

# Inclusion in Danish Public School

**NVIE**

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for Inclusive Practice**

Part of University College  
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# Introduction

The Inclusion Compass and its guidelines are compiled in a cooperation between The National Research Centre for Inclusive Practice, University College South Denmark and Skolelederforeningen (The Head Teacher Association) in Denmark; the intention is to support head teachers seeking a quick overview of the various aspects of leadership on which they should focus in developing the inclusive school.

The guide provides a set of values which enable school leaders to make reasoned choices regarding focus areas and strategies, causing the school to adopt a more inclusive pedagogical practice. Our hope is that this guide can inspire schools to choose and test diverse paths within central leadership areas. We also hope that the head teacher, together with staff and others involved in education, can use the guide to create a common base for assessing whether the school is developing in a more inclusive direction.

The guide is not intended to be a formula where individuals can “tick off” tasks completed; on the contrary, it is intended to be a source of inspiration in involving local interested parties, in developing strategies and in highlighting focus areas.

The Inclusion Compass and its guidelines build on research within each of the named areas of leadership. In the Danish version there is a web-based material detailing the background for the guide’s recommendations in the various areas of leadership. This allows school leaders and others the opportunity to gain more knowledge in their efforts at developing the inclusive school.



# Contents

The guide is structured as follows:

**The first section** describes briefly what is meant by inclusion. This section forms the basis for the other sections in the guide which explain where leadership is required and in relation to whom and what.

**The second section** presents "The Inclusion Compass – **direction and framework for a 360 degree school leadership**". The compass is an important foundation for understanding the rest of the structure and content of the guide.

**The compass illustrates the following six areas of leadership:**

1. Colleagues
2. Parents
3. Children
4. Other professionals
5. Politicians and the local administration of education
6. The local community

**In addition, three different aspects of leadership:**

1. Values
2. Directions
3. Assessments

**The third section** contains a more concrete approach to the six areas of leadership as stated in the guide with in part a description of specific leadership tasks, in part a description of resources. In the third section there are references in parenthesis to relevant research which can be accessed in the knowledge base at [www.skolelederne.org](http://www.skolelederne.org)

*Happy reading!*

# What are we talking about when we talk about inclusion?

With The Salamanca Statement (1994) and The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), inclusion has become a central concept in the approach to children and young people by local authorities in Denmark. The concept is constantly evolving and appears in different ways – dependent on whether there is talk of inclusion at a societal level or at a school level. When mention is made of the inclusive society, it usually means that everyone has a right to participate in society as fellow citizens; talk of the inclusive school most often refers to the right of all children to participate in the general fellowship of the school – even if their schooling takes place in special groups, in special classes or at special institutions. For many years the concept was identical with spaciousness, emphasising a school for everyone, whilst there was less focus on whether the presence of children in ordinary classes also gave them better opportunities for participation and learning.

In this guide, inclusion should be understood as the opportunity for everyone to participate in fellowships. To be a participant in fellowships has a direct bearing on human learning in all areas: the better the opportunities to participate in different forms of fellowships, the better the opportunities to learn and thereby to develop social, personal and cognitive competences. Efforts should therefore be made to develop many different forms of fellowships at school where learning takes place and the diversity of children is acknowledged. When inclusion is coupled with participation and learning, it becomes a key pedagogical concept with crucial significance for all school activities. It is important to bear in mind that inclusion should not be regarded as a method, but rather as a mindset which represents certain

perspectives on the relationship between the child and its social sphere. Basically, what we are discussing here is a movement away from an individual-oriented approach focused on fault-finding and towards a more social-oriented approach focused on the resources in the child's environment:

- **Firstly**, there is talk of a dynamic perspective in the relationship between a child and its social environment where different social situations lead to different opportunities to act.
- **Secondly**, this has to do with a position perspective, where the child adopts differing social positions in certain social contexts. Rather than talk about vulnerable children we should talk about children in vulnerable positions, thereby allowing us to work with these positions in various contexts.

It is important as head teacher to clarify which understanding of inclusion there is talk of when developing local definitions. It can be useful here to differentiate between four different discourses, each of which has its specific justification for inclusion at school.

- **The economic discourse** - with focus on efficiency and resource utilisation
- **The pragmatic discourse** – with focus on effective courses of action in relation to given premises
- **The political discourse** - with focus on efforts that engender security and provide a feeling of social cohesion
- **The ethical discourse** - with focus on the right of access to learning and having a say in one's own life.

While the first two discourses have to do with the real world, the last two are associated with the ideal world. The first

two discourses relate in particular to the domain of management; the framework for a school's operation manifests itself to a great extent on the basis of these discourses. It is an important point that school management is not responsible for the broader economic and practical understanding of the efforts at inclusion as these are determined politically. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of school leadership to provide content for the overall framework which makes sense to school staff.

This requires that staff efforts at increased inclusion must to a greater extent be guided in relation to the ethical discourse with special focus on the pedagogical and didactical perspective. Thus there is a need for leadership of staff fulfilling their professional responsibility and coping with the attendant challenges; this is a field of leadership that cuts across all four discourses.

Both management and staff meet the four discourses daily as justification for or against inclusion. There is an important leadership function here in contributing to a clarification of which discourse is brought into play in the ongoing discussion of developing the inclusive school. It is especially a challenge for management to clarify that all four discourses can be invoked, but that a single discourse cannot determine the agenda for the school's total enterprise. In order to qualify this discussion, it would be constructive if the discourses were used to keep political, economic, ethical and pragmatic arguments separate.

In this way the discourses can be used to focus on the scope of leadership – and not least to specify which areas are the responsibility of management and which are

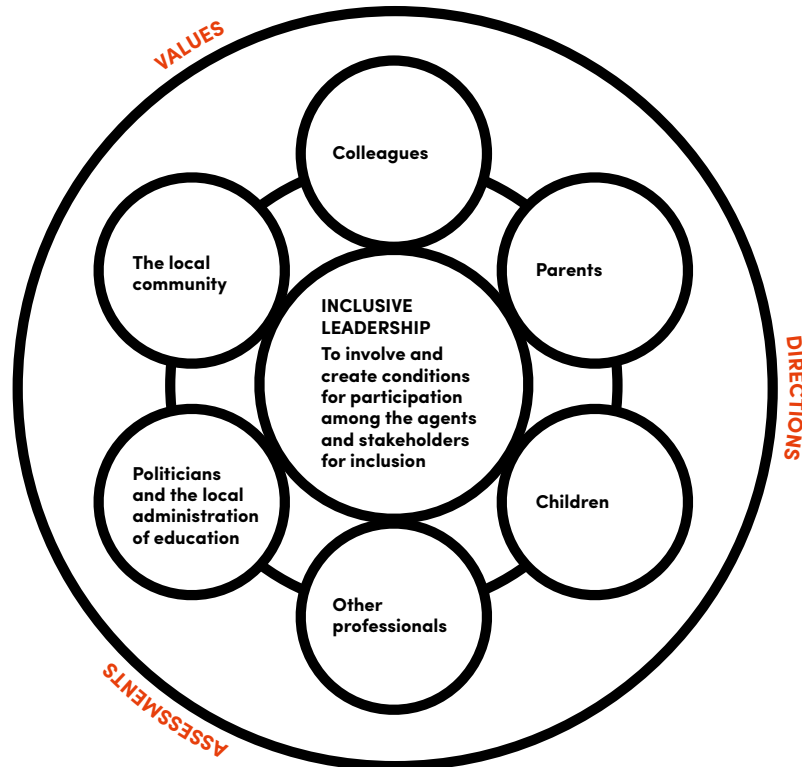
the responsibility of the professional staff. Once again it is important to emphasise that management needs to strengthen the staff's professional competence in working with a 'social didactic' that focuses on the terms on which children participate in school activities for the purpose of learning.

**The development of an inclusive school therefore depends on two important prerequisites:**

1. Development of the proper professional competences required to fulfil the school's goals in relation to inclusion
2. Development of the school's leadership to engage all those involved with the school in an active fellowship in the inclusion project. What this specifically entails for management in the perspective of inclusion is elaborated on in the following.

# The Inclusion Compass

## – direction and framework in a 360 degree school leadership



### Inclusion leadership

– to contribute and create conditions which allow participants and other parties interested in inclusion to play a part.

The overall leadership task is to involve participants and other parties interested in the school in such a way that each can make a contribution to the inclusive school – a collaborative aspect that becomes the general principle in this guide.

The Inclusion Compass is a management tool which assists leadership in:

- creating and formulating common directions for those involved with inclusion by involving them and coordinating their resources,

- developing and formulating a joint framework for the individuals involved, thereby enabling them to act on the basis of common values, directions and assessments.

### Six spheres of leadership – setting the course for those involved with inclusion

Staff, parents, children, other professionals, politicians and the local education administration as well as the local community are all essential cooperative partners for the school's management in implementing an inclusive school strategy. These six major participants are considered to be – based on both research as well as practice – the most important factors when it comes to developing institutions and schools with an inclusive practice. They each



represent a range of resources which should be included and coordinated under a joint management perspective. These resources are expressed through their knowledge and interests which determine their position and define their tasks in relation to the running of the school.

Each of the six categories named above must be engaged in the leadership perspective as all are involved in creating the conditions for an inclusive pedagogical practice. At the same time, they are interested parties who have disparate motives and reasons for participation in the process of inclusion. They therefore represent many different resources and the leadership task here is to have them cooperate in a constructive way. In other words, a leadership that, as well as displaying the differences in capability and interests among the participants in inclusion, also brings their diverse resources to interact in the joint project.

It is presumed that the six areas of leadership are given their particular focus in time. This guide calls for the involvement of all participants in the compass but, realistically speaking, it is not possible to focus on all points of the compass simultaneously. At which point of the compass one wishes to start will depend on how far one has come with endeavours locally; it would however be a good idea to start in the order suggested by the guide. Even though we have tried to demarcate the content of the six areas of leadership, there will always in practice be overlapping, something which the individual school needs to address.

Pedagogical practice should also by necessity focus on the various types of obstacles which from time to time affect a school's cooperative relations. The compass illustrates the crucial importance of identifying impediments for participation as processes which occur simultane-

ously in several areas. Accordingly, an inclusive pedagogy should be planned and practiced in several areas simultaneously. The suggestion here is that strategic and pedagogic leadership should supplement one another as different perspectives on each focus area.

### **Three dimensions of leadership – creating a framework for joint action**

Values, Directions and Assessments are three dimensions whose substance is considered important when school leadership has to create a common understanding and activity among those involved. The three dimensions represent the framework within which cooperation between participants takes place. Leadership perspective is focused on:

1. The foundation for our value system (perspectives) which forms the basis for our efforts
2. The directions (strategies and methods) which should lead us to the goal
3. The assessment criteria (indicators) whose purpose is to evaluate whether the efforts lead to a more inclusive practice

### **Values (ethics)**

Values and the foundation on which they rest are, and always have been, the basis of school practice. Values are formulated at many levels – in The Danish Education Act, in the individual school's value system and in those values which staff, children and parents can agree should apply in their class etc. In addition, within the last 50 years international policies and intentions have been formulated which have been influential, also in Denmark, an example of which is The Salamanca Statement. Values in this context are ethical definitions and manifestoes stating how institutions such as schools can contribute to the humanising of society.

In the education sector, these values have been especially associated with equal access to education and the possibility of participation in learning communities. The value "inclusion" is an overriding perspective, a mindset which is connected to the individual's view e.g. on the purpose of running a school, the task of teaching children and, not least, how these goals can be achieved by cooperation, recognition, guidance etc. Values are thus the overriding framework for our actions.

### Directions (methods)

There are many ways to implement inclusive learning environments and many methods to develop the best possible conditions for participation in school activities. The fundamental assumption is that there are no specific methods which guarantee all children full participation in all everyday life situations. Rather, it is a matter of making a conscious choice of methods, choosing and testing them in relation to pedagogical goals, the abilities of those involved and the pedagogical context. No methods can replace the conscious collegial reflection on those methods which best promote the individual child's participation in a specific pedagogical situation. Many paths can lead to inclusion, but inclusion cannot be understood without the conditions for participation being taken into account by all those involved with the school and by all the children attached to a class.

### Assessments (indicators)

In order to assess whether the efforts at inclusion also lead to the desired results, indicators of the concrete practice one wishes to develop have to be put in place; this practice should be observable using various methods of evaluation. An indicator must inform us as to whether we are on the path to the desired development as formulated

as a goal for our efforts. And as a result of this knowledge, management has a foundation on which to decide which changes and which new initiatives, if any, should be implemented.

The six areas of leadership in "The Inclusion Compass" will now be presented. To each of the six areas there are subsequently provided examples of what a value, a direction and an assessment could be. These are prime examples regarded as an inspiration to schools to continue to work locally to determine values, directions and assessments in relation to inclusion.

#### Areas of Leadership: Members of Staff

The two largest groups of colleagues at a school are teachers and pedagogues whose job it is to provide for the education, the well-being and the development of the children; for the school leadership they are the central partners in working for inclusion in the school. From studies we know that the professional member of staff who works with people will often, as a result of his specific perspective on the individual child, be the person who comes to decide the extent of inclusion (1, 2, 3)\*. In other words, it is very much a colleague's own value system and experience of e.g. 'the limits of inclusion' that can be decisive for the efforts at inclusion. It is therefore important that the head teacher involves staff in the process of achieving inclusion as a meaningful pedagogical value and as the basis for the school's activities. Together they must find how to work in a concrete fashion with the development of an inclusive practice (4).

In the range of school activities, these three elements - teaching, other activities and personal education plans for pupils - are totally central to the work of both teachers and pedagogues (1). These three fields of activity provide opportunities to make inclusion visible across staff

groups and also to involve other professionals as well as parents. Engaging all cooperative partners in this pedagogical process legitimises inclusion. Leadership exercises a key role here when, among other elements, teaching and other duties are distributed among staff (5).

Similarly, it is also a leadership task to support the improvement of qualifications of a professional, didactic and interpersonal art, all fundamental factors in increasing inclusion (4, 6). This can be achieved in different ways, e.g. where management establishes clear frameworks for staff cooperation, collegial guidance, supervision etc. By focusing on the development of these types of practices, one in which among others external professionals can be included, 'the system' is challenged by the presence of a single inclusion and its appropriate 'disruption', which can lead to a change in thinking (9). To achieve this effect, it is important that the individual team functions optimally, enabling inclusion to become a dynamic process at the school (7). It is a leadership task to ensure that the composition of teams is a process that takes place, partly in an open dialogue between staff and the school leadership, partly via a clear pedagogical objective, via leadership and via determination from the school leadership's side (8, 10).

### **Resources; staff at the school**

To sum up, and based on an extensive European study (5), a profile can be drawn of the resources and the competencies which are notably prerequisites for developing the inclusive school:

- Teachers and pedagogues must show respect for the differences children exhibit; and exactly that - being different - should be regarded as a resource and as a valuable contribution to fellowship and to teaching
- Teachers and pedagogues must support all children by expressing positive expectations

and by making appropriate and achievable demands on their abilities and performances in all areas

- Teachers and pedagogues must tackle their professional functions alongside others; to cooperate with others is therefore a decisive and fundamental professional capability
- The personal and professional development of teachers and pedagogues is closely linked to teaching and social processes; thus teaching and pedagogical praxis for professional educators is itself a lifelong learning process for which teachers and pedagogues themselves must take a joint responsibility.

Giving a higher priority to these resources will support inclusion, in the same way as innovative pedagogical environments have shown themselves to be supportive of inclusion (8). As didactical and pedagogical developments are context-dependent, it could be inappropriate to base inclusion on 'prefabricated' pedagogical concepts. This could reduce opportunities for colleagues to reflect and to develop their own praxis; it would also reduce their chances of accepting the challenge of inclusion as reflective methodologies (2, 8).

### **Value e.g.**

It is of value that the school's members of staff acknowledge the importance of fellowship for children's learning in all fields

### **Directions e.g.**

We support inclusion in our daily work by maintaining a sustained focus on both the practical and ethical demands of inclusion

### **Assessment e.g.**

We know that we are on the right path when efforts at inclusion are not only described in relation to school subjects, but also in relation to opportunities for social and physical participation.

### **Areas of Leadership: Parents**

School management has the primary responsibility for cooperation between home and school. This cooperation can be very differentiated and its nature can very often be determined by the current situation. This applies not least in relation to efforts at inclusion (1). The school management performs functions at three levels as regards cooperation with parents:

- At an organisational level with the school's governing body
- At a general level with all parents at the school or in a class
- At an individual level with a single child's parents

The functions at these 3 levels differ from one another as follows:

- At the organisational level the head teacher is a participant in relation to the school's governing body
- At the general level the head teacher has a more regulatory function
- At the individual level the head teacher is a decision maker in addition to often being a mentor.

For parents to feel a joint responsibility for a successful inclusion, it is important to acknowledge that their position and opinions depend on their authority as parent at all three levels. Seen from the perspective of inclusion this means that parents, with their knowledge and outlook, can challenge the school's normal point of view and general "solutions". However, especially on the individual level, this can provide an opportunity to turn an otherwise difficult and deadlocked situation to a new and positive start.

The school must deal with the fact that when a child is in a vulnerable position, for whatever

reason, the parents will regard this situation as very special, whereas the school will often regard it as commonplace, almost normal. This relationship defines to a great extent how parents see and experience their responsibility and concern. Therefore it is also important to know that parents to children in a vulnerable position are themselves especially vulnerable in the period where an explanation still has not been given as to 'what went wrong', what is to be done and when (2).

### **Parental resources**

With the knowledge they have of their child, parents are an especially valuable resource as regards inclusion. Various surveys, e.g. with regard to the preparation of personal teaching plans for pupils, show that parental knowledge is not recognised and utilised adequately (3). Endeavours at inclusion would probably be optimised if the knowledge of the parents was included to a greater extent at all of the three previously named levels.

Another important aspect in cooperation between school and the home is the fact that resourceful parents can be more conspicuous in relation to inclusion. Resourceful parents are therefore important partners in endeavouring to succeed with inclusion. Again, this requires input from leadership at all three previously named levels. Hence it is an important leadership function to follow, control and preferably prevent negative or destructive actions, moods and tendencies from developing (4).

That school leadership has an important role to play developing cooperation between school and home is supported by a study which shows that parents can change their viewpoint on efforts at inclusion in their child's class; these can change

from negative to a realisation that their child can in fact benefit from being in an “inclusion class”, because precisely that class with its diversity contributes to the development of social competence in all children in the class, also their own child (5).

Finally, it is the case that parental understanding of and support for what happens in school contribute to a successful schooling. In relation to inclusion, it is especially important that school leadership along with staff involve the parents because much of what happens at school and in the after school club is influenced by how school is discussed at home and what parents worry about and are happy with. It is also well-known that when parents themselves have experienced problems at school, there is a greater risk of it affecting in a negative way their children’s schooling.

Involving the parental perspective is therefore important for success with efforts at increased inclusion. This can e.g. happen through a dialogue on developing local Values, Directions and Assessments which would then become bearing elements in parental cooperation.

#### **Values e.g.**

It is of value when parental cooperation is based on recognition, involvement and knowledge sharing from the specific, e.g. personal education plans for pupils, to the more general, e.g. the set of values on which the school operates.

#### **Directions e.g.**

Support comes from cooperation with parents in clarifying mutual expectations and in benefiting from and supporting parental resources.

#### **Assessments e.g.**

We know that these are established when parents are involved with inclusion both at the individual, the class and the school level.

### **Areas of Leadership: children**

A key perspective on inclusion is that it is not the children who have to adapt to the school but rather school activities which must adapt to the children (1, 2, 3). This approach entails a special responsibility for leadership to satisfy the needs of as many children as possible at school.

Leadership must in other words regard child differences as a resource and at the same time ensure all children participation in school activities. For leadership this requires that close attention be paid to the situation with each child’s sex, family and family background (11, 12).

Inclusion concerns all children and their right to participate regardless of sex, ethnicity, academic or social background. Leadership at the school has overall responsibility for children’s individual differences being met with differentiated opportunities for participation. It is of the utmost importance for learning and development – and thereby for inclusion – that each child is met with positive expectations as regards learning and development: Making demands is acknowledging each child’s prospects and circumstances for learning and development.

### **Resources; children at school**

School activities must be planned on the basis of the needs of the individual child and the needs of fellowships for children. An important resource here is to exploit ‘the child’s voice’ and thereby use the child’s knowledge and experience as an important basis for inclusion. This presupposes the establishment of a running dialogue between management, staff and children both formally, e.g. at student council meetings, and informally. In other words, the school must endeavour actively to incorporate the perspective of the children (4).





It is very much the quality of the meeting with the child and the story he or she tells of the experience of being a pupil that determines the opportunities afforded management and staff of having a contributory influence on the child's life and that of the fellowship of children. Creating space for the child's perspective signifies that management pays attention to the child's world.

That socio-cultural background is a factor which is evident in school because children naturally take elements of their background with them to school (8, 9, 10). For management this is a constant challenge but at the same time a resource because it provides opportunities to use variability as the starting point for development of a school culture characterised by openness and curiosity to the world around us. In that way, the differences in background of the children can be an important contribution to the process towards more inclusion (5, 6).

For management the meeting of variation amongst the children is at the same time a commitment that the child can develop his or her personal capabilities instead of meeting obstacles for participation. Verbal, physical or virtual mobbing can start with the mutual differences between children, differences in terms of abilities, sex and socio-cultural background (7, 8); mobbing is therefore a destructive process opposed to inclusion and creating on the contrary exclusion.

#### **Values e.g.**

It is of value that activities at school are planned in such a way that the children's disparate backgrounds are considered resources for all children in the group.

#### **Directions e.g.**

It supports leadership when we as leaders ensure that members of staff have the competence to include the child's perspective in the

planning of teaching and in the school's other activities.

#### **Assessments e.g.**

We know we are on the right path when the child's perspective is a constant theme at class and team meetings in connection with planning, implementing and evaluating school activities.

#### **Areas of leadership: Other professionals**

It is not only teachers and pedagogues who are responsible for promoting an inclusive perspective in school activities. This responsibility is shared with a variety of other fellow professionals who can be defined as "resource persons" appointed by the school to fulfil special tasks and functions, e.g. school counsellors, reading specialists, special needs teachers and pedagogues, support teachers and pedagogues, special needs coordinators etc. Other specialists such as school psychologists and social workers represent external resources which are also available for school management. These specialists have no clear description of their job and functions as their work depends on the local structure and the local school policy. Studies show that school management usually has plenty of leeway to generate local solutions for municipal strategies (1).

An inclusive school is, among other things, defined by its development of knowledge and resources to be able to cope with a large diversity among its pupils. Now that more children than previously are to be allowed to attend ordinary classes, it will be necessary to develop supportive forms of teaching; these should not be designed solely for children with special needs, but should support all children in their active participation in the fellowship of the school.

A pedagogical practice focused on the idea that children are co-creators of each other's learning, requires the teaching space to be

enhanced by varying types of knowledge and resources which can match the diversity in the abilities of children. It is imperative that the specialists – those with particular knowledge and special skills – share the same understanding of the need for inclusion as the school.

Typical conflicts in this cooperation often arise from varying professional paradigms which manifest themselves in very divergent views on e.g. general and special pedagogy or on the professional and the social aspect in teaching.

Studies amongst school counsellors show that they sometimes understand their work with inclusion as counselling unruly children out of the class fellowship (7); and psychologists from time to time adopt a rather individual perspective on participation difficulties which can entail no effort being made in developing the class as a social context for learning (5).

### **Resources that contribute to an inclusive school**

Leadership's task is to involve this array of professional resources, where each individual professional contributes with his or her particular skill in a cooperation and with the pupil at the centre. School leadership should be aware of the possibility of professional conflicts between these specialists and teachers and pedagogues in ordinary teaching situations.

It is important that the school's structure reflects that all professional staff are per se members of the same organisation with common values and directions. Leadership must be constantly aware that the necessary resources are developed and accessible for teachers and pedagogues in their daily contact with children and parents.

In addition, the inclusive school needs to engage external expert knowledge via an

interdisciplinary cooperation in order to cope with the many types of behaviour and ways of learning (2, 3). Many of the collegial difficulties that arise in the space of a school day must be analysed and resolved in a broader local context with the participation of many different professions (8). School leadership must therefore face these questions: Which type of knowledge is needed? Where do we find it and which professional colleague possesses it? How can this knowledge be made available to those who are responsible for the task?

### **Value e.g.**

It is of value that colleagues and resource persons adopt a comprehensive perspective on the individual child as a common ground for cooperation.

### **Directions e.g.**

This is supported by, among other things, leadership coordinating and broadcasting each resource person's contribution to resolving the task of inclusion by means of clear plans for procedure, competence and action.

### **Assessments e.g.**

We know we are on the right path when resource persons participate regularly in class and team meetings focusing on sharing knowledge about the kinds of efforts that promote inclusion.

### **Areas of leadership: Politicians and school administration**

In many municipalities, local Councils have decided that inclusion is to be an area of focus, not only in the ground school, but as a priority in the Council's children and young people's policy. Such a decision presents school authorities with a comprehensive undertaking demanding cooperation and coordination between several different political and administrative agencies.



Leadership at the school must internally create formal meetings where varying understandings of the concept of inclusion can be brought to cooperate in a common pedagogical practice.

Studies regarding the external cooperation show that the school's relations with the municipal administration is characterised by two elements. On the one hand, the school is seeking an administration that can help with attempts at acting from common strategies and values; on the other hand, not all demands for implementation of new strategies are felt to improve the quality of the school's activities. The pressure to implement various new endeavours is growing and several schools deal with the pressure by allowing them to become a part of ongoing initiatives. This does not always lead to the desired change in practice (1).

Another challenge is that the arguments for giving priority to inclusion as a common municipal strategy can be found in disparate discourses – often in an economic as opposed to a pedagogical discourse. Politicians will often feel a greater obligation to municipal budgets, while school leadership is also bound to construct a vision of inclusion in relation to international conventions. Both discourses have equal legitimacy but in the specific cooperation, school leadership must draw up criteria for choices of inclusion endeavours and how they can be realised in practice (3).

### **Resources which contribute to an inclusive school**

It is a leadership task to mobilise the resources necessary to create inclusion strategies. Political support must be engendered through formal cooperative bodies so politicians interested in education have access to necessary knowledge about the school's inclusive practices. A school's report on the quality of service in the municipality is an important basis for communication with the

local administration about the school's activities (2). On the one hand, communication should make clear that the school appreciates both political and administrative contributions to its development; and on the other hand, it is important for the commitment of both staff and parents that the political and administrative involvement in the school is receptive to and respectful towards the staff's professional authority (4).

### **Value e.g.**

It is of value that the municipality's education authorities have a common inclusion policy.

### **Direction e.g.**

This is supported by leadership through, among other things, participating in a constant dialogue with the educational administration and politicians about the task of inclusion.

### **Assessment e.g.**

We know we are on the right path when we experience concurrence between political intentions, stated resources and school praxis.

### **Area of leadership: The local community**

The local community is the school's neighbouring social environment; from a leadership point of view, it is essential to involve it both pedagogically and strategically. The school and the local community, when viewed from the perspective of inclusion, can be seen as one another's prerequisites, both wishing to develop the local school for all children in the local community and to implement local solutions for children, young people and families in vulnerable situations or children with special needs. Neither of these inclusion tasks can be solved without the school opening up to the local community and the local community doing likewise. School leadership should send an invitation to an open and critical dialogue about developing

an inclusion strategy for the school, together with the local community's diverse groups: associations, organisations, institutions, businesses as well as informal bodies and interest groups. As a result of this dialogue it will be possible to develop a mutual understanding of the inclusion project and not least to spread responsibility for creating an inclusive school to a number of local interested parties.

Studies have shown an interest in the importance of civil society for children's schooling. One project shows that friendship groups are founded at school and continue as a rule in leisure time, but that a conscious effort in after school clubs can create new relationships and opportunities for participation. In addition, the project shows that children do not learn to make themselves available in friendship groups, neither at school, in their leisure time nor in the family. In other words, an increased focus on social responsibility is necessary (3).

### **Resources that contribute to an inclusive school**

The dialogue with the local community has to do with involving the many different types of resources present and on which the school needs to be able to draw. There is an important coordinating task here once local efforts at inclusion are launched as these resources also represent different local participants who have their own, often contradictory, interests and motives. This is where the exercise of leadership takes a more strategic turn and is especially challenging when the school also has to deal with some of the obstacles children experience in their local environment when participating in organised leisure activities (5).

Leadership should also draw attention to social obstacles outwith the school, e.g. in the housing estate, in local associations and leisure

activities and in informal groups of children and young people where there is a need for preventive measures. Leadership's cooperation with the local community must generate insight into which social arenas in the community are accessible and which are used by pupils of different age groups. When does participation in activities locally support the social abilities of the children? When do children experience defeat and social isolation? How do you create a positive interaction between school and the local community's diverse leisure time activities? And what resources can be drawn on? A research project has shown that a child's difficulties at school are often followed by difficulties in other social relationships both in their leisure time and in the family (2). Focusing on the local community calls attention to the importance of aiming efforts at inclusion at all the contexts and systems children frequent.

### **Value e.g.**

It is of value that school and the local community jointly have acknowledged a common responsibility for children and young people's opportunities to participate in fellowships.

### **Directions e.g.**

We support this by, among other things, cooperating with various local partners about support for children with special needs as well as other offers aimed at vulnerable children and young people.

### **Assessment e.g.**

We know we are on the right path when leadership regularly invites local partners to meetings where inclusion is on the agenda.



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