



Inclusion Not Exclusion - Technology Helps Close the Gap

At the heart of progress is the ability of educational establishments to ensure that every child has access to continuity of lessons. If you do not have children sat in class receiving quality first teaching, they will be disadvantaged and start to fall behind. A steady downward spiral will ultimately result in pupil disengagement, underachievement and a lack of expected progress. What can school leaders do to address this profound problem?

Today, schools experience mounting pressure to ensure that every child makes expected progress. We are exposed to unprecedented levels of public accountability because school results data is now published in ever increasing detail and scrutiny. From this data, there will always be schools which are perceived as winners, and schools which are perceived as 'requiring improvement.'

Schools on both these winning and losing sides share very similar problems regarding inclusion. In the classroom, specialist subject teachers provide clear evidence of continuity so that sustained progress is made by pupils. But when dealing with the issue of inclusion the question must then be asked: What about those children excluded from the structured classroom lessons?

What is current practice?

Management direct increased resources towards focus groups. But what works for a cohort in one year does not guarantee success for later cohorts. Schools restructure systems and pour money into various intervention strategies which can include mentoring, enhancing levels of classroom support, developing behaviour programmes and holding catch up sessions. All this in the hope of discovering a solution. These interventions are intended to be for the short term but can become a school within a school for some.

In our haste to be all things to all pupils, schools inadvertently disadvantage some by creating artificial support situations which are not financially sustainable. These can become intrinsically selective. Staff act as gate keepers to 'special rooms' because they cannot afford to open the floodgates to accommodate every pupil who, at some time in their school life, will have a 'special need.' The pressure to teach outstanding lessons within every classroom often comes at the cost of an individual child's right to experience the same lesson as their peers.

Breaking the downward spiral

With each new school year it quickly becomes obvious which pupils are not coping and require a different approach. Pastoral teams intervene to identify underlying problems. Some solutions can include withdrawal from certain mainstream lessons and re-engagement in these lessons can prove difficult. If unsuccessful, the pupil can start on a long downward spiral. Ports of call can include inclusion rooms, managed moves and, when all else has failed, education in a specialist provision. In the worst case scenario, the result can be a total non-engagement with education. Schools lose control over the eventual outcomes of the pupils for whom they are still responsible. It is this small number of pupils who can adversely affect the results data of a school.

How can technology help reduce disengagement?

The ILS Alpha software package was developed by teachers from the premise that all pupils should have access to quality first teaching to ensure academic progress. The streaming of live lessons, from the regular school teachers in the timetabled lessons, offers the chance for pupils who are experiencing difficulties to re-engage with mainstream education, regardless of their location within the school.

How can the *ILS Alpha software package* help pupils who have additional needs?

Pupils who have additional needs should be offered a personalised pathway which will enable them to fulfil their potential. This should include, where appropriate, access to top set lessons from good teachers. Top set groups are frequently large and can be a stressful environment for those with a variety of needs. Every child should have the opportunity to be stretched by quality first teaching which is commensurate with their potential and not restricted by limited adult perceptions formed by a focus upon the need itself. Normally, classroom support is offered within lower subject sets where the majority of pupils benefit from having an additional adult present. Whereas, in the higher sets the support level would be 1 to 1, which would prove costly for schools. Support of this level can feel intrusive and be counterproductive for the pupil. *The ILS Alpha software package* enables a child to access top set lessons which are streamed to their preferred location. As and when needed, a pupil can communicate with the teacher via a messaging function, therefore facilitating independent learning and problem solving in a non-threatening environment.



Inclusive Learning Systems Alpha software package

was developed in response to an obvious need within educational establishments to ensure access to the total learning experience for all. It was also developed to ensure that all students can achieve and make progress. Its use has many applications, notwithstanding CPD, Teacher Training and the sharing of good lessons between teaching groups.



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