE and school sport.

“The day to Clare Mount college... helped me understand why students need movement breaks to help them improve their education.” – Teacher trainee from Liverpool John Moores

Students also expressed a strong desire for further practical guidance to support inclusive teaching in real classroom situations. Rather than asking for more theory, respondents wanted concrete examples and strategies that could be directly implemented in lessons.

Students described inclusive practice as requiring flexibility and responsiveness to individual learner needs. Several emphasised the importance of proactively adapting lessons so pupils with SEND are not disadvantaged from the outset while others highlighted the importance of involving pupils themselves in decisions about adaptation

“Ensuring that the content is accessible to everyone and not disadvantaging pupils before the lesson even begins.” – Trainee teacher

“Learning the variations of adaption and if possible ask the student themselves what they would like.” – Trainee teacher

Students also increasingly viewed inclusion as being about participation, enjoyment and success, rather than simply access alone.

Looking ahead, students described intending to place greater emphasis on flexibility, adaptation and learner-centred planning within future practice.

“Get to know the learners as much as possible so I know their needs and what activities they like.” – Trainee teacher

3. Lessons learnt about CPD

Across interviews, surveys, case studies and feedback gathered during Year 1 delivery, several consistent themes have emerged regarding the delivery of professional development and training to school sector staff. Inclusion 2028 appears to be helping shift inclusive PE from being viewed as specialist, separate or an additional stand-alone activity towards something embedded, practical and adaptable within everyday and mainstream delivery.

Context

- Pupils with SEND are now commonly in mainstream settings⁶. SEND is therefore no longer an ‘add-on’ activity or exclusive to specialist provisions. The government focus is on inclusion (i.e. adapting what is offered for all pupils while meeting the needs of those with SEND)
- In many settings PE can play an important role in the integration of pupils with SEND, including those who receive other lessons in specialist bases.
- Delivery staff and schools describe limited access to external support exists (such as Local Authority SEND advisory teams, Occupational Therapists, educational psychologists) or they are not easy for settings to access, therefore they need to grow their own in-house expertise⁷
- Building staff confidence appears important in supporting more inclusive practice.

⁶ More than 1.7million pupils have SEND, meaning 1 in 5 of all pupils in the school system. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/ycrbfrjw/nSEN-high-send-schools-report-2.pdf>

Government data for 2024/5 shows 18.3% of pupils in State funded primary settings have SEND, and 16.5% in State funded secondaries. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2024-25#section-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-in-schools>

⁷ Inclusive workforce models, DfE, CFE & ASK Research, in press

Challenges to accessing CPD

- Staff are highly busy, stretched and time poor. Getting time out for training is difficult
- There is a high level of CPD burn out
- Support staff, particularly Teaching Assistants, play a key role in enabling inclusive PE and physical activity, but require more consistent inclusion in training, planning and wider school discussions around PE delivery
- For training to engage staff, it has to be seen as highly relevant, valuable and applicable, as well as flexible and relatively easy to take part in.

Training needs to turn theory into practice

- Feedback consistently suggested that staff valued training that was both practical and motivating.
- Attendees want to learn something new (this applies to both those from specialist settings and mainstream).

Training needs to be active – they are PE staff and do not appreciate being sat and talked to for long periods of time.

- Training needs to reflect the realities of mainstream settings and teachers' day-to-day experiences. Participants frequently described working with classes of around 30 pupils with a wide range of needs and limited additional adult support.
- Feedback across interviews and surveys suggest that training needs to cover engaging pupils with the types of needs staff are seeing - neurodiverse, Learning Disabilities, pupils with behavioural and engagement issues.

Training needs to inspire

- Inspiring staff to be inclusive and to feel that they have the tools to make suitable adaptations is key. Training needs to:
 - Give a general sense of inclusive practice (lived experience, adaptations, thinking outside the box).
 - Introduce the use of pupil voice and consultation with pupils with SEND.
 - Provide key take-aways for everyday practice.

Lessons from e-learning

- Whilst there can be high engagement with signing up for e-learning, this often does not transition into full completions. Therefore, it is important that any promotional tools highlight how easy it is to complete and what they will benefit from by completing.
- Flexible completion works, but needs to include practical application (especially through use of videos)
- Practitioners that have completed the e-learning could benefit from a follow up after they have tried to apply what they have learnt before returning for a check in.

- Findings suggest that online learning is most effective when it is combined with opportunities for practical application, discussion and follow-up support to help staff embed learning into practice. Follow up and consolidation could involve:
 - Wider signposting, especially to further Inclusion 2028 resources
 - Further discussion and idea-sharing with delegates
 - Consolidation and recap of learning
 - The tutor answering further questions about real-world practice

4. Conclusions and recommendations for next steps

Inclusion 2028 has delivered well against its delivery KPIs set for this period:

KPI	Delivery	KPI status
Upskill 1,000 teachers and teaching assistants (500 each) in inclusive practice.	4553 members of the school workforce took part in CPD training, including 2597 teachers and 1122 TAs. This was in addition to other forms of 'upskilling'	Over achieved
50 schools training 500 young leaders (30% with SEND) to engage 5000 pupils (70% with SEND) in inclusive physical activity. 200 new extra-curricular inclusive clubs established by young leaders in their schools for peers.	5,836 young leaders were trained (34% with SEND) with 43,615 pupils (70% with SEND) engaging in inclusive events and activities. 210 new extra-curricular inclusive clubs were established in schools	Over achieved
Deliver resilience, leadership and self-belief training to support young people to thrive in an additional 10 Alternative Provision (AP) schools/units across England, engaging between 60-100 young people (70% with SEND).	10 AP settings delivered MyPB sessions (focused on resilience, self-belief and life skill development), engaging 250 pupils (100% with SEND) weekly	Over achieved
Provide free to access content and resources created by sport & education sector experts, reaching a total of 4000 practitioners	4464 practitioners are registered on the free to access Inclusive Education Hub with refreshed and updated content	Achieved
Deliver Inclusion Live 2026 to 1000 practitioners	1,409 practitioners registered for Inclusion Live	Achieved
Offer 9 Inclusive PE Trainings with 280 teachers attending	10 sessions were run for 302 teaching staff	Achieved
650 new completions of the Inclusive PE e-learning	621 staff completed the IPE e-learning, which will now be improved based on feedback received	Almost achieved
Engage 500 TAs in training	742 TAs registered for the TA training modules	Achieved

Deliver School Swimming and Water Safety training, reaching 225 school swimming staff	303 practitioners attended School Swimming and Water Safety training	Achieved
Recruit 66 Water Safety Young Champions (50% with SEND)	50 Water Safety Champions (over 50% with SEND) have delivered activities (the rest deciding to run events during Drowning Prevention week – outside of this reporting period)	Almost achieved
Strength and balance activities co-created with young people with SEND.	Young people with SEND advised the development of the Strength and balance activity cards, which have now been published	Achieved
Two HEIs identified and connected with Lead Inclusion School activities	Trainee teachers from two HEIs received input from Inclusion 2028	Achieved

*this includes only KPIs where relevant data has been collected during this period.

Early findings from evaluation activities conducted this year suggest the range of CPD offered by Inclusion 2028 is helping to embed more inclusive approaches to PE and physical activity practice across participating settings, while also supporting wider sharing of inclusive practice across the sector.

Inclusion 2028 insights re-enforce the importance of developing teams of confident practitioners facilitating inclusive practice, from classroom teachers, Teaching Assistants, senior leaders and third-party providers. Immersive training experiences for trainee teachers, and support staff are most impactful but require practitioners to be released to experience the training, and for the staff they work with in settings to also be confident in delivering inclusion in practice.

Year 1 evaluation findings suggest some focused areas for future programme development:

A. Programme development

1. Continue to prioritise practical and applied CPD approaches

Feedback across the programme consistently suggested that staff most valued CPD which was practical, adaptable and rooted in real-world delivery contexts. Continuing to prioritise these approaches within both face to face and online CPD is likely to support engagement and application into practice.

2. Further develop blended approaches to professional development

Findings suggest that flexible online learning is valued by staff due to workload pressures and time constraints. However, participants also identified the importance of practical application, discussion and opportunities to see inclusive approaches in action. Further development of blended approaches combining e-learning, practical modelling, peer discussion and follow-up support may help strengthen implementation and sustain learning over time.

3. Continue to strengthen support around neurodiversity, behaviour and mainstream inclusion

Across interviews, training feedback and case studies, staff consistently highlighted the growing need for support in engaging pupils with a wide range of needs within mainstream settings, particularly around neurodiversity, regulation and behaviour. Continuing to develop resources, examples and CPD focused on these areas is likely to remain highly relevant to workforce needs.

4. Strengthen whole-school engagement in inclusive practice

Findings suggest inclusive practice is most effectively embedded when it extends beyond individual PE staff. Wider engagement from Teaching Assistants, pastoral staff and senior leaders appears important in supporting sustainable implementation. Continued emphasis on whole-school approaches and wider staff engagement may support more sustainable implementation of inclusive practice.

5. Continue to develop opportunities for pupil voice and leadership

Early findings suggest that involving pupils with SEND as leaders, contributors and peer researchers can support both engagement and wider inclusion. There is value in continuing to strengthen opportunities for pupil voice and leadership within future programme delivery and evaluation activity. Staff consistently highlighted how having the basic tools to be inclusive was helpful but being led by actual pupils, by asking them what worked and how PE needed to be adapted to meet their needs, supported their delivery. Equipping staff with the confidence to consult pupils was therefore key to this.

6. Explore opportunities to extend HEI engagement

Initial feedback from participating HEIs suggests that experiential learning, placements and exposure to inclusive practice are highly valued by trainee teachers. There may be opportunities to further develop this strand of work and explore how inclusive practice can be more consistently embedded within initial teacher training and placement experiences, including with providers whose offer is less developed.

B. Evaluation development

1. Continue to strengthen evidence around sustained practice change

Year 1 findings provide strong evidence of workforce engagement, increased confidence and intended changes to practice. The next phase of the evaluation will continue to explore the extent to which these changes become embedded within day-to-day delivery over time across a range of settings.

2. Further explore pupil-level outcomes and experiences

While early case study evidence suggests positive effects for pupils with SEND in areas such as confidence, participation and engagement, further work is needed to better understand the nature and sustainability of these outcomes across different settings and delivery models.

3. Continue to develop participatory approaches to evaluation

The use of peer researchers and pupil voice activity provided useful insight into young people's experiences of the programme. There is value in continuing to develop participatory approaches which enable pupils with SEND to directly shape and inform future evaluation activity.

4. Explore barriers and enabling factors across different settings

The next phase of the evaluation should continue to explore the contextual factors which support or constrain implementation across different settings, including workforce capacity, leadership support and access to wider specialist expertise.

5. HEI follow up

The evaluation will seek to follow up with students trained this year as they progress through their course and/or into teaching. The aim will be to see if various strands of the input are more impactful within real-world teaching practice.

Appendix: HEI pilot evaluation details

Method and response

Student teachers at Plymouth Marjon (PMJ) and Liverpool John Moores (LJM) Universities were surveyed during the 2025/26 academic year during their first term and again during their second term. Responses were anonymous. Respondents from PMJ were from across years 1, 2 and 3 whereas students at LJM were on a one-year course. Survey links were shared with the course leaders who then distributed them on behalf of the research team to the full student cohort.

There were 16 eligible PE trainees at PMJ and 25 at LJM. The response rates for the surveys were:

- For LJM - 100% (25 responses) at baseline and 64% (16 responses) at follow-up

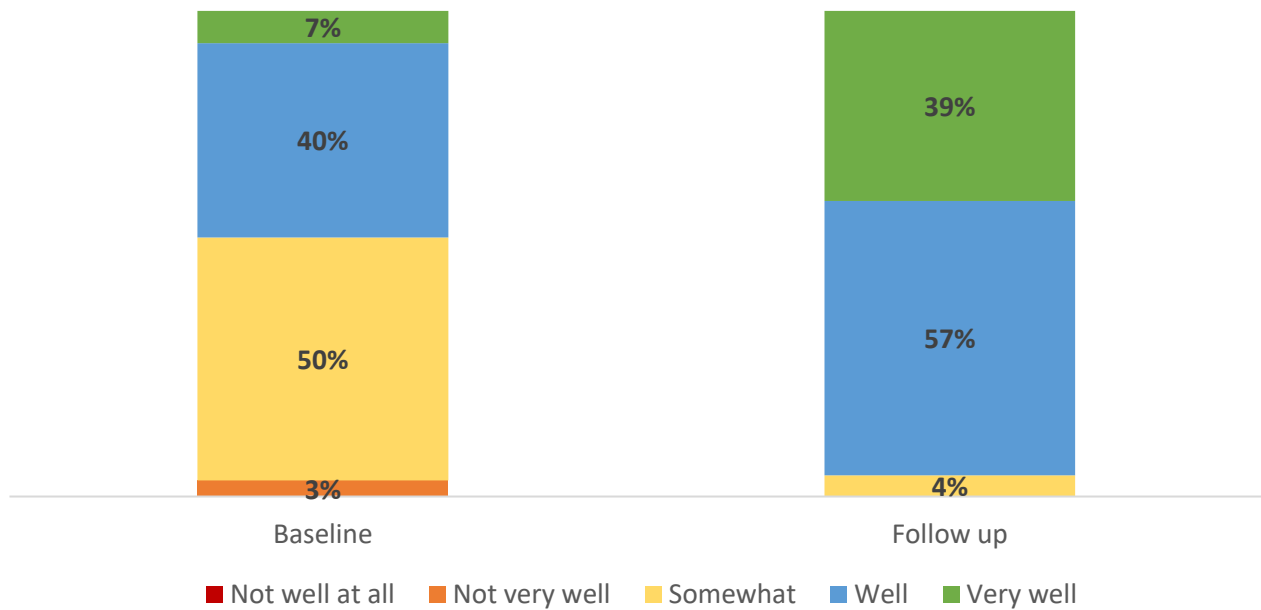
For PMJ – 88% (14 responses) at baseline and 57% (9 responses) at follow-up. The follow-up survey is assumed to represent largely the same cohort with one exception. No Year 3 students from PMJ responded at follow-up. This was because these students were on an extended placement when the survey was administered. To account for this, cohort comparisons between the baseline and follow-up surveys were restricted to students in Years 1 and 2 at Plymouth to improve comparability between waves. There was also some drop out between survey waves at LJM as already described.

Responses from the two survey waves were combined into a single dataset but as responses were anonymous they could not be linked at individual level. Findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative of cohort-level change rather than tracked individual progression.

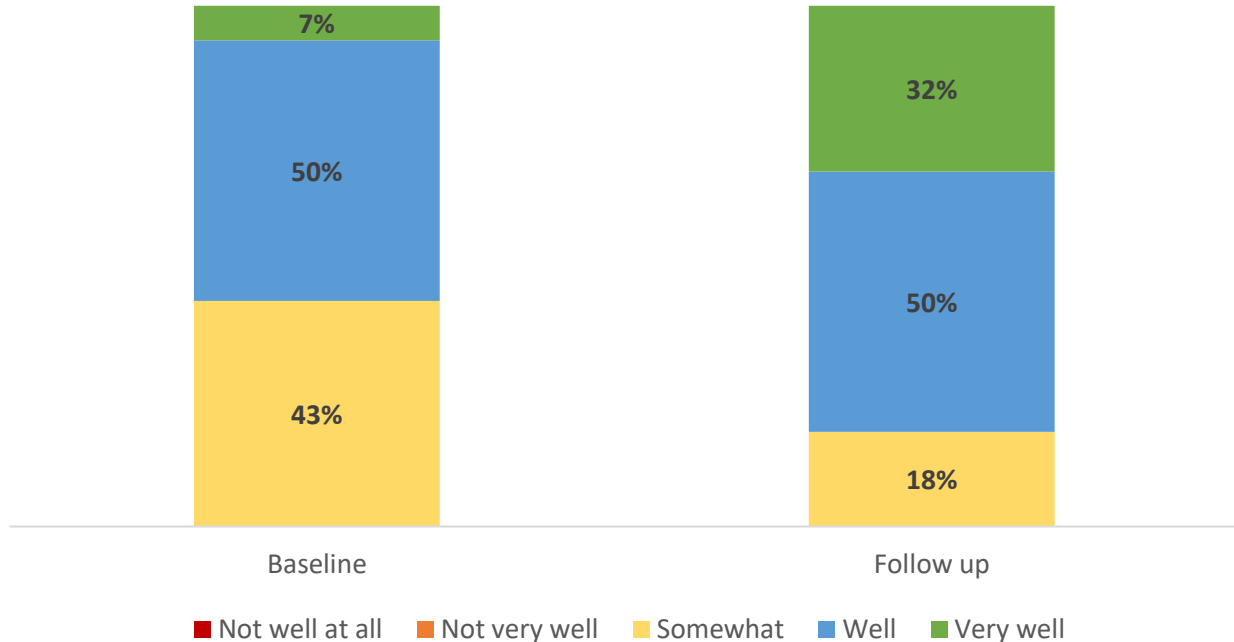
Comparison between baseline and follow-up

Students were first asked to rate their knowledge and understanding of how to make adaptations and include pupils with SEND in lessons using a five point scale⁸. Ratings shifted towards the more positive end of the scale (Figures A1 and A2) over time.

⁸ The scale ran from 1 = not well at all to 5 = very well.

Figure A1: How well do you understand how to include pupils with SEND in lessons?

Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

Figure A2: How well informed do you feel about how to make suitable adaptations to your lessons to meet the needs of pupils with SEND?

Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

Follow-up respondents reported statistically significantly higher levels of knowledge and understanding relating to inclusive practice than baseline respondents (n = 30 at baseline and 23 at follow-up). Mann–Whitney U tests found significant differences for both

understanding how to include pupils with SEND in lessons⁹ and feeling informed about making suitable lesson adaptations¹⁰. The largest shift related to understanding inclusive practice within lessons.

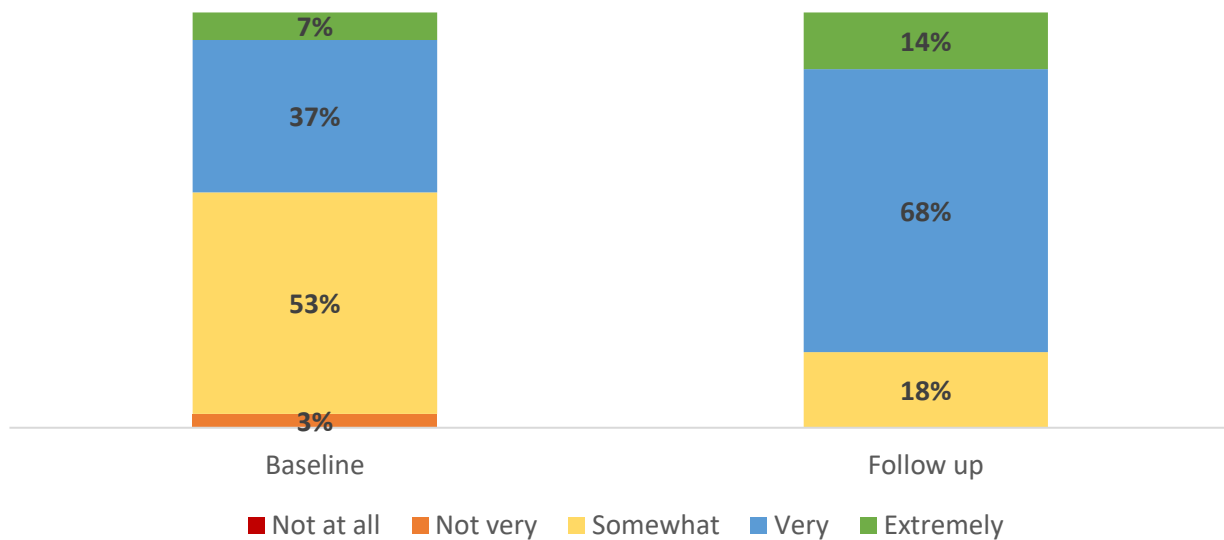
A second set of questions asked respondents to rate how they felt about a range of different aspects of including pupils with SEND in their lessons. Again, there was a positive shift between the two surveys (Figures A3 to A7).

Responses provided at follow-up (n = 30 at baseline and 23 at follow-up) were more positive in all areas compared to baseline. Mann–Whitney U tests indicated that these differences were statistically significant for:

- levels of confidence in including pupils with a range of SEND in lessons
- perceived skill in and capability in delivering inclusive lessons
- confidence that lessons fully include pupils with SEND
- confidence in using pupil voice to inform inclusive practice.

Confidence in knowing where to find information on inclusive practice also increased between waves, although this difference was not statistically significant. Feelings of inspiration and motivation relating to inclusion were already high at baseline and remained stable at follow-up, with no statistically significant difference observed between waves.

Figure A3: How confident do you feel about including pupils with a range of SEND in your lessons?

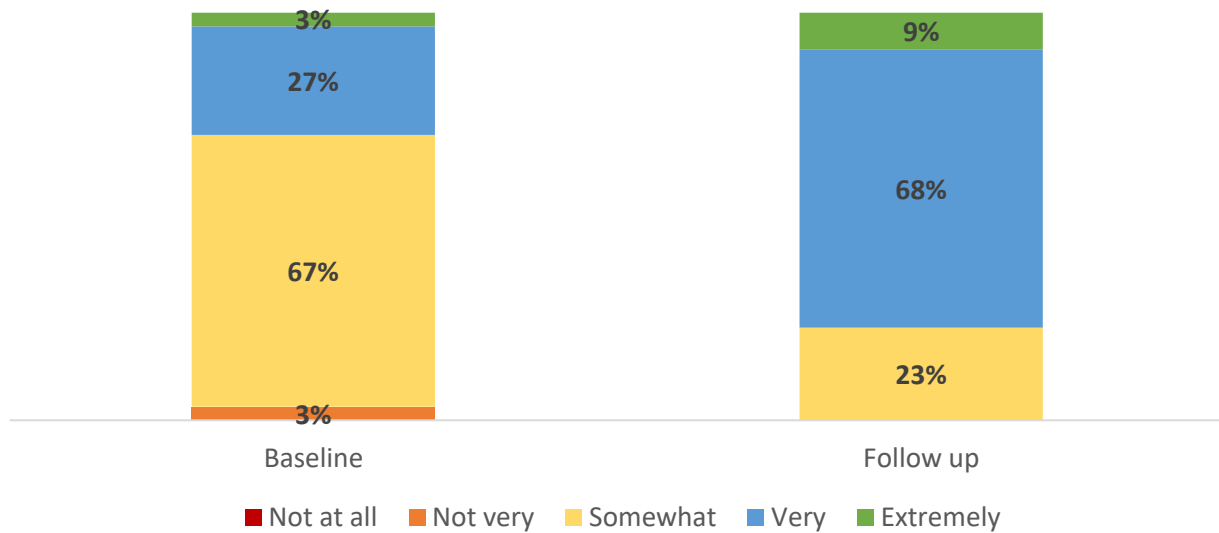


Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

⁹ (U = 134.50, p < .001)

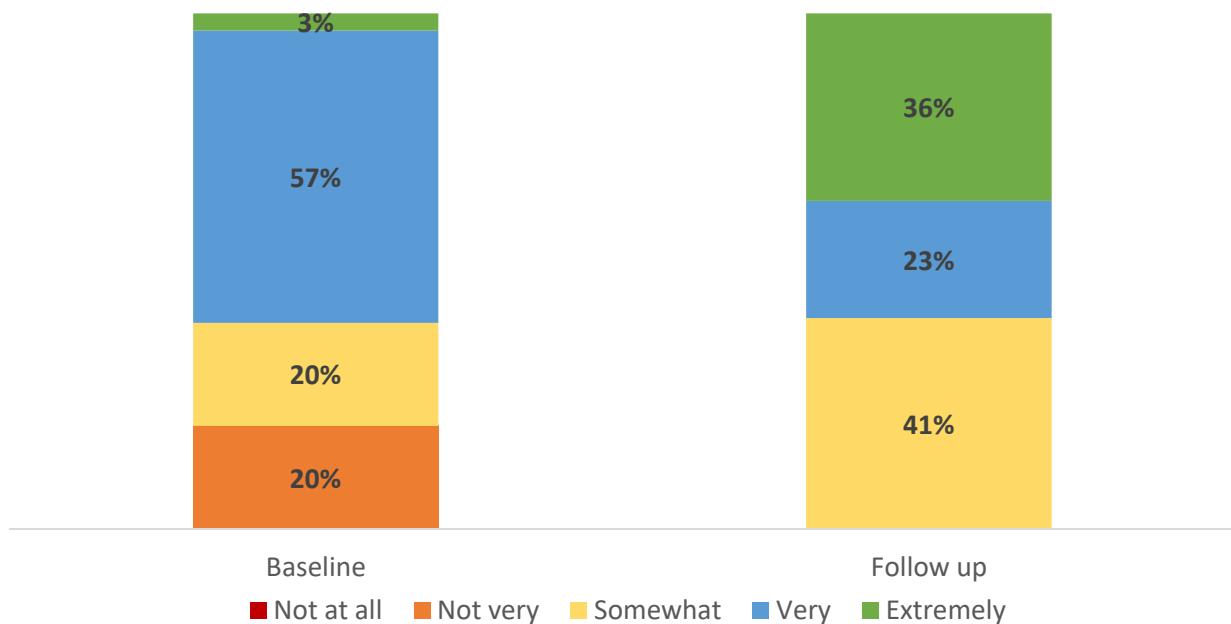
¹⁰ (U = 205.50, p = .012)

Figure A4: How skilled do you feel including pupils with a range of SEND in your lessons?



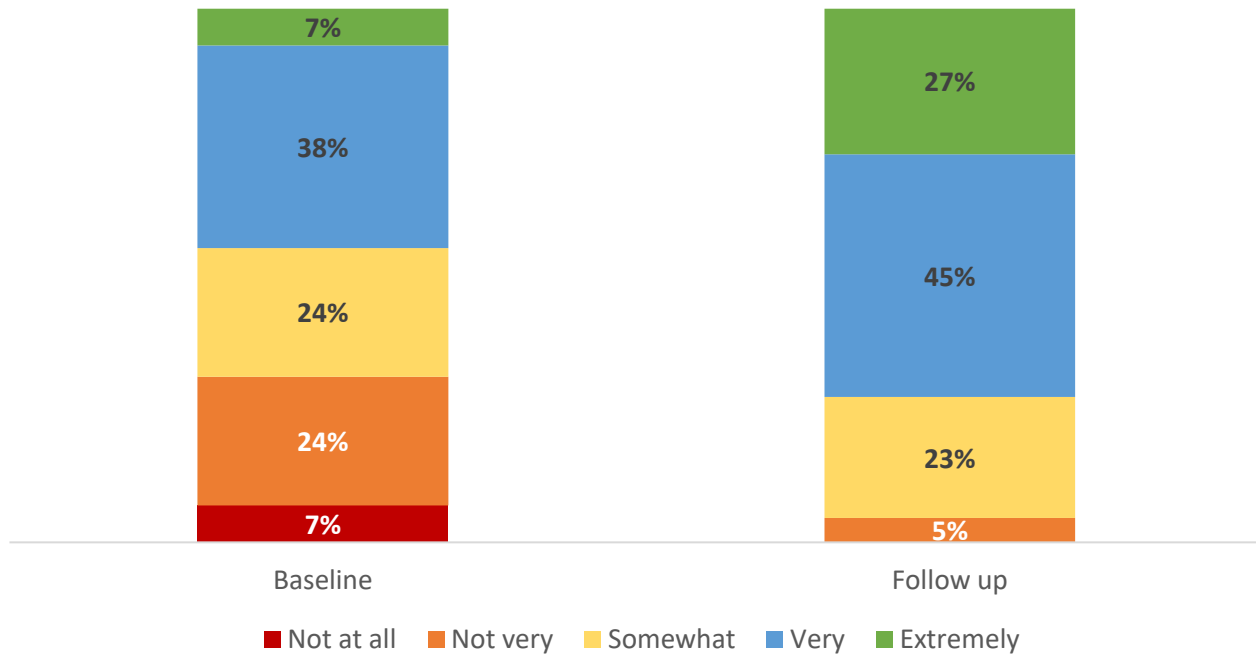
Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

Figure A5: How confident are you that you know how to include pupils with a range of SEND in your lessons?



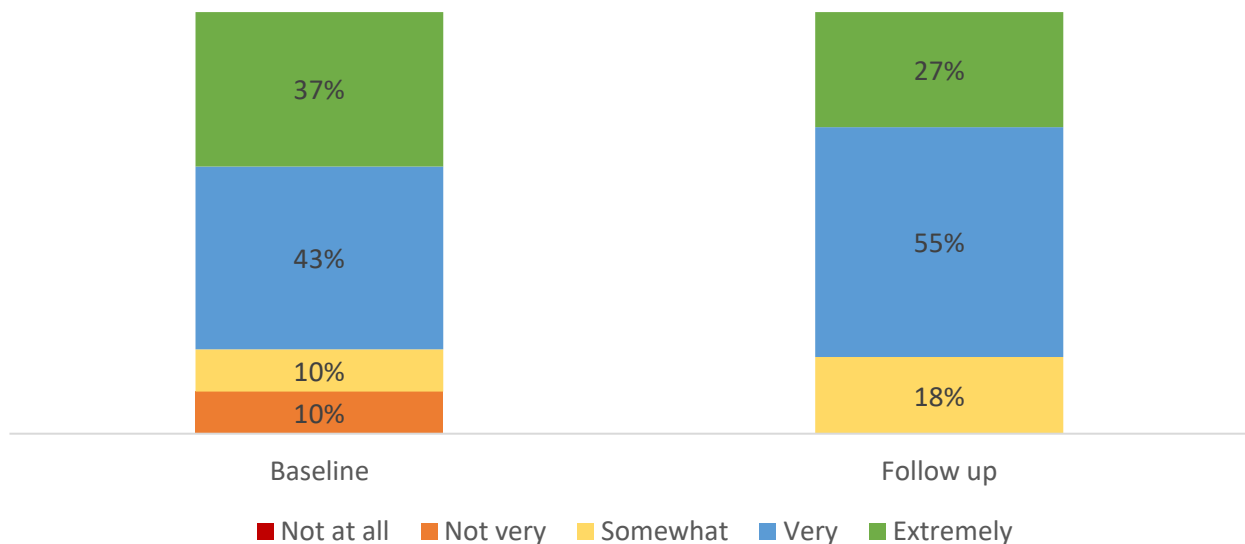
Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

Figure A6: How confident do you feel about using pupil voice to inform your practice about including pupils with a range of SEND in your lessons?



Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

Figure A7: How inspired do you feel about including pupils with a range of SEND in your lessons?



Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 30 respondents at baseline and 23 at follow-up

Therefore while students were positively disposed towards inclusive practice from the outset, follow-up responses reflected greater confidence, practical understanding and perceived capability in implementing inclusive approaches within lessons. The strongest shifts were seen in applied aspects of inclusive practice, particularly respondents'

confidence that their lessons will fully include pupils with SEND and their perceived skill in delivering inclusive teaching.

Comparing institutions

Table 2 shows mean baseline and follow-up scores relating to inclusive practice separated out for each university. Findings relating to PMJ should be interpreted with particular caution due to the small number of respondents at both baseline and follow-up (n=5 and n=7 respectively). As a result, relatively small changes in individual responses may have a substantial impact on mean scores, and observed differences may not be representative of the wider cohort.

Baseline scores differed between the two institutions across several measures, with PMJ respondents generally reporting higher starting levels of knowledge, understanding and confidence relating to inclusive practice. This was particularly evident in relation to using pupil voice to inform practice, confidence that lessons fully include pupils with SEND and understanding how to make lessons inclusive for pupils with SEND.

Differences between universities remained evident at follow-up, although both universities demonstrated improvements across most measures. PMJ respondents continued to report higher overall scores across most areas at follow-up, particularly in understanding how to include pupils with SEND in lessons. However, the scale of change varied between institutions. PMJ respondents showed the largest increase in understanding how to include pupils with SEND in lessons (+1.03), while LJM respondents demonstrated the largest increase in confidence in using pupil voice to inform practice (+1.00). LJM respondents also showed comparatively larger increases in confidence that lessons fully include pupils with SEND (+0.75) and perceived skill in delivering inclusive practice (+0.56). In contrast, levels of inspiration relating to inclusive practice remained consistently high across both universities, with little change over time.

Table 2: Mean baseline and follow-up ratings of student's inclusive practice by university

	PMJ			LJM		
	Baseline	Follow-up	Change	Baseline	Follow-up	Change
How well do you understand how to include pupils with SEND in lessons	3.60	4.63	1.03	3.48	4.20	0.72
How well informed do you feel about how to make suitable adaptations to your lessons to meet the needs of pupils with SEND	4.00	4.38	0.38	3.56	4.00	0.44
How confident do you feel about doing this	3.40	3.86	0.46	3.48	4.00	0.52
How skilled do you feel doing this	3.60	4.00	0.40	3.24	3.80	0.56

How confident are you that you know where to find information on this	3.60	4.14	0.54	3.40	3.87	0.47
How confident are you that your lessons fully include pupils with SEND	3.40	4.00	0.60	3.12	3.87	0.75
How confident do you feel about using pupil voice to inform your practice around this	3.80	3.86	0.06	3.00	4.00	1.00
How inspired do you feel about this	4.20	4.14	-0.06	4.04	4.07	0.03

Source: Surveys of students from Plymouth Marjon and Liverpool John Moores Universities, same cohort with drop out between waves, conducted Sep-Dec 2025 and Mar-Apr 2026. Based on 5 respondents at baseline and 7 at follow-up for PMJ and 25 at baseline and 15 at follow-up for LJM

Students from both universities therefore reported greater confidence, understanding and perceived capability relating to inclusive practice at follow-up compared with the baseline. While PMJ respondents generally reported higher scores overall at both timepoints, respondents from both institutions demonstrated positive movement across a range of measures relating to inclusive teaching practice. The largest changes were seen in understanding how to include pupils with SEND in lessons, confidence that their lessons fully include pupils with SEND, and confidence in using pupil voice to inform practice.

Although respondents from both universities reported increased **understanding of how to include pupils with SEND in lessons**, the increase was more pronounced among PMJ respondents (+1.03 compared with +0.72 at LJM). Given PMJ respondents also reported slightly higher baseline understanding, this may suggest that aspects of the PMJ offer more strongly supported students' understanding of inclusive practice. The limited sample size and inability to track individual's progress, however, makes it inappropriate to make firmer conclusions.

Developing understanding

Open text questions in both waves asked students what had helped them most in developing an understanding of how to include pupils with SEND in lessons.

Most helpful aspects

Responses at both time points highlighted the importance of practical experience, placements, lectures and workshops in developing respondents' confidence around inclusive practice. While similar themes were evident at both timepoints, baseline responses tended to focus more on general exposure to SEND and inclusion-related learning opportunities, whereas follow-up responses appeared somewhat more focused on the practical application of inclusive approaches, including adapting teaching strategies, understanding individual pupil needs, and implementing inclusive practices within lessons. This broadly aligns with the quantitative findings, which suggested increased confidence and perceived capability relating to inclusive practice at follow-up.

“Examples, SEND awareness, learning about inclusivity.” (LJM student, baseline survey)

“Infiltrating adaptive practices into practical lectures during university” (PMJ student, follow-up survey)

Additions they would find useful

Across both waves, respondents identified practical experience, observation and direct engagement with pupils with SEND as the areas that would be most useful in further developing their confidence and capability relating to inclusive practice. Baseline responses tended to focus more on wanting greater exposure to specialist settings, practical examples and knowledge relating to different needs and conditions. In contrast, follow-up responses were more focused on how inclusive approaches could be embedded and implemented within practice, including adapting activities, integrating inclusive strategies within teaching, and gaining experience across a wider range of SEND contexts. This suggests that through their courses students were experiencing a shift from needing support with their general awareness and understanding towards a need for more applied and implementation-focused thinking about inclusive practice.

“I feel like some hands-on experience and observation of more lessons would be useful” (LJM student, baseline survey)

“Specific guidance on how to implement in PE” (LJM student, follow-up survey)

Developing the ability to make suitable adaptations

Students were also asked in an open format what had helped them most in making suitable adaptations in lessons to meet the needs of pupils with SEND

Most helpful aspects

Both surveys highlighted the importance of placements, practical experience, lectures and workshops in supporting the development of inclusive practice. Baseline responses more commonly focused on developing foundational knowledge about SEND, learning adaptation strategies and understanding inclusive teaching approaches. In contrast, follow-up responses were more focused on applying inclusive practices within real teaching contexts, including adapting activities during placements, responding to practical situations and learning from experienced practitioners. Across both waves, respondents consistently identified practical experience and opportunities to observe or implement inclusive teaching approaches as particularly valuable in developing their confidence and capability relating to inclusive practice.

“Lectures about specific ways to adapt lessons to make sure everyone can be involved.” (LJM student, baseline survey)

“Focused lectures on adaptive teaching. Whole conferences based on this. Practical experience in schools delivering and reflecting on SEND and meeting pupils needs.” (PMJ student, follow-up survey)

Additions they would find useful

In terms of additional support, responses continued to emphasise the importance of practical experience, subject-specific examples and opportunities to apply inclusive approaches in practice. Baseline responses more commonly focused on accessing resources, lesson adaptations, examples and strategies to support understanding of inclusive teaching. In contrast, follow-up responses were more focused on implementation and repeated application, including practising adaptations within practical lectures, embedding inclusive approaches within mainstream teaching, and gaining further experience applying strategies in authentic teaching contexts. Across both waves, respondents consistently highlighted the importance of practical application and experiential learning in developing inclusive practice.

*“A book of easily adaptable lesson plans designed for students with SEND”
(LJM student, baseline survey)*

*“Extra resources on the inclusion model, how to effectively implement this
in schools. Especially inclusion in mainstream” (PMJ student, follow-up
survey)*

Activities experienced

Students were asked what practical experience and other opportunities they had experienced related to inclusive practice for pupils with SEND.

Observation and practical experience

Five students from PMJ and 12 from LJM had observed a session involving pupils with SEND during their course and the same numbers had run a session involving pupils with SEND. All five from PMJ had done both, with 10 out of the 12 students from LJM doing both, two just observing and two just running a session.

Inclusive activity workshops and attending Clare Mount Specialist Sports College

A sub-set of the students from LJM university (n=15) had attended both an inclusive activity workshop and visited Clare Mount Specialist Sports College. These students were asked to rate the usefulness of these activities. Both activities were rated highly with all students saying that they got at least something out of it. Using a five point scale¹¹ the mean scores were 4.0 for the workshops and 4.5 for the visit indicating that most students felt they got a lot or a great deal from the sessions.

When asked to compare the two experiences, students were fairly evenly split between those who found both activities equally helpful and those who found attending Clare Mount most useful. No respondents identified the workshops alone as most useful.

Most useful aspects of the whole course

All students were asked in an open question what had been most useful about their course with 13 students responding. The focus of these answers was mainly on the value of practical experiences, particularly at Clare Mount Specialist Sports College, SEND placements, workshops and conferences. Some highlighted the opportunity to work directly

¹¹ The scale used was 1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = some, 4 = a lot and 5 = a great deal

with pupils with SEND and see inclusive approaches in practice as especially useful in developing their understanding of inclusive PE and school sport.

Several responses specifically referred to the Clare Mount Specialist Sports College experience and the opportunity to deliver activities with pupils with SEND. For example:

“Delivering the sessions in Clare Mount to SEND students so we could get experience of the different types of learners and activities”. (LJM student)

“The day to Clare Mount college... helped me understand why students need movement breaks to help them improve their education.” (LJM student)

Reflections on the year

The follow up survey asked students to reflect back on their experiences of learning about inclusive practice for pupils with SEND over the year.

Support that would help include pupils with SEND in their lessons

Most students who provided feedback identified a desire for more practical, applied support to help them adapt teaching for pupils with SEND in real classroom situations. Rather than requesting abstract theory, many comments focused on concrete examples, strategies and guidance that could be directly implemented in lessons. Students highlighted a desire for more scenario-based learning, examples of inclusive lesson planning and greater understanding of how to respond to individual pupil needs.

Overall, responses suggested that students were particularly interested in practical guidance on how inclusive approaches could be implemented effectively within day-to-day teaching practice.

“Given examples to be shown about what is the best way to adapt things and things in the content that would be best suited for the students for them to learn the best that they can.” (PMJ student)

“More inclusive whole school approaches for SEND learners. And more awareness of SEND needs for all staff, some are aware of it but still don't take this into account when planning/teaching. Lots more Staff CPD on SEND and a real focus on how all staff can manage the increasing SEND learners in the classroom.” (PMJ student)

Key takeaways

Students were asked what their main takeaway was about how to make PE and school sport inclusive.

A number showed their understanding of inclusive practice had moved beyond general awareness towards ideas around anticipating needs, being flexible, able to individualise and deliver responsive teaching. Several respondents highlighted the importance of proactively adapting lessons to be inclusive so that pupils with SEND are not set up to fail from the outset, for example:

“Ensuring that the content is accessible to everyone and not disadvantaging pupils before the lesson even begins.” (LJM student)

Others emphasised the importance of tailoring approaches to individual learners and involving pupils themselves in decisions about adaptation:

“Learning the variations of adaption and if possible ask the student themselves what they would like.” (PMJ student)

There was also evidence that respondents increasingly viewed inclusion as linked to participation, enjoyment and pupil success, rather than simply access alone:

“Make sure the activities are accessible for everyone by using adaptive practice and everyone is enjoying the lesson and experiencing success.” (LJM student)

Some responses reflected a growing awareness of inclusive teaching as an ongoing and flexible process requiring responsiveness and adaptability:

“Plan effectively beforehand, but have more than one plan or thought as the day changes constantly and one thing that would’ve been good can always be better.” (PMJ student) Several respondents also articulated more universal approaches to inclusion, recognising that planning effectively for pupils with SEND could improve learning for all pupils:

“Plan for the SEND students as that will be OK for all.” (LJM student)

Collectively students appear to have started conceptualising inclusive practice not simply as making isolated adaptations, but as a broader approach centred on flexibility, accessibility, responsiveness and understanding individual learner needs.

What students will do differently in practice

Based on their experiences, it appears students’ future practice will have greater emphasis on flexibility, adaptation and learner-centred planning. When asked what they would do differently in future many responses focused on making lessons more inclusive through adapting activities, using different equipment and strategies, simplifying teaching approaches, and ensuring that all pupils could participate, progress and experience success. Several respondents also highlighted the importance of understanding individual learners and their needs in advance in order to plan more effectively for delivery of an inclusive approach.

A number of responses demonstrated a more practical and applied understanding of inclusive teaching, with respondents identifying specific strategies they intended to use within future practice. These included adapting activities where needed, making better use of teaching assistants, using the STEP principle and modifying the pace or structure of lessons to support engagement and accessibility.

“Get to know the learners as much as possible so I know their needs and what activities they like. Without knowing them it’s a real struggle to plan and teach effective, inclusive lessons.” (PMJ student)

“Ensure that all my lessons are inclusive and all pupils can progress, learn and have fun.” (LJM student)

“Slow the speed of teaching and simplify.” (PMJ student)

“To have adaptations where needed.” (LJM student)

Conclusion

Overall, findings suggest that students from both universities developed greater confidence, understanding and perceived capability relating to inclusive PE and school sport over the course of the year. While students were generally positively disposed towards inclusion from the outset, follow-up responses suggested increasing confidence in applying inclusive approaches within practical teaching contexts. The strongest changes were seen in more applied aspects of inclusive practice, including confidence in adapting lessons, ensuring lessons fully include pupils with SEND, and using pupil voice to inform practice.

Across both the quantitative and qualitative findings, practical experience emerged as particularly important in supporting this development. Placements, workshops, SEND-focused sessions, conferences and opportunities to work directly with pupils with SEND were consistently highlighted as among the most useful aspects of the courses. Students particularly valued opportunities to observe, deliver and reflect on inclusive practice within real settings.

Open-text responses also suggested a shift over time from more general awareness-building towards more applied and reflective thinking about inclusion. Earlier responses tended to focus on exposure to SEND, learning strategies and understanding inclusive approaches, while later responses increasingly focused on implementation, adaptation, flexibility and responding to individual learner needs within teaching practice. By the end of the year, many students appeared to view inclusion less as a set of isolated adaptations and more as an ongoing process of responsive, learner-centred teaching.

Lessons learnt from the pilot evaluation

The pilot demonstrated that it is feasible to gather meaningful evidence on changes in student teachers' confidence and understanding of inclusive practice through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The open-text responses were particularly valuable in explaining how students' thinking developed over time and in providing context for the survey findings.

The pilot also highlighted several considerations for future evaluations.

HEI-led survey administration reduced evaluator oversight. Because course leaders distributed the surveys, the evaluation team had limited visibility of who had received the survey, response rates during fieldwork, or whether reminders had been issued. This made it difficult to monitor participation or implement a consistent follow-up strategy. Despite this, however, the response rates were relatively high. Greater consultation in advance with course leaders on the best time to administer the surveys for different cohorts would ensure that even those on placements could respond.

A more coordinated fieldwork approach could improve response rates. Future pilots should consider either central survey administration or agree a common fieldwork protocol with HEIs, including planned reminder schedules and reporting of response rates. A relatively small incentive could also be used to support response. Allowing the research

team to administer the survey may also help to overcome any distribution issues when the students are on placement.

Anonymous responses limited longitudinal analysis. While anonymity may have encouraged honest feedback, it meant individual responses could not be linked across waves. Using unique identifiers would allow changes to be tracked while maintaining confidentiality. Students would have to agree for their contact details to be shared with the evaluation team in advance so this would need to be built into the course administration.

Differences in course structures should be considered when designing future evaluations. The differing programme lengths and cohort structures made direct comparisons more difficult and consideration of whether this can be better reflected in future sampling and analysis plans should be made. However, given that the cohorts are relatively small, it may be difficult to do much more.