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What inclusive practices support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education?

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Abstract

The growing population of refugee children within mainstream primary schools represents a frequently overlooked group in discussions of inclusive education. This research explores inclusive practices that support the social, cultural and academic integration of refugee learners, addressing a notable gap in existing literature. Grounded in principles of inclusion and social justice, a review of existing literature revealed key barriers faced by refugee learners, including systemic challenges, language barriers and the impact of displacement and trauma. These recurring themes shaped the direction of the research and emphasised the need for a more targeted and holistic approach for effective integration.

To examine how these barriers are addressed in everyday classroom settings—and with the aim of contributing to more equitable educational experiences for refugee learners—a small-scale, mixed-methods study was carried out across two contrasting school contexts. The study investigated the practices that teachers employ to support refugee learners, drawing on their experiences to understand what promotes successful integration. Findings suggest that cohesive language support, active engagement with families and the development of trauma-informed practices play a critical role. Significantly, the research emphasises that refugee learners are not a homogenous group—there is no single solution for effective inclusion. Instead, adaptive, responsive practices that reflect the unique needs of each learner are vital.

Keywords: Refugee education, Integration, Inclusion, Social justice

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Introduction

The inclusion of refugee learners in education has become a pressing global concern as displacement due to war and human rights violations continues to escalate. With children comprising 40% of the world's 117.3 million refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2024), schools are under increasing pressure to create inclusive and supportive learning environments for refugee children.

Article 22 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) *states, "If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention."* One of these rights is education, yet refugee learners often encounter distinct social, academic and cultural barriers, often exacerbated by a hostile political climate (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). These challenges can limit teachers' capacity to deliver equitable, high-quality education that fulfils these rights (Yeo and Yoo, 2022).

Schools play a vital role in fostering belonging and supporting refugee learners' transition to active citizenship (Christie and Sidhu, 2002; Kaur and Szorenyi, 2020), yet research highlights persistent gaps in effective educational support. This research aims to identify inclusive practices that support refugee learners' social, academic and cultural integration into mainstream primary education. It explores teachers' perspectives, examines ongoing challenges and offers recommendations for improving inclusivity. While policy developments and inclusive pedagogical approaches have advanced, challenges remain in equipping schools to meet the diverse needs of refugee learners. By focusing on holistic integration, this research contributes to the development of more effective, inclusive educational practices that upholds refugee learners' right to equitable education.

Part I: Literature Review

1.1 The Historical and Scottish Landscape of Refugee Education

The Human Rights Watch (2016) highlights the crucial role of education in shaping the futures of refugee children, noting its transformative potential for those who have access to it. The UNHCR (2011e, p.18) describes education as "*a right through which other rights are realised*" and stresses that it must be upheld even in times of crisis. As such, education should not be considered a luxury to be deferred in times of displacement but rather a vital aspect of life for young refugees.

Following World War II, the UNHCR was established to address the displacement crisis, leading to legal frameworks such as the *1951 Refugee Convention*. This convention defines a refugee as someone who has fled their country due to a justified fear of persecution. Traditionally, education for refugees has been treated as part of emergency relief, prioritising immediate safety over long-term integration (UNHCR, 2024). However, with prolonged displacement becoming more common, this approach is increasingly inadequate (Dryden-Peterson *et al.*, 2019). A shift towards a rights-based approach in refugee education now emphasises sustainable policies and integration into national education systems (UNHCR, 2018). *The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees* and initiatives like *Refugee Education 2030*, promote this shift, ensuring long-term educational inclusion.

Integration is a complex and contested concept, shaped by policies, environments and societal attitudes (Castles *et al.*, 2002; Smyth *et al.*, 2010; Valtonen, 2004). The Scottish Government's *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (2024, p.8) defines integration as an "*inclusive approach that takes place through equitable interactions between people from diverse cultures through dialogue and respect*". The UNHCR (2023) further reinforces integration as a dynamic, reciprocal process involving cooperation between refugees, governments and communities, highlighting the importance of mutual adaptation and collaboration in achieving successful integration outcomes.

Inclusion, which was originally associated with special education, has since broadened to address wider issues of diversity and social justice within education (Florian, 2014). However, inclusion's historic focus on additional support needs has led to refugee learners being routinely overlooked in policy and practice (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012), despite contemporary views of inclusion emphasising greater participation and reduced exclusion for all learners (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Integration, inclusion and social justice are deeply interconnected. Social justice is commonly understood as the balanced distribution of resources within a society, ensuring that all individuals can fully participate without discrimination (Hyttén and Bettez, 2011). Gewirtz (1998) defines social justice in education as the process of addressing inequalities and guaranteeing equal access to knowledge and opportunities, particularly for marginalised groups. Meanwhile, Fraser (2008) conceptualises social justice through three key dimensions: *redistribution*, which focuses on economic fairness; *recognition*, which emphasises cultural and identity-based inclusion; and *representation*, which ensures political voice and participation.

Scotland has a longstanding political and social commitment to inclusion and social justice (Meer, 2016; Hayward, 2007). Endeavours to combat racism and foster a hospitable environment for refugees are evident in the *Race Equality Framework for Scotland (2016)* and inclusive immigration rhetoric (Leith and Sim, 2019). While attitudes toward immigrants are generally more positive in Scotland than in other parts of the UK, support remains mixed (Oxford Migration Observatory, 2014; Blinder, 2014; Leith and Sim, 2019). Nevertheless, Scotland is perceived as more welcoming than other parts of the world (Dabbous, 2019).

This is reflected in Scottish education, with social justice and inclusion being fundamental principles that shape policy development. A key framework that embodies these values is the *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* policy (The Scottish Government, 2008), which seeks to ensure that all children and their families receive targeted support. This policy emphasises the importance of respecting individual rights and fostering equity within the education system. *The Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act* (The Scottish Government, 2004) reinforces this wider understanding by recognising the varied and evolving needs of learners, ensuring that all children, regardless of their circumstances, have access to the necessary support to fully participate in the curriculum. Although Scottish schools have embraced a shift towards

inclusive policies and practices that prioritise social justice, there remains a palpable lack of targeted policies specifically addressing the needs of refugee learners. This gap is not unique to Scotland but is a widespread issue in education systems across the globe.

The absence of both policy and research are intrinsically linked. Pinson and Arnot (2007) characterise research on refugee education as a *"wasteland"*, while Taylor and Sidhu (2012, p. 42) *argue* that *"the discursive invisibility of refugees in policy and research has worked against their cultural, social and economic integration."* This gap raises significant concerns for educators seeking to understand refugee children's experiences and promote inclusion and social justice in the classroom.

1.2 Teacher Perceptions and Trauma-informed Practice

Refugee children often face the complex challenge of forging a new identity in an unfamiliar culture while simultaneously coping with past traumas. Their experiences are deeply impacted by disruptions, including displacement from their home country, separation from loved ones and exposure to violence (Thomas, 2016). Lustig (2010, p. 242) emphasises the shared struggles of refugees, stating that, despite individual differences, their experiences are universally defined by *"deprivation, upheaval, fear, uncertainty and loss"*.

Schools play a significant role in dictating the future of refugee children (Thomas, 2016; Taylor and Sidhu, 2012; Ryu and Tuvilla, 2018). However, it is often within these educational settings that refugee learners face the most barriers (Yeo and Yoo, 2022). Hattam and Every (2010) argue that school environments are shaped by broader societal contexts. Therefore, negative and often misleading media representations—along with societal perceptions of refugees as either helpless victims or potential threats—can lead teachers and schools to emphasise the limitations of refugee learners rather than their strengths (Harvey and Myint, 2014; Ryu and Tuvilla, 2018). However, Strauss and Smedley (2009) note that there is a strong desire from schools and teachers to ensure a positive integration experience for refugee learners. Nevertheless, they conclude that refugee learners' complex educational needs often place them at a considerable disadvantage and that merely providing access to education did not equate to equal access to the mainstream curriculum.

In educational settings, as reflected in society, refugee learners are frequently perceived as "*problems*" rather than valuable contributors to the classroom (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). This perception can be further compounded as refugee learners often arrive at irregular times during the school year, usually without records, which can significantly increase teachers' workload (Thomas, 2016). Strekalova and Hoot (2008) stress that understanding refugee learners' experiences is essential to avoid misinterpreting behaviour and combatting negative perceptions. In addition to the extensive trauma faced on the journey to reaching their new schools, refugee learners can suffer from continual trauma due to the stark transition into an unfamiliar environment (Thomas, 2016). In a study involving 311 Syrian children living in a refugee camp, Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2015) discovered that over 45% exhibited symptoms of PTSD. They concluded that Syrian refugee children are at a dangerous risk of experiencing mental health disorders. Additionally, this trauma can affect learners' social-emotional and cognitive development (Sirin and Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Walkley and Cox (2013) highlight that early nurturing educational experiences are crucial for the lifelong learning of trauma-affected children. However, many schools lack adequate support, often misidentifying trauma-related behaviours as attention deficits or misconduct (Black *et al.*, 2013). Unaddressed trauma can lead to delinquency and anti-social behaviour in later life (Black *et al.*, 2013). This underscores the need for schools to implement clear policies and interventions that foster a safe, nurturing environment and address refugee learners' developmental needs early on.

Research highlights the importance of trauma-informed practice when working with refugee learners, emphasising the need for professional development tailored to their unique experiences (Tweedie *et al.*, 2017). Teachers trained in trauma-informed practices develop expertise in socio-emotional learning and cultivate a shared approach to fostering welcoming and supportive school environments (Morrison, 2022). According to Mayor (2019), refugee trauma differs from other forms of trauma as it is ongoing and recurrent rather than a singular event. Therefore, professional development should be specific and not limited to a one-time session. Instead, it should involve continuous opportunities for training, discussion and feedback (Mayor, 2019). However, a study by Bačáková and Closs (2013), supported by the UNHCR, found that there is a severe lack of professional development, resources and funding for teachers and schools specifically regarding refugee learner inclusion.

Ryu and Tuvilla (2018) argue that although focusing on understanding trauma is beneficial, an overemphasis on refugee learners' trauma can lead to misconceptions about their ability. Thomas (2016) echoes this, discussing that although refugee learners' past experiences can significantly affect their development, a sole focus on this can result in learners being placed in low-level groupings that do not reflect their capabilities, causing further isolation. This exclusion can become common practice, with schools focusing on linguistic and emotional support and failing to recognise other important practices, such as fostering a sense of belonging and promoting inclusive curriculum content (Taylor and Sidhu 2012).

Rutter (2006) highlighted that 76% of the literature she accessed for her research focused on refugee learners' trauma. She claims that the perspective of refugee children as "*traumatised*" dilutes the significance of their individual experiences and strengths, while also downplaying the impact of post-migration events. Individuals from refugee backgrounds can often face lower socioeconomic status, psychological challenges and persistent prejudice in host countries (Block *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, shifting our perception of refugees from being merely victims and the beneficiaries of host-country support, to recognising them as resilient individuals who are valuable assets to their communities is essential (Yeo and Yoo, 2022). This change in perspective can significantly influence broader societal views and therefore, as previously argued by Hattam and Every (2010), transform school environments.

1.3 Social Integration

School environments play a crucial role in bridging the social gap between refugee learners and others in the community (Trisokka *et al.*, 2021; Woltra *et al.*, 2024; Niemi *et al.*, 2019). A review by Niemi *et al.*, (2019) emphasises the vital role social integration plays in supporting the psychological well-being of refugees, while Shafer and Walsh (2018) discuss how friendships are essential for helping refugee learners adjust to a new country and cope with significant challenges. However, evidence indicates that deep rooted discriminatory attitudes among practitioners and peers often act as obstacles to social inclusion (Trisokka *et al.*, 2021; Woltra *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, research indicates that learners whose first language differs from the host countries, face an increased risk of social exclusion (Wittekk *et al.*, 2020). A study

by Boda *et al.*, (2023) found that refugee learners in more diverse classrooms experience greater peer support and face less rejection, suggesting that increased intergroup contact fosters inclusion—a key claim of Allport's (1954) *Intergroup Contact Theory*. Although his four optimal conditions are not directly examined within the study.

Allport's *Intergroup Contact Theory* (1954) suggests that positive intergroup relationships develop when four key conditions are met: equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals and institutional support. These four key conditions are particularly essential for fostering inclusion and reducing prejudice in schools, as such, they are highly relevant to the social integration of refugee learners. However, systemic inequalities frequently hinder the fulfilment of Allport's conditions which can, as he suggests, reinforce rather than reduce biases. This highlights that mere contact between learners is insufficient; successful social integration requires intentional, equity-driven strategies within schools. Supporting this perspective, a study by Sutton *et al.*, (2023) which interviewed sixteen refugee learners in New Zealand, highlighted a crucial link between social inclusion and the recognition of cultural diversity. Refugee learners expressed that their sense of belonging would be significantly strengthened if their culture and language were more visible and valued within the school environment, demonstrating the real-world impact of institutional support highlighted in Allport's (1954) theory.

During the early stages of school integration, peer support can be significant when promoting academic engagement among refugee learners (Brewer, 2016). Academically motivated co-ethnic peers can serve as valuable resources, helping refugee learners navigate and adapt to their new school environment while also providing emotional support in response to experiences of discrimination and racism (Amthor and Roxas, 2016). Given this, schools have a significant role in promoting social cohesion by offering peer mentoring during their initial resettlement phase (Mendenhall and Bartlett, 2018). Such initiatives can help reduce feelings of isolation and encourage greater participation in both curricular and extracurricular activities (Mendenhall and Bartlett, 2018). However, placing refugee learners exclusively with peers from similar backgrounds may inadvertently reinforce a sense of exclusion from the broader school community and contribute to feelings of stigmatisation (Selimos and Daniel, 2017). While grouping refugee learners together may provide initial comfort through shared experiences, shared refugee status does not guarantee

compatibility or harmonious relationships (Roxas, 2011). Roxas (2011) also highlights that tensions can emerge when refugee learners are grouped together in the classroom, as cultural differences and historical conflicts from their home countries may persist. As Taylor and Sidhu (2012) note, treating refugee learners as a homogeneous group risks essentialising their experiences and identities. Teachers should therefore consider individual personalities and cultural dynamics when creating groupings, rather than relying solely on shared refugee status.

1.4 Cultural Integration

Historically, refugee education has emphasised assimilation over integration, reinforcing dominant cultural norms rather than valuing diverse identities (The Scottish Government, 2024). An approach that values integration over assimilation encourages inclusion while allowing individuals to retain their cultural identity. Educational policy reflects this stance, with UNCRC Article 29 (United Nations, 1989) stating that education must enable children to respect “*their own and other cultures.*”. In alignment with this, Amthor and Roxas (2016) define culturally relevant pedagogy as designing school experiences that allow learners to succeed while preserving their cultural identity. Bahar and Dooley (2020) argues that true integration requires positioning refugees as intellectual contributors, yet systemic barriers often obstruct this process. Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of cultural capital further explains these challenges. Refugees frequently arrive with valuable skills and knowledge, but when their cultural capital is not recognised within the host society, they may experience negative internalisation, leading to marginalisation (Kirova, 2019). To counter this, schools must actively validate and incorporate refugee learners’ cultural backgrounds, treating them as assets rather than deficits. Recognising and valuing the knowledge and linguistic skills of both learners and parents can facilitate meaningful integration and create a more inclusive educational environment (Kaur and Szorenyi, 2020). Research on inclusion highlights a connection between school culture and the effectiveness of inclusive education. To achieve genuine inclusivity, schools must be mindful of initiatives within their structures that could unintentionally limit the appreciation of cultural diversity (Corbett, 1999).

Literature highlights English as an Additional Language (EAL) as one of the greatest barriers to refugee learner integration. Refugee Action (2016) emphasises that achieving a sufficient level of English is essential for unlocking all other aspects of refugee integration. In recognition of this, Scotland's refugee integration strategy provides free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to refugee communities (The Scottish Government, 2024). However, language acquisition is a complex process that demands both systemic support and classroom-based strategies tailored to refugee learners' specific needs (Dabbous, 2019).

Limited English proficiency can hinder access to the curriculum and restrict social interactions (Dabbous, 2019). To support refugee learners effectively, teachers must implement both universal and targeted language-focused strategies. Targeted EAL interventions, such as one-to-one support programmes, can provide individualised attention to help refugee learners bridge language gaps quicker (Maadad and Yu, 2021). However, Ford (2023) highlights that for one-to-one support to be successful, ongoing collaboration between EAL teachers and classroom teachers is essential to ensure consistency for learners. Furthermore, a culturally responsive EAL programme is equally important as it builds on learners' existing linguistic knowledge and lived experiences, making learning more relevant and meaningful (Miles and Bailey-McKenna, 2016; Symons and Ponzio, 2019). Recognising linguistic diversity in the classroom involves leveraging learners' home languages as learning resources rather than viewing them as obstacles. Hancock (2012) advocates for strategies such as employing bilingual staff, involving learners' families and using bilingual dictionaries to support language development. A study by Walick and Sullivan (2015) on Somali learners in U.S. schools, found that while learners acquired English quickly, they struggled with unfamiliar curriculum content, leading to feelings of cultural exclusion. This highlights the need for integrating both language instruction and culturally relevant content into teaching practices.

An absence of effective EAL approaches can have future implications for the academic achievement of refugee learners (Dabbous, 2019). A report by McBride *et al.*, (2018) looking at the educational needs and experiences of refugee children in Scotland, found that refugee learners' subject preferences are often shaped by language barriers, with most refugee learners expressing a preference for practical subjects such as physical education or science over language-heavy subjects. It is important

to note that many scholars highlight that there is often an overemphasis on EAL within refugee education, sidelining other academic and social needs (Pinson & Arnot, 2007). This overemphasis could be viewed as deficit-focused, ignoring refugee learners' multilingual skills (Cummins, 2000). To foster meaningful inclusion, a balanced and holistic approach is needed.

1.5 Academic Integration

Refugee learners' academic success is shaped by multiple factors, including disrupted schooling, economic hardship, psychosocial challenges and the need to adjust to a new culture and environment (Stewart, 2019). However, despite these barriers, many refugee learners exhibit a strong determination to excel academically and pursue higher education (Brewer, 2016). McBride *et al.*, (2018) found that teachers in Scotland reported strong academic performance among many refugee learners. Additionally, differing cultural perspectives on education often lead refugee learners and their families to place significant importance on academic achievement, which may explain their strong educational aspirations (Dryden-Peterson *et al.*, 2017; McBride *et al.*, 2018). However, a large-scale study in Canada by Wong and Schweitzer (2017) challenges this perspective. They found that academic achievement was not high amongst refugee learners, with only 54% completing high school. This is a perspective affirmed by Lerner (2012). Dolan *et al.*, (2022) found that prioritising refugee learners' well-being can enhance their academic achievement. Research increasingly supports a link between positive mental health and greater academic performance (Halpern-Manners *et al.*, 2016). This raises concerns, as Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2015) previously highlighted that refugee children are at an exceptionally high risk of experiencing poor mental health.

A study by Gagné *et al.*, (2018) highlights the importance of a strong support system at home in fostering academic success among refugee learners, a point echoed by Wong and Schweitzer (2017). While this is relevant for all learners, refugee parents often face additional barriers—including family separations, EAL needs, cultural differences and systemic challenges—that can limit active participation in their child's learning journey (Gagné *et al.*, 2018). Arnot and Pinson (2005) advocate for a holistic

approach to refugee learner integration, highlighting that forming connections with families and the wider community as being essential for learner success.

Academic success is not solely dependent on learners' families, individual effort or institutional support but is also deeply tied to a learner's ability to navigate and integrate into the social and cultural fabric of their new environment. When refugee learners experience a sense of belonging—whether through peer relationships, culturally responsive teaching or inclusive school policies—the probability of them engaging meaningfully in their education and achieving academic success rises (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). Furthermore, it is critical not to view refugee learners as a homogeneous group when assessing their academic needs and potential (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). Refugee learners come from diverse backgrounds, with varying levels of prior education, linguistic abilities, cultural experiences and personal histories of displacement. Treating them as a single entity overlooks these nuances and risks implementing one-size-fits-all practices that may not be effective for all learners (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Sidhu and Taylor, 2012; Dabbous, 2019). Instead, adopting a differentiated approach that considers individual experiences and strengths is vital for building an inclusive and socially just educational environment.

Ultimately, the academic success of refugee learners is deeply intertwined with wider social and cultural factors and cannot be measured in isolation. Schools that create strong links with families, communities and support networks can provide a foundation for refugee learners to thrive academically. A holistic approach that acknowledges both the systemic barriers and individual aspirations of refugee learners is crucial to ensuring their successful integration within education and beyond (Block *et al.*, 2014).

Part II: Methodology

2.1 Aims

This research aims to identify inclusive practices that support refugee learners' social, academic and cultural integration within mainstream primary schools. It explores teachers' experiences and perspectives to gain insight into both the strategies they employ and the challenges they encounter and offers recommendations for enhancing inclusive educational practices for refugee learners.

2.2 Research Design

Within the research, a mixed-methods approach was employed—specifically a convergent parallel design—using both semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire to gather comprehensive data from teachers with current or previous experience of teaching refugee learners. This approach allowed qualitative and quantitative data to be collected and analysed separately, then merged to provide a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the topic by combining the strengths of both research methods.

The semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of teachers' insights regarding inclusive practices, the challenges they encountered and the successes they had achieved in supporting refugee learners (Magaldi and Berler, 2020). Interviews provided rich, detailed qualitative data that helped uncover nuanced perspectives that may not have emerged in the questionnaire (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). By using open-ended questions, teachers shared their lived experiences thoroughly, describing specific classroom and school strategies that had an impact on refugee learner integration.

The questionnaire provided structured, quantifiable data on key themes related to refugee learners' integration. Using Likert scale questions allowed for the identification of patterns and trends across a larger sample, making the findings more generalisable (Bryman, 2016). This quantitative data complemented the qualitative insights, ensuring a balanced analysis that captured both depth and breadth.

A mixed-methods approach was chosen as it allowed for triangulation—the process of using multiple data sources to increase the validity and reliability of the findings (Denzin, 2012). While interviews offered detailed personal experiences, questionnaires helped quantify those experiences and identify broader trends. Combining both methods ensured an extensive and nuanced understanding of teachers' perspectives on refugee learner integration (Denzin, 2012).

2.3 Research Context

One of the key strengths of employing a mixed-methods approach was its ability to capture data across diverse educational contexts, thereby enriching the overall understanding of refugee learner integration. The qualitative component was conducted in a small, semi-rural primary school that had recently begun accommodating refugee learners (School A). At the time of the study, the school had enrolled four Ukrainian refugee learners, all of whom had arrived within the past three years. For the teachers interviewed at this setting, teaching refugee learners was a relatively new and unfamiliar experience, offering insight into the challenges and learning curves faced by schools in similar contexts.

In contrast, the quantitative element was distributed to staff at a large, urban primary school with a long-standing and diverse population of refugee learners from a wide range of backgrounds (School B). Teachers in this setting had considerable experience in supporting refugee learners, contributing valuable perspectives on effective inclusive practices for a broad range of refugee learners. By collecting data from both a relatively novice and a more experienced educational environment, the mixed-methods approach facilitated a broader and more nuanced understanding of the varied realities faced by schools when supporting refugee learners.

2.4 Sample

The research sample consisted of two groups from contrasting educational settings, selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research aims (Punch, 2014). Purposive sampling strengthens the accuracy and reliability of the

research process by ensuring that participants are closely connected to the research topic (Campbell *et al.*, 2020).

In School A, three teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. Each had experience teaching the four Ukrainian refugee learners at various stages of their integration and development, and for all three, it was their first time teaching refugee learners. Participant A, with 32 years of teaching experience, taught two of the learners during their first year at the school. Participant B, who has been teaching for five years, was the current class teacher for three of the learners. Participant C, with 11 years of experience, taught two of the learners during their second year at the school. In contrast, the questionnaire was completed by ten teachers from School B, most of whom reported having extensive experience teaching refugee learners from diverse backgrounds.

2.5 Ethics

Ethical integrity was central to all stages of this research, from participant recruitment to data analysis and reporting. In accordance with British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2024) guidelines, measures were implemented to protect participants' confidentiality, autonomy and well-being. Pseudonyms such as "*Participant A*" were used in transcripts and findings, while questionnaire responses remained anonymous. School names were omitted to ensure privacy and all data was securely stored in compliance with data protection regulations, accessible only to the researcher.

Transparency was prioritised through detailed participant information sheets (see Appendix C and H) outlining the study's aims, procedures and use of data. Written informed consent was obtained, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time, ensuring alignment with BERA's focus on voluntary, informed participation. To reduce interviewer influence, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed (see Appendix A) to provide consistency while allowing flexibility. Sharing this in advance gave participants time to reflect, leading to richer, more thoughtful responses (Menter *et al.*, 2011).

2.6 Data Preparation and Application

The qualitative data was securely stored and transcribed to maintain confidentiality and uphold ethical standards (BERA, 2024) (see Appendix E). Following Menter *et al.*, (2011), analysis focused on interpreting meaning through participants' perceptions and contexts. Transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure familiarity and preserve nuance, reducing the risk of misinterpretation. To address potential researcher bias, a reflexive approach was adopted, involving critical reflection on personal assumptions (Punch, 2014).

Coding was essential for organising and interpreting the data. Descriptive codes identified key ideas, which were then grouped into broader themes aligned with the research questions (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018; Bell and Waters, 2018). These themes enabled structured interpretation and supported comparison with the quantitative findings.

The quantitative data was securely recorded and organised using Microsoft Excel. This ensured a clear, systematic and accessible format for data management—an essential aspect of high-quality research (Menter *et al.*, 2011). The data was then analysed descriptively, allowing for the identification of patterns, levels of agreement and notable themes among participants.

This descriptive analysis enabled direct comparison with the qualitative findings, highlighting areas of convergence and contradiction across methods, as is central to the convergent parallel mixed-methods design employed in the study. Visual representations of the data were also created in the form of graphs (see Appendix K and L), aiding interpretation by making the results more accessible (Menter *et al.*, 2011). These graphs also supported the triangulation of findings by presenting quantitative trends alongside the more detailed narratives from the interviews.

Part III- Findings and Discussion

3.1 Theme 1: Individualising Refugee Inclusion

A recurring theme that emerged during the interview process was the recognition that refugee learners are not a homogenous group. As such, no universal strategy can effectively support their integration. Interview participants consistently highlighted the diversity among refugee learners in terms of their social backgrounds, academic histories and cultural identities. This perspective is strongly reflected in literature, with Dryden-Peterson (2016), Taylor and Sidhu (2012) and Dabbous (2019), warning against grouping refugee learners into a singular category, as it risks overlooking their individual needs and experiences.

Notably, despite all refugee learners within School A being from the same national context, there was significant variation in their educational backgrounds, language proficiency and cultural practices. Interview participants emphasised that shared nationality did not equate to shared experience. Individual differences, even among those displaced by the same conflict, were found to have a profound impact on how each learner and their families engaged with education. This reinforces the importance of personalised, context-sensitive approaches to inclusion that avoid assumptions based on refugee status or country of origin (Roxas, 2011; Ryu and Tuvilla, 2018; Thomas, 2016; Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). One participant explained:

“For child A, even her Ukrainian culture was different from Child B. They were from different parts of the country, and they have different attitudes and values sets. So, you couldn’t just do one homogeneous kind of group, so it was about trying to, as the way you would with anybody, trying to support them as an individual.” (Participant A)

Initially, two learners were grouped together in the same class to support their transition—a common strategy in schools to aid social integration and communication (Amthor and Roxas, 2016; Brewer, 2016). However, this well-intentioned approach had inadvertent consequences:

“Most of the difficulties came from infighting between them, it probably wasn’t the most sensible move to put the two of them in the class together because it turned out

they didn't really get on. Which made it difficult for the two of them to settle because they kind of magnetised towards each other but not in a good way.” (Participant C)

This echoes Roxas (2011), who cautions that grouping refugee learners based solely on shared background or status can be counterproductive. Cultural or personal tensions—sometimes rooted in regional or historical conflict—can resurface in the classroom, creating further barriers to integration.

In addition to cultural differences, interview participants also observed discrepancies in academic progress, particularly in language acquisition. While some learners picked up English quickly, others required more intensive support. Teachers attributed this to a range of factors, including parental involvement, prior educational experiences, and individual personality traits. As a result, all participants stressed the importance of differentiated support tailored to each learner's needs. This reinforces calls within literature for inclusive practices that are flexible, individualised and responsive to the lived experiences of each refugee learner.

3.2 Theme 2: EAL Support

All participants agreed that EAL support is one of the most critical factors in facilitating both academic and social integration for refugee learners. However, there was some divergence in views regarding what should be prioritised first—language acquisition or fostering a sense of belonging.

Participants A and C believed that nurturing a sense of belonging must come before academic progress, suggesting that learners need to feel emotionally secure and socially included before they can fully engage with language development. In contrast, Participant B viewed the two as intrinsic, arguing that communication is a key pathway to feeling connected:

“Feeling like you belong is important, but to do that you have to be able to communicate.” (Participant B)

This perspective aligns closely with the quantitative findings, in which EAL support emerged as the highest-ranked factor for promoting inclusion and supporting refugee learners' progress (see Appendix L). This strong consensus mirrors arguments by

Refugee Action (2016) and Dabbous (2019), who emphasise that acquiring English is a foundational step toward unlocking all other aspects of integration.

Across the board, participants highlighted the effectiveness of one-to-one EAL support in accelerating learners' development. This view is supported by Maadad and Yu (2021), who advocate for targeted interventions that enable learners to bridge language gaps more efficiently while building confidence in the classroom. Participant A described the value of such personalised support in fostering both linguistic and emotional growth:

“Having somebody to teach them the basics of English one-to-one was what helped the most, because you just don’t have time in a class of 24. It helped them feel happy within the classroom. Even if things are strange—if they feel they’re making progress, and they can communicate with you—then that’s a huge part of it.”

(Participant A)

In addition, Participant B stressed the importance of collaboration between classroom teachers and EAL teachers, highlighting the need for content covered in one-to-one sessions to be consistently reinforced and integrated into wider classroom practice, a point affirmed by Ford (2023). However, questionnaire participants expressed concern regarding EAL teachers' diminishing availability due to budget constraints despite refugee learner numbers increasing (see Appendix J). This reflects Bačáková and Closs's (2013) warning that chronic underfunding and the lack of targeted resources continues to hinder efforts to support refugee learners effectively.

Additionally, interview participants highlighted the importance of incorporating learners' home languages into classroom practices to support both EAL development and cultural integration. This approach reflects the work of Hancock (2012) and Symons and Ponzio (2019), who recommend recognising and leveraging learners' first languages as cultural and cognitive assets rather than deficits.

Participant C made a deliberate effort to learn Ukrainian to build stronger relationships with learners and support their communication, an approach also adopted by Participant A and the school's principal teacher, reflecting the school's broader ethos of valuing learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds:

“We put up signs around the school and brought in Ukrainian books—even though they were still in infants and couldn’t really read in Ukrainian very well—I think it did help with their communication and their sense of belonging.” (Participant C)

These actions demonstrate a commitment to culturally responsive and multilingual practices, which are highlighted in literature as essential components of inclusive EAL provision. By acknowledging and integrating learners’ home languages into the school environment, educators not only support language development but also affirm learners’ identities and promote a greater sense of belonging (Miles and Bailey-McKenna, 2016; Walick and Sullivan, 2015).

Beyond traditional forms of support, one questionnaire participant raised the importance of digital technology in enhancing EAL learning. While not addressed in the reviewed literature, this insight suggests an important area for future research. Integrating technology could provide flexible, accessible language support—particularly crucial in contexts where EAL staffing is limited. This perspective broadens the understanding of inclusive EAL practices and underscores the potential for digital tools to complement traditional strategies.

3.3 Theme 3: Family Engagement

One of the most consistently emphasised approaches was the recognition that refugee learner inclusion must extend beyond the classroom to actively include families. Participants repeatedly highlighted the pivotal role that parents and caregivers play in supporting refugee learners’ development:

“The parent’s impact is massive, and you can see a difference in each of the children depending on how the parents engaged with the school...Child B, she’s not doing as well academically now, and I would say the reason is because the parents don’t necessarily engage with the school as well as the other parents.” (Participant C)

This was strongly reinforced by the quantitative data: 80% of respondents strongly agreed, and the remaining 20% agreed, that establishing strong connections with refugee families is essential for learner progress (see Appendix K).

Participants discussed how parental involvement can significantly impact language development, classroom engagement and overall well-being. Learners whose families were able to actively engage with the school often displayed greater confidence and faster progression. This is supported by Gagné *et al.*, (2018) who emphasises the importance of a strong support system at home in fostering academic success among refugee learners. However, they recognise that refugee families often encounter additional barriers, a perspective echoed by participants, who discussed how language barriers and cultural differences can hinder parents' ability to participate fully in their child's learning journey. Participant C also highlighted that unfamiliarity with education systems can pose as a barrier, as Ukrainian and Scottish systems are vastly different.

Interview participants noted that refugee parents demonstrated particularly strong values regarding education. They consistently placed a higher importance on academic achievement compared to many parents of children born in Scotland. As a result, participants observed that refugee learners often exhibited higher levels of attainment:

"Their educational ethics is very much that, you know, education is something to be prized, and you get everything out of it that you can and when you look at those children around the school, their ethos and ethic is quite a lot higher than a lot of the kids that are from here." (Participant C)

This observation aligns with findings by McBride *et al.*, (2018), who reported that teachers in Scotland recognised strong academic performance among refugee learners. Dryden-Peterson *et al.*, (2017) suggest that these outcomes may be influenced by differing cultural perspectives on education.

However, the quantitative data revealed that refugee learners are frequently placed in lower-ability groupings, with 70% of respondents agreeing with this statement (see Appendix K). This finding could lend support to Wong and Schweitzer's (2017) conclusion that academic achievement among refugee learners tends to be lower. Alternatively, it may reflect Thomas's (2016) argument that teacher perceptions can result in refugee learners being placed in lower ability groupings that do not accurately represent their true capabilities. Further research and deeper exploration would be

necessary to determine which of these explanations most accurately accounts for this trend.

All interview participants agreed that parents' attitudes toward the host country's culture and education system—whether accepting or resistant—play a vital role in the successful integration of refugee learners. Additionally, refugee families who spoke English at home progressed quicker both socially and academically:

“The wee boy struggled initially but his family really wanted to be here. His mum and dad are both university graduates and they did lots of work with him and made an effort to speak English at home. And now he doesn’t go for EAL support because of how proficient he is”. (Participant C)

However, Participant A emphasised that the relationship between families and schools must be reciprocal. While parents should be encouraged to engage in their children's education, schools have an equal responsibility to foster welcoming, accessible and culturally responsive environments that enable meaningful inclusion (Arnot and Pinson, 2005):

“It’s a two-way street really, yes they have to embrace us, but we also have to embrace them.” (Participant A)

In addition to supporting academic outcomes, fostering strong connections with parents was also viewed as crucial for supporting the emotional well-being of refugee learners. Interview participants acknowledged that they often do not have access to the full context of a child's personal or familial situation and therefore rely heavily on communication with parents to stay informed. These ongoing dialogues help educators better understand any external challenges the learner may be facing which may impact their behaviour in school:

“They spoke to us quite a lot, you know, Child A’s mum told us how they got here, and it didn’t sound particularly great, and that they’ve had to leave relatives behind who wouldn’t come. It’s important to know that stuff to move forward, but parents can be very closed off at first.” (Participant C)

While much of the existing literature on refugee education prioritises areas such as prejudice, trauma-informed practice and EAL provision, there is a comparatively limited focus on the role of parental engagement in the integration process. This gap

is particularly striking considering the strong emphasis placed on family involvement by participants. This disparity was also reflected in the quantitative data: although all respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that establishing connections with refugee families is crucial, parental engagement was frequently ranked as less important than other factors such as EAL provision and emotional support (see appendix L). This suggests that, despite widespread acknowledgment of its value, parental involvement may remain an underprioritised area in both research and practice.

Interview participants highlighted several school-based and community initiatives that were effective in bridging this gap. Programmes such as learning cafés—informal spaces where families could connect with school staff and better understand the education system—were seen as valuable tools. Similarly, wider community initiatives such as local authority-run *social days* for refugee families were viewed as opportunities to build connections beyond the classroom. Arnot and Pinson (2005) and Block *et al.*, (2014) emphasise the importance of a holistic approach to refugee education, highlighting that the active involvement of families and the wider community is fundamental to achieving meaningful integration. By creating shared spaces for dialogue and community-building, School A demonstrated a commitment to working *with* families, not just for them—an approach that appears vital in supporting the social, cultural and academic integration of refugee learners.

3.4 Theme 4: Trauma-informed Practice

All participants consistently highlighted the importance of adopting nurturing, trauma-informed approaches when supporting refugee learners' integration, a view echoed by 100% of questionnaire respondents, who agreed that trauma has a significant impact on refugee children's learning. A key element of this nurturing approach was the emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging the development of friendships:

“If they don’t feel like they belong here, they’re not going to learn” (Participant B)

Participant B's assertion underscores the value of fostering environments where refugee learners are not only included but actively engaged in equitable and

supportive relationships. This aligns with Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory (1954) that contact alone is not enough—it must be structured to promote mutual respect and shared understanding. Interview participants noted that friendships often formed naturally, as young children found ways to connect despite cultural and language differences. However, participant A acknowledged that all the refugee learners being ethnically white, may have aided their social integration:

“I think we would be naive to say that it didn't help. I don't think other children would have been bad towards them but, we are a very ethnically white school, and they would have stood out and I suppose been more isolated.”

(Participant A)

While racial bias was not directly evident in School A, this stands in contrast to School B, where diversity was more prevalent. The quantitative data revealed that 90% of participants agreed that addressing racial bias and prejudice was a key factor (see appendix K), placing it third among the most important inclusive practices. This supports broader literature: Block *et al.*, (2014) and Trisokka *et al.*, (2021) emphasise that refugee learners often face racialised barriers within educational systems, with staff and peer biases negatively influencing their integration and compounding existing experiences of trauma.

Whether or not racial diversity was present in the school context, all participants agreed that trauma-informed practice was crucial for fostering a nurturing environment that supports both integration and learning. One participant commented:

“We have lots of kids here who have traumatic backgrounds. So, I suppose in a school like this, trauma-informed learning is just part of our culture, a part of our day-to-day approach.” (Participant A)

Participant A highlights how embedded this approach had become in the school's ethos, not only for refugee learners but for any child with a complex background. Participant C's perspective further underlines the emotional labour of working with traumatised learners, pointing to the limits of teacher training and systemic support:

“All you can do is be nurturing, because you don't want to ask them questions about it, because we don't have the skill set to deal with the answers to those questions, and there isn't going to be anyone that comes out to school to help them deal with it,

so you have to just provide them with an nurturing enough environment that they feel safe enough to learn.” (Participant C)

This echoes Walkley and Cox’s (2013) assertion that many schools are ill-equipped to identify or appropriately respond to trauma-related behaviours, which are often mistaken for behavioural problems or attention deficits (Black *et al.*, 2013). Participant B affirmed this observation, noting that one of the refugee learners had been considered for an attention deficit diagnosis, though they suspected the behaviours might instead be linked to underlying trauma.

In School A, nurturing practices do not merely serve as an emotional buffer—they are foundational to re-engaging traumatised learners with the curriculum. Participant B discussed the importance of predictable environments and consistent routines, while Participant A emphasised strong, trusting relationships with staff to help establish the psychological safety that is a prerequisite for learning (Morrison, 2022). Participant C placed less of an emphasis on trauma-informed practice although acknowledged that it should still be a consideration. Instead, they emphasised creating a space where learners could *temporarily* set aside their difficult experiences and focus on building a future through education:

“Our job is actually to find a way for them to shut it off because... your only chance to get out of all that is to get good at what you do in here.” (Participant C)

Participant C’s approach—to acknowledge the trauma without letting it define the child’s educational experience—echoes Rutter (2006) and Ryu and Tuvilla’s (2018) call for a more balanced perspective that recognises both the challenges and strengths refugee learners bring.

All participants noted a lack of professional development in trauma-informed practice and most agreed it would be beneficial. They felt better training would boost confidence, improve consistency and help distinguish trauma-related behaviours from other needs. This reflects Tweedie *et al.*, (2017) and Mayor (2019), who argue that effective trauma-informed practice requires ongoing, whole-school training and systemic support to ensure all staff can respond appropriately and consistently. What was noteworthy is that experience did not correlate with confidence. Some participants who reported extensive experience teaching refugee learners also expressed low levels of confidence in doing so. This suggests that exposure alone is not sufficient;

without targeted training and support, even experienced teachers may feel ill-equipped to meet the complex needs of refugee learners.

These insights reinforce the view that nurture, safety and belonging are foundational to learning—but these must be underpinned by systemic awareness of how race, identity and trauma intersect. As such, the most effective trauma-informed practices are those that consider the full spectrum of refugee learners' experiences: from the war zones they flee to the classrooms they enter.

Part IV: Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

This research aimed to explore inclusive practices that support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education. Through a mixed-methods approach across two contrasting school settings, the study uncovered key insights into the challenges faced by refugee learners and the strategies employed by teachers to combat them. It reaffirmed that refugee learners are not a homogenous group, and that effective inclusion demands adaptive, learner-centred approaches grounded in understanding, equity and cultural responsiveness.

The findings emphasise the importance of targeted EAL support, trauma-informed practice and active family engagement. These factors were consistently identified as pivotal for the effective integration of refugee learners. The role of professional development also emerged as a significant theme; while teachers expressed a strong commitment to inclusive practices, many highlighted a lack of training regarding the specific needs of refugee learners.

4.2 Limitations

Despite the valuable insights gained, this study is not without its limitations. The small-scale nature of the research means findings cannot be generalised across all mainstream primary schools. Due to time constraints, the interview sample was limited to three participants, potentially narrowing the range of perspectives. Although the inclusion of a questionnaire strengthened the data set, its scope was also limited. The sample size was small, and responses relied on self-reporting, which may introduce bias or inconsistency (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, the questionnaire did not capture deeper qualitative insights into individual experiences that might have further enriched the findings (Menter *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, the focus on Ukrainian refugee learners within the qualitative findings, while relevant and timely, may not fully reflect the diverse experiences of learners from other refugee backgrounds, who may face different social or cultural challenges. Future research would benefit from broader and

more diverse samples to explore deeper, varied insights into refugee learner integration.

4.3 Implications and recommendations

Several key measures are recommended for inclusive practice. Firstly, refugee learners should not be treated as a homogenous group; they arrive with varied cultural backgrounds, languages, prior educational experiences and individual needs. Schools and teachers must adopt differentiated approaches that are flexible, learner-centred and responsive to each child's unique circumstances.

Schools must provide cohesive EAL support which should include both targeted one-to-one sessions and wider classroom interventions. Beyond direct support, schools must also foster classroom environments where learners' home languages are valued as assets rather than deficits. Teachers should work collaboratively to ensure that EAL provision extends to learners' families and stays consistent. Access to appropriate resources is also essential to enhance language development and engagement. While adequate funding and training remains important to sustain these initiatives, educators must begin to embed inclusive and responsive EAL practices across the school community.

Fostering a sense of belonging and implementing trauma-informed approaches within practice is vital for improving refugee learner outcomes. To support this, ongoing professional development should be prioritised to equip staff with the skills to meet refugee learners' social-emotional needs and support cultural and academic inclusion. This should include trauma-informed approaches, as well as training in anti-racist practice to address unconscious bias and systemic inequities. Such training must be embedded in school culture and revisited regularly to remain relevant and impactful.

While this research reaffirmed the importance of trauma-informed practice and EAL support in refugee learner integration, it also uncovered a significantly underexplored dimension: the role of family engagement. Schools must take proactive steps to create accessible spaces for dialogue, allowing families to feel welcomed, heard and involved in their children's education. Building trusting relationships between schools and

families is paramount for promoting refugee learners' academic success and well-being, creating an environment where they can thrive.

Finally, educational policy must respond to the growing population of refugee learners within classrooms and explicitly recognise refugee learners within broader inclusion practices. Targeted, evidence-based supports should be embedded into national frameworks to ensure that refugee learners' right to equitable education is consistently upheld across all school settings.

Although the voices of refugee learners were not directly heard in this study, their presence was felt—in every story told, every challenge recounted, and every hope expressed by the teachers who work daily alongside them. Inclusion is not simply a policy or a practice—it is a promise. A promise that every child, regardless of where they come from or what they have faced, will find safety, belonging and the chance to flourish in our schools and beyond.

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Appendix A

School of Education & Social Sciences



Interview Schedule

My name is [name], and I am a B.A.4 Education student at the University of the West of Scotland. As part of my dissertation research, I will be conducting interviews with colleagues in the school. The aim of the research is to identify inclusive practices that effectively support refugee learners' social, academic and cultural integration within mainstream primary education, understand the experiences and perspectives of educators regarding these practices and provide recommendations for enhancing inclusive educational practices that support the learning of refugees.

I have approached you to interview as I feel that you would be able to offer valuable insights into your own experiences of the inclusion and learning of refugee learners, I hope to use the data you provide with that of others I interview to identify themes on supporting and enhancing learners social, academic and cultural inclusion. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes.

Student reads:

I am with participant _____, and I would like to start by stating that all data gathered, and responses provided are completely confidential. Also, you will remain anonymous and will only be referred to as "Participant X". I would also like to remind you that you may withdraw your participation in the research, and you can ask for the recorder to be stopped during the interview. Based on the information in the Participant Information Sheet and what we have discussed, are you happy to proceed with the interview?

Date:

Time:

Participant:

1. Can you describe your experiences working with refugee learners in your classroom or school?
2. What do you think are the most important aspects of inclusion for supporting the learning of refugee learners?
3. How do peer interactions and friendships influence the inclusion of refugee learners? Are there any strategies that you or your school implement to support this?

4. What challenges have you encountered in supporting the academic progress of refugee learners, and how have you tried to address these? Are there specific teaching materials or resources that you use to support refugee learners?
5. Are there any cultural or social challenges that impact refugee learners' education? How important do you think cultural representation is for the inclusion of refugee learners? For example, this could include incorporating cultural holidays, literature from various backgrounds, utilising learners' home language, or visual representation of different cultures within the classroom.
6. Have you experienced any specific inclusive practices or programmes your school has implemented to support the learning of refugee learners? How effective were they?
7. What are the main barriers to learning and inclusion for refugee learners in your school?
8. Is trauma something you consider when approaching the planning and teaching of refugee learners? How do issues such as trauma, displacement, or interrupted education affect their learning?
9. How do you address any language barriers for refugee learners within your school/classroom? In your experience, what impact does EAL have on refugee learners' social, academic and cultural inclusion?
10. How do parents and caregivers of refugee learners engage with the school?
11. Have you ever received professional development on the inclusion of refugee learners? Do you believe there is enough support and resources available for teachers and schools to effectively support refugee learners and their families?
12. What do you think could be done to improve the learning and inclusion of refugee learners?
13. Are there any other points you would like to add?

Appendix B (School A)

Ayr Campus
University Avenue
Ayr
KA8 0SX
Scotland

Dear Head Teacher,

I am a B.A.4 Honours student studying at the University of the West of Scotland. Throughout my time on placement, I have had the privilege of working with a diverse range of learners, including individuals from refugee backgrounds, and I have witnessed the unique challenges they face. For this reason, I have chosen to carry out a small research project on what inclusive practices support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education as part of my final year Dissertation, and I would appreciate your school's participation.

The purpose of my research is to gather information on what inclusive practices effectively support refugee learners' unique needs. It aims to understand the experiences and perspectives of educators regarding these practices, the barriers they face, and provide recommendations for enhancing inclusive educational practices based on empirical findings.

I plan to obtain this information using semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 20-30 minutes. I would like to interview four or more teachers from your school who could discuss their experiences of supporting refugee learners in the primary school.

If you are willing to host this research at your school, please email me at [email address] and provide me with a list of experienced teachers who are currently or have previously supported refugee learners in their classroom. I will then approach them to ask if they would like to participate in the research.

The research has possible benefits as it provides participants with the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. It also allows participants to share ideas and strategies that may further assist them in supporting refugee learners within the classroom. Participants will receive a debriefing highlighting the findings of the research. All participants will be anonymous (individual information, e.g., name, institution, specific location, specific role, will not be identifiable). Participants have the right to withdraw from the research in the data collection phase.

My supervisor is [name], an Honorary Professor at the University of the West of Scotland. Should you have any questions, please contact me or my supervisor.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet (Interviews)

Research Topic: *What inclusive practices support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education?*

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information carefully and contact me if there is any further information you require. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to participate.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to gather information on the inclusive practices currently used in primary schools to support the social, academic, and cultural integration of refugee learners. It aims to explore educators' experiences and perspectives on inclusive practices for refugee learners, identify potential barriers to inclusion, and evaluate strategies to overcome these.

What do I have to do?

You are being invited to take part in a one-to-one interview with me. The interview takes approximately 20-30 minutes, is arranged to take place at a time and a location that suits you and supports confidentiality and student teacher safety, e.g., a meeting room in the school. You will be asked about your opinion on what inclusive practices are effective in supporting the integration of refugee learners and about your experiences of supporting refugee learners within your classroom. The interview is audio-recorded and afterwards the content of the interview is transcribed.

Why are you asking me?

You are being approached because you are currently or have previously supported refugee learners in their education.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participating in this project is voluntary. Even if you decide to take part, you can change your mind after the interview, and any data that you have already given can be withdrawn up until 4 April 2025.

Is my data kept confidential?

The original recordings are destroyed once they have been typed up. Your name is not used in the written transcripts of the interview, nor in the final report for the programme, nor in any other publications arising from the research. Participants are referred to by code instead (i.e. Participant A, B, C or D). Individual information, e.g., name, institution, specific location, specific role, is not identifiable. Electronic files and documents are password-protected and stored on UWS OneDrive.

What happens to the information I provide?

Your data and data from the other participants' interviews are analysed and used to identify effective inclusive practices that support the social, cultural and academic integration of refugee learners. It is used to identify any potential barriers that you feel may impact on the education of refugee learners and give recommendation on how to overcome these. These findings are included in my B.A.4 Honours Dissertation. Once the data has been analysed and conclusions have been

drawn, you are provided with a summary of the findings. On request, you have full access to the final dissertation and a summary of the data collected is provided.

Who should I contact for more information?

If you have any more questions or would like additional information about the research, please contact me by email on [email address]

What if I have a complaint about the research?

If you have a complaint about the research, please contact [name], Dissertation Module Co-ordinator, by email on [email].

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and I hope that you are interested in taking part in the research.

Yours sincerely,

[name]

Appendix D

School of Education & Social Sciences



Participant Consent Form: Interviews

Researcher: [name]

Research title: *What inclusive practices support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education?*

Dear participant,

I am a B.A.4 Honours student studying at the University of the West of Scotland. My supervisor is Kenneth Muir, an Honorary Professor at the University of the West of Scotland. I would appreciate your participation in the form of an interview. Please read the participant information sheet provided and ask any necessary questions before signing this form.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above Study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. Yes/No
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to not answer any question or end my interview at any point without giving any reason and that I can request to withdraw from the study after completing the interview by emailing the researcher before 5 April 2025. Yes/No
3. I understand that my data from this study will be securely stored by the researchers (on UWS OneDrive), and my individual information will not be identifiable (name, institution, specific location, specific role). Yes/No
4. I agree to take part in the above study. Yes/No
5. I agree to the interview being recorded and transcribed. Yes/No

Participant	_____	Date	_____
Signature (electronic)	_____		
Researcher	_____	Date	_____
Signature (electronic)	_____		

1 copy for participant to keep and 1 copy for researcher

Appendix E

Participant C	Transcript	Code
	Speaker 1 Question one is can you describe your experiences working with refugee learners in your classroom or school? Speaker 2 OK so our refugees are all Ukrainian. And I have taught three of the four that we have in school. All in infants, which presents its own set of challenges. I have taught two in primary 3 and one in primary 2 and I still teach all three of them in regard to raising attainment. Speaker 1 Fab, thank you. And question 2, what do you think are the most important aspects of inclusion for supporting the learning of refugee learners? Speaker 2 I suppose just making them feel like they're part of the school and an understanding that there potentially will be language barriers. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 And I suppose we do it with all our learners but recognising what family have come with them and what family have stayed behind and the actual circumstances that have brought them here and how they have actually got here in the first place. Speaker 1 Yeah. Do you think fostering that sense of belonging is the number one thing before you can tackle EAL or anything else? Is that your number one priority? Speaker 2 Yes, because without that they're not going to make any progress. Because if they don't feel like they belong here, regardless of the language barrier, they, like any of the children, particularly infants, when they first start If they don't, you know, know where to find a pencil or a pair of scissors, or they don't know where the toilet is or how the lunch routine works and even things like, you know, the food, for these children, it will be different. And also depending on where they have started within school before they came here, their school system is very different as well, which you	Fostering a sense of belonging Language barriers Recognising trauma Fostering a sense of belonging is crucial to success and learning Possibly more important than EAL Things will be culturally different for the learners, such as food

	know, takes nurturing before you can actually start any teaching. Speaker 1 Do you think because they were early years that it was almost harder? Easier I suppose because they don't have any experience of any kind of schooling beforehand so your starting fresh or do you think it was harder because you're teaching them those basic skills like right off the bat? Speaker 2 So, there were lots of challenges. The two children that came initially who were in a primary 2/3 class, I think there is probably four or five months between them in age. Speaker 1 Hmm. Speaker 2 But in Ukraine, they don't start school until they're seven. But regardless of that when you start in the Scottish education system you have to enter the class according to your age. Regardless of what grade you have been. So, both these children would only have been starting in primary 1 in Ukraine and they were put into a primary 3 class in Scotland. Speaker 1 Alright ohh that's hard. Speaker 2 Yeah. Now one of them was fine. The other one I would have argued should have been put into primary 2. I mean, if you look at them now, they're doing OK. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 But I think we failed them initially because they're coming from a war-torn country and they have come from an early year's nursery environment, which was, you know a Scandinavian early year's environment, so they are learning, but they are then being put straight into a mainstream school primary three class, and they don't speak English. And they have been in early years so even their Ukrainian isn't at a good level Speaker 1 Yeah. Speaker 2	School systems are different Nurturing approach before you can start teaching Teachers face a lot of challenges and barriers Highlighting cultural differences Cultural/system differences can be a barrier Highlighting trauma Trauma can be continued from a stark transition into an unfamiliar environment. Perhaps highlighting the need for extended transitions.
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	You know we were all making signs and things around the classroom, but even in Ukrainian, they don't know what the words mean. Speaker 1 Uh. Speaker 2 Yeah. Do you know what I mean? One of them, it was a struggle because I think she should have been in the primary 2 class. She was too big to be in the primary 1 class. But she could have done with being in the primary 2 class. The wee boy struggled initially but his family really wanted to be here. His mum and dad are both university graduates and they did lots of work with him and made an effort to speak English at home. And now he doesn't go for EAL support because of how proficient he is. Speaker 1 Yeah. Hmm. Speaker 2 so, he has done OK, but he could probably actually have coped better initially as well if he was in a primary 2 class. Speaker 1 And question 3, how did peer interactions and friendships influence the inclusion of refugee learners? Are there any strategies that you or your school implement to support this? Speaker 2 The local authority as a whole has got refugee groups. So, they go away as big groups, they go trips and things like that and it's across the local authority so doesn't matter what school they're in. The parents can all get together and somebody locally organises all that. Speaker 1 Ohh that's good. Speaker 2 The first two children I had, they were both in the same class, so theoretically that should have helped but it didn't. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 [redacted] runs a social club that they attend but I think for them, and everything you have to remember is that they're not British, they're Ukrainian, and their ethos is different. And also, their parents very much saw coming here as an escape and want their children to fit in and normalised within the... so. As children,	Culturally responsive teaching/fostering a sense of belonging Highlighting that stage can be a barrier Highlights the importance of family engagement and speaking English at home Highlighting stage is important Highlights community wide initiatives for fostering belonging and social interaction Highlights that same background doesn't mean learners will get on Highlights different culture/ethos Highlights the influence and attitudes of parents
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	they very quickly do that, and as young children would very quickly do that. So, if you listen to particularly the young ones in the infants, they very much...I mean they all speak with their little Scottish accents already, but they very quickly make friends because well they're different, so you know, the other kids are interested in them, but they're all actually nice kids, you know what I mean, so they did very quickly just become part of the school. Speaker 1 Just naturally, yeah. And the other people, the other kids in the class, did they respond well to their arrival? Speaker 2 Yes, yes, they did. Speaker 1 Well, that's good. Speaker 2 It doesn't take much for the boys they've got their football. And you know, that's it you're in with the gang. Speaker 1 I asked participant A this and I thought their response was quite interesting. As they're Ukrainian, they are obviously white and there's not any strong physical or religious differences between them and the children already in the school, do you think there would have been a difference in their social inclusion and friendships if there was bit of more physical difference between them and the other children? Speaker 2 I think there would be more intrigue because, well, we live in an area where you don't have a lot of racial diversity. But again, children are very, very accepting. Children would stare more but that's not out of anything bad, it's just that they've never seen someone that looks like that. Speaker 1 Yeah absolutely. That's interesting, thank you. Question 4, what challenges have you encountered in supporting the academic progress of refugee learners, and how have you tried to address these? Are there specific teaching materials or resources that you use to support refugee learners? Speaker 2	are important for integration. Very quickly integrated socially. Highlighted that other children were intrigued by their differences. Other children were welcoming Highlights that racial diversity would promote more intrigue Highlighted that learners may have stood out more but would largely be treated the same
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	So, the initial thing was that they haven't even done their sounds. Speaker 1 Yes. Speaker 2 They had huge amounts of EAL support initially. And they are quite clever, so they're very quickly adapted. I would say more so the two boys than the girl but that is because they had families who spoke English and Child B's mum refuses. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 They're quite Russian and you can even see a difference in culture between the children in that way. Speaker 1 Oh, that's interesting. Speaker 2 Child B's family, are very Russian, whereas the other two, their families are far more, relaxed is the wrong word, but want to take the benefits of what's available here and want their children to fit in. So have been working with and initially were very much working with them at home to try and push on their English, so there's lots of work done initially with EAL with those two children versus the other child. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm Speaker 2 In the early days you did try to do loads of Ukrainian worksheets and you know things you could use. But again, the challenge was they were very early into education. So, their Ukrainian wasn't even that great. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Yeah. Speaker 2 There was an older Ukrainian refugee up the school and one of the younger children would get quite upset sometimes and she would come down and try and translate. Most of it came from infighting between again, probably wasn't the most sensible move to put the two of them in the class together because it turned out they didn't really get on. Speaker 1 Hmm. Speaker 2	Highlights that were lots of EAL support in the initial stages. Highlights the importance of natural ability, possible cultural differences regarding education. Highlights the importance of family engagement with the language. Highlights that refugee learners are not a homogenous group Highlights the differences even between families that are from the same background Highlights the importance of family attitudes, engagement and cultural. EAL speaking at home is important. Highlights including language within daily practice. Considering past educational experiences as a barrier Highlights possible lack of resources, relying on another learner to translate. Highlights that refugees' learners are not a homogenous group. They do not also get on. Highlights the consequences for
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	Which made it difficult for the two of them to settle because they kind of magnetise towards each other but not in a good way, in a way that made it difficult for the rest of the class. Learning wise, again, the education system in Ukraine is very different. It's very regimented and It's very much, even primary 1, sperate desks, bums on seats and face the front. They have to flash card 150 words in, I think, it's 2 minutes. One of the parents had brought in like booklets of mental maths that they have to be able to do by the end of primary 2 and he's the only one in my class that could do it. Speaker 1 Wow. Speaker 2 By the end of primary 2 they had started seeing a tutor, three nights a week, four nights a week of extra work and it's all in Ukrainian. And when you see what he brings in, like the level of academia is far higher than what they get from here but what the parents say, is that there is no nurture in Ukraine. Redacted Speaker 1 Umm. Speaker 2 Redacted Speaker 1 Hmm. Speaker 2 Like, they've missed two or three hospital points because their ethic is you don't take time off school. So that educational ethics is very much that, you know, education is something to be prized, and you get everything out of it that you can and when you look at those children around the school, their ethos and ethic is quite a lot higher than a lot of the kids that are from here. Speaker 1 That's interesting because I never thought about looking at refugees' education systems at home and how they are different. Speaker 2	learners and the rest of the class Highlights cultural differences between education systems Highlights family engagement Highlights cultural difference/ethos in regard to education. Highlights that a stronger cultural ethic towards education can lead to higher learner
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	Particularly Child A's mum at parents' night said, I don't know if I want to go back. Because her child has ADHD, and he would not cope with that system. Speaker 1 I see. Yeah, that is tough. And question 5 is, are there any cultural or social challenges that impact refugee learners' education? How important do you think cultural representation is for the inclusion of refugee learners? And so just for example, like incorporating kind of cultural holidays or different literature and home languages. I think what's interesting that came across in the previous interviews is that even though they're both from Ukraine, that they don't necessarily have the same culture, would you say that's pretty accurate? Speaker 2 Participant A was very good when Child D came to primary one with sharing Ukrainian books with the class and such. She tried to learn Ukrainian, and I tried also, but languages are not my thing, and I found it difficult. But I think it is important to try and incorporate their home language into as much as possible, we put up signs around the school, even though they were still in infants and couldn't even really read in Ukraine very well, I think it did help with their English development and their sense of belonging. But we are very respectful of the fact that Child C will come in, more so than the other two, but they'll come in with his traditional Ukrainian shirts on, and on special occasions they'll all come in with them, but he does it quite a lot. Speaker 1 OK. Speaker 2 Not so much... I haven't really done anything cultural but, again, I think that's tricky because they're not all the same they are from different areas of Ukraine and some of them are far more westernised and European than others Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Yeah, it's not all the same. Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 And I suppose it's finding the balance as well of like, obviously fostering their sense of belonging and then integrating them, but also because you don't want to highlight them out	Highlights that cultural representation helps with language development and fostering a sense of belonging The schools allow them to dress in a way that aligns with their culture. Highlights that it can be difficult to include cultures if cultures are different. Not a homogenous group. Highlights the importance of finding balance, including
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	as being different. So, it's like how do we make you feel part of this but also respect your culture. Yeah, it's quite difficult. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 So, I think it's more, it comes more from them because like Child C at Christmas and in the summer, he always brings you in Ukrainian sweeties. Speaker 1 OK. Speaker 2 He will bring in Ukrainian things, which we then talk about. We did show and tell he would bring in Ukrainian things and talk about them and where he was born, we get the map up and so a lot of it stemmed from him. Speaker 1 Hmm. Speaker 2 Again, there is that sense of having to be very careful because the country is a mess and you have to watch that you don't then...It's a bit like when you look at kids like [REDACTED] who come to school... Speaker 1 Hmm. Speaker 2 Horrendous home life and school is their safe haven, and they don't want to talk about what's happening at home. They don't want you to ask them how they are because when they come through those doors it disappears. And I think when it comes to the children from Ukraine you almost want to rely on the parents to do what they feel, and I certainly think you want parents to do what they feel is the right thing by way of educating them about their country. If they want to share with us, yes, then that's great. But you don't want to overstep the mark because, they're here for a reason and It's not a good reason and you have no idea who in their families are not here, who is, what they've been told, so yeah. Child A used to draw your pictures of his house and Child C would drawing pictures of his house. And, you know, Child B had lived on a big farm, their family were obviously very well off and now they're living in an ex-council house in not a great area Speaker 1	their culture but not isolating them socially. Imbedding learners cultural into learning and the classroom Highlighting an awareness of trauma Highlighting that school is a safe place and to be cautious when asking questions Highlighting the importance of parental support and relationships Highlighting a lack of knowledge regarding learners' trauma and backgrounds
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	That's hard and you don't have a kind of clear picture of their story. Do the other children know why they're here? Speaker 2 Kind of. Again, you've got to be very sensitive because we are a primary school and you know, certainly in infants you don't talk very much about all that because it's not, it's not appropriate. And yeah, they know why they came over, but they're very young kids and they just accept that they are here, and I do debate how many of them will go back. Speaker 1 Question 6 is, have you experienced any specific inclusive practises or programmes your school has implemented to support the learning of refugee learners and how effective were they? Speaker 2 Well, the EAL, they've been fabulous. And so, I mean, so fabulous that a couple of the kids don't go anymore because it has been so effective. [REDACTED] does her group, where she gets all of them together plus another boy in the school from Vietnam for different social activities, which has really benefited them. She also does things at assembly with them, not just for them but the likes of [REDACTED]. One of our other little kids, he's Polish, so she maybe, once every term does a thing where they'll get up and they'll talk and they will do something about where they're from, but the biggest thing has been the one-to-one EAL support. Speaker 1 Fab. Question 7, what are the main barriers to learning and inclusion for refugee learners in your school? Speaker 2 The main barriers are probably language, language and culture. Speaker 1 Ok. Speaker 2 Language differences, cultural differences Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 And just actually where we place them when they first come in. Because I just think they wouldn't have struggled as much if they were placed in Primary 2 at the beginning.	Highlighting the need for sensitivity EAL support has been extremely beneficial Highlights the need for school wide social groups Highlights a school ethos of cultural inclusion Highlights that one-to-one EAL support is important Highlights that the main barriers to inclusion are language and cultural differences Initial decisions such as staging are important
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	Speaker 1 Question 8, is trauma something you consider when approaching the planning and teaching of refugee learners and how do issues such as trauma, displacement or interrupted education affect their learning? Speaker 2 Because they were so young their education wasn't really interrupted. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 The trauma things interesting because. Somebody said to me about Child A's ADHD, do you think some of that might be trauma and PTSD? And that is something I had never considered. Now the thing that stopped me considering that it was that his mum said it was a problem with them in Ukraine as well. But I would argue that his behaviour is less manageable due to uncertainty with family members such as his dad. And we noticed a big difference when his dad eventually came over. Speaker 1 That is really interesting. Speaker 2 There possibly was and is trauma with the other children but I suppose all you can do is be nurturing, because you don't want to ask them questions about it because we don't have the skill set to deal with the answers to those questions, and there isn't going to be anyone that comes out to school to help them deal with it, so you have to just provide them with an nurturing enough environment that they feel safe and hope that they then, off the back of that feeling of security, feel safe enough to learn. They are very closed off and their parents certainly are quite closed off in some respects about talking to you too much about it. Speaker 1 Hmm. Mm-hmm. Speaker 2 Initially they spoke to us quite a lot, you know, Child A's mum told us how they got here, and it didn't sound particularly great, and that they've had to leave relatives behind who wouldn't come. It's important to know that stuff to move forward, but parents can be very closed off at first. I mean, Child D came into school the	Highlights the connection between trauma being misdiagnosed as attention deficits Highlights engagement with families Highlights that behaviour is linked to trauma Highlights the need for a nurturing approach Highlights a possible lack of professional development and resources Highlights the importance of nurture and safety Highlights the importance of building relationships with parents to stay informed
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	other week absolutely hysterical because they hadn't told him that his mum was going back over. Speaker 1 Yeah. Speaker 2 She's went back over to see Gran, but we have no knowledge really, of, I mean, what they actually went through to get here. And I debate whether he does either because he was so young. In his head his head he'll remember bits of it, but I don't really think, we don't have the skills to ask those questions. If he comes and says something to you, then fine. But we don't have the skills to ask the questions and then be prepared to deal with what he comes out with. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Yeah absolutely. Speaker 2 I think, certainly this far down the line, the emotions that these children will have will be emotions based and things that they have held in their head and it's just their last memory of it and that kind thing needs proper counselling. And I suspect that if the parents felt that they really needed that, they probably would get it through some of the refugee groups and charities. Speaker 1 Yeah. Speaker 2 So, an answer. You're aware of it but you try not to make big of a big deal out of it. You make allowances certainly. Initially we made allowances for them because there was an understanding that...I mean they came here with nothing, but it's still important to have high expectations and boundaries. Speaker 1 Hmm. Speaker 2 So, like Child B, was a little bit of a kleptomaniac, I am not sure if they are quite as bad now, but you know, you couldn't leave your handbag lying. Speaker 1 Oh, really? Gosh. Speaker 2 Redacted	Highlights a lack of knowledge regarding learners' backgrounds Highlights that teachers are not prepared to deal with trauma Multi-agency approach trauma and refugee education Teachers cannot be councillors Highlights that trauma should not be the sole focus regarding refugee learners
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	but they had nothing. They probably had no toys at home or very little in the way of entertainment. Speaker 1 That's so sad. Speaker 2 So, in that respect, we cut them a little bit of slack. Speaker 1 You deal with trauma a lot in the school, regardless of if they're refugee or not. So does your approach to like, the refugee children. Does that change to the likes of the kids in your class who aren't refugees, who have also experienced trauma? Speaker 2 It's interesting when you put it like that. I suppose no, you don't treat them any differently because some of our kids who are not refugees have equally harrowing stories. I suppose the difference is the Ukrainian kids are now somewhere safe and they're with nurturing families. Obviously, there is continued trauma but not from events that are necessarily happening in the present. A lot of our kids are currently experiencing trauma daily with their family. Speaker 1 Have you ever had, I'm probably anticipating a future question here, but any trauma informed practice training or professional development in the school, because you'd think it would be beneficial, in an area like this to have something like that as there is so much trauma and deprivation? Speaker 2 No, we have never received any sort of training or personal development. But I'm not sure if anything would come of it. And these kids don't need us to know how to deal with their trauma, because we can't. So, I see it as my job as a teacher to make these kids resilient and in some respect it would be better if we didn't know any of it because you would treat them all the same. Now, that's not fair on them and it's not reality and the bottom line is we have to recognise that that's all going on. Speaker 1	Highlights that the approach to refugee learners with trauma and other learners is no different Acknowledges continued trauma Highlights that there is a lack of professional development and trauma-informed practice. Highlights a contrasting perspective that it may not be beneficial
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	Hmm. Speaker 2 But our job is actually to find a way for them to do shut it off because when you're in here, this is your only chance to get out of that and in the future, you're only chance to get out of all that is to get good at what you do in here so that you can make a better life for yourself. Now you can't, say that in so many words but the bottom line is that is our job. Speaker 1 Hmm. Speaker 2 Because I can't fix your home life and nothing, I can say to you is going to fix it. Because as a teacher, I know, yes, your life is horrendous but no matter how many GIRFEC and SHANNARI things I sit through in August, nothing will change that for them. The reality is, I'm sorry, that you're stuck with that. My job is to make you resilient enough that you can come in here find a way to shut that off long enough that you can learn, so that when you are older you can get out of that. Now some kids are too good at that, like [REDACTED] and that is sometimes a worry also. Speaker 1 Mm-hmm. Yeah, absolutely. Question 9, how do you address any language barriers for refugee learners within your school or classroom and your experience? What impact does EAL have on refugee learners, social, academic and cultural inclusion? So, we've kind of touched upon that briefly. Speaker 2 I mean the language barrier was just a total language barrier to start with because their Ukrainian wasn't really any better than they're English, but the EAL teachers very quickly developed the skills they needed to communicate. Speaker 1 How did it work with friends? The language barrier, so academically, obviously you had the one-to-one support, is that kind of where [REDACTED] groups came in? But I suppose that was all just Ukrainian children so when it came to the Ukrainian children communicating with people in their class how was that? Speaker 2	Discusses that learners must shut off trauma in order to learn. Highlights the importance of EAL teachers
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	Very young children very, very quickly just find a different way to communicate. Very young children chat through play. Which I think possibly helps the fact that our refugees were in primary 1 and 2 was by that time it was quite play based. That probably helped them. Speaker 1 Question 10 is how do parents and caregivers of refugee learners engage with the school? Speaker 2 The parent's impact is massive, and you can see a difference in each of the children depending on how the parents engaged with the school. Child A's mum was always asking, how's he doing? What's he needing help with? Like she took a textbooks home and studied them. Child C and D's parents are the same. Speaker 1 Yep. Speaker 2 Child B, she's not doing as well now, and I would say the reason is because the parents don't necessarily engage with the school as well as the other parents. She wasn't progressing as quickly with her language, but that's because they weren't speaking English with her home. I don't know whether again that would come from the fact they resented being here and I get the impression that they probably actually had quite a nice life in Ukraine as well and you just look at some of these houses and you can understand that. I think there was hostility there that bled through. Whereas the other two were very, I think because they liked the education system, and they embraced it. Redacted She was happy to be here, where she knew her children were safe. Where I think with Child B's family, they were more resentful, and it effected how they interacted with the school. Speaker 1 Yeah. Speaker 2 Though they wanted to know how she was doing, when you said how she was doing and that a lot of it was still to do with the language barrier they would shut it down. Speaker 1	Highlights that young children are good at finding ways to communicate regardless of language barriers Highlights the extreme importance of parental engagement Highlights that parental engagement links to academic achievement Highlights that families embracing the host countries culture and education system is important Highlights that refugee learners are not homogenous group
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	Do the parents talk? Like from the different families? Speaker 2 Yeah, they do. So, sometimes it's grannies that used to come and pick them up and one had better English than the other, so they would chat. As I said there are those refugee groups that they go to, and they do family trips and things that show them around the local authority, which is great, so they all have a chance to communicate and get to know the community as well. Speaker 1 Have you ever had access to translators or anything like that Speaker 2 No, never. Speaker 1 OK. And question 11 is, have you ever received professional development on the inclusion of refugee learners, and do you believe there's enough support and resources available for teachers in skills to effectively support and refugee learners and their families? Speaker 2 We did get stuff from the Council, and somebody very kindly did put stuff together and pointed out all the information. Speaker 1 Yeah. Speaker 2 For professional development, no we never received anything. I kind of feel that it's one of these things that should be available if you think you're going to need it, it almost would be better if they just did a Podcast that you could dip into if you if you had a child that had a particular need because it... the longer you spend in the education, the more you realise that you are just sent on these endless courses which are not always relevant at the time you do them and then by the time they do become relevant, you've forgotten what they were. Speaker 1 Hmm. Yeah. Speaker 2 It's not going to apply to every teacher, especially in our local authority, and it's only going to be applicable if you've got the kids in your class at that time. But could I have benefited from professional development	Highlights the importance of wider community initiatives Highlights a lack of resources Highlights support from council Highlights a lack of professional development Highlights that targeted professional development may be beneficial for the schools that require it, instead of making it standardised for all schools
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	specific to refugee learners? I think so, especially with language support. It would have been interesting. Speaker 1 And what about resources? Speaker 2 In terms of resources, I wouldn't use any different resources than you would use for the rest of the learners. In infants especially, you have to colour code things because most learners can't read anyway. In terms of translators and such, that would have been helpful to allow us to engage with families especially. Speaker 1 Yeah. OK. Uh-huh. And so, support wise like from and the council and wider school and such, how would you say that was? Speaker 2 It was fine, adequate I would say. The EAL people came in very quickly and they were there consistently. I think they did the best that they could with what they had. Speaker 1 Fab and question 12, what do you think could have been done to improve the learning and inclusion of refugee learners? Speaker 2 Putting them in the appropriate stage in the beginning to me was the main thing. I think we messed up on that one. Speaker 1 Ok, and just are there any other points you'd like to add that we've not covered? Speaker 2 Nope. I think we have covered everything. Speaker 1 Great. Thank you very much.	Highlights that professional development would have been helpful Highlights a cross over between refugee learners and other learners Highlights that translators would be helpful for engaging with families Highlight the importance of quick and consistent EAL support Highlights a possible lack in resources and support
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Appendix F

School of Education & Social Sciences



Questionnaire

For each statement below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Please select the number that corresponds to your answer by clicking on it.

1. I have significant experience working with refugee learners in my classroom or school.
2. Inclusion is a critical factor in ensuring the success of refugee learners in school.
3. Supporting the academic progress of refugee learners is challenging.
4. Refugee learners have the same access to the mainstream curriculum as other learners.
5. Refugee learners are more likely to be placed in lower ability groupings.
6. Cultural representation plays an important role in integrating refugee learners into the school environment. For example, this could include incorporating cultural holidays, literature from various backgrounds, utilising learners' home language, or visual representation of different cultures in the classroom.
7. Race and prejudice are important factors to consider when supporting the inclusion and learning of refugee learners.
8. Trauma, displacement and interrupted education significantly affect the learning of refugee learners.
9. Connecting with refugee learners' families is important for their progress.
10. There is enough professional learning for teachers on the inclusion of refugee learners.
11. There is enough support and resources to effectively support refugee learners.
12. I feel confident when approaching the planning and teaching of refugee learners.
13. Rank the following factors in order of importance for facilitating the inclusion and supporting the learning of refugee learners, with **1** being the most important and **10** being the least important.
 - Addressing Racial Bias and Prejudice
 - Cultural Representation (For example, including diverse cultural traditions, holidays, and literature in the curriculum to reflect the backgrounds of all learners.)

- EAL Support
- Emotional Support
- Parental Partnership
- School-Wide Initiatives (Examples include buddy systems for new learners, cultural awareness days, or anti-bullying campaigns tailored to promote inclusivity.)
- Social Cohesion (Fostering a sense of belonging and unity within the school community through team-building activities, inclusive group projects, and encouraging diverse friendships.)
- Targeted Academic Support
- Professional Development for Teachers
- Trauma-Informed Practice (Understanding and addressing the effects of past trauma on learning and behaviour, such as using calming strategies, flexible approaches to deadlines, or providing safe spaces for reflection.)

14. What further improvements do you think could be made to support the learning and inclusion of refugee learners? *(Open-ended)*

15. Are there any other points you would like to add? *(Open-ended)*

Appendix G

Ayr Campus
University Avenue
Ayr
KA8 0SX
Scotland

Dear Head Teacher,

I am a B.A.4 Honours student studying at the University of the West of Scotland. Throughout my time on placement, I have had the privilege of working with a diverse range of learners, including individuals from refugee backgrounds, and I have witnessed the unique challenges they face. For this reason, I have chosen to carry out a small research project on what inclusive practices support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education as part of my final year Dissertation, and I would appreciate your school's participation.

The purpose of my research is to gather information on what inclusive practices effectively support refugee learners' unique needs. It aims to understand the experiences and perspectives of educators regarding these practices, the barriers they face, and provide recommendations for enhancing inclusive educational practices based on empirical findings.

I plan to gather this information through a short questionnaire that will take less than 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will be created using Microsoft Forms and sent to you via a link. If you are happy to support this research at your school, please share the questionnaire with teachers who have experience supporting refugee learners and may be interested in participating.

The research has possible benefits as it provides participants with the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. It also allows participants to share ideas and strategies that may further assist them in supporting refugee learners within the classroom. Participants will receive a debriefing highlighting the findings of the research. All participants will be anonymous (individual information, e.g., name, institution, specific location, specific role, will not be identifiable). Participants have the right to withdraw from the research in the data collection phase.

My supervisor is [Name], an Honorary Professor at the University of the West of Scotland. Should you have any questions, please contact myself at [email] or my supervisor.

Yours sincerely,

[name]

Appendix H

Participant Information Sheet (Questionnaire)

Research Topic: *What inclusive practices support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education?*

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information carefully and contact me if there is any further information you require. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to participate.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to gather information on the inclusive practices currently used in primary schools to support the social, academic, and cultural integration of refugee learners. It aims to explore educators' experiences and perspectives on inclusive practices for refugee learners, identify potential barriers to inclusion, and evaluate strategies to overcome these.

What do I have to do?

You are being invited to take part in a short questionnaire that should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions which relate to the inclusion of refugee learners and what practices effectively support their social, academic and cultural integration.

Why are you asking me?

You are being approached because you are currently or have previously supported refugee learners in their education.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participating in this project is voluntary and you can stop the questionnaire at any time.

Is my data kept confidential?

Your answers to the questionnaire are kept completely confidential. Your name is not used in the final report for the programme, nor in any other publications arising from the research. Participants are referred to by code instead (i.e. Participant A, B, C or D). Individual information, e.g., name, institution, specific location, specific role, is not identifiable. Electronic files and documents are password-protected and stored on UWS OneDrive.

What happens to the information I provide?

Your data and data from the other participants are analysed and used to identify effective inclusive practices that support the social, cultural and academic integration of refugee learners. It is used to identify any potential barriers that you feel may impact on the education of refugee learners and give recommendation on how to overcome these. These findings are included in my B.A.4 Honours Dissertation. Once the data has been analysed and conclusions have been drawn, you are provided with a summary of the findings. On request, you have full access to the final dissertation and a summary of the data collected is provided.

Who should I contact for more information?

If you have any more questions or would like additional information about the research, please contact me by email on B00264374@studentmail.uws.ac.uk

What if I have a complaint about the research?

If you have a complaint about the research, please contact [name], Dissertation Module Co-ordinator, by email on [email].

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and I hope that you are interested in taking part in the research.

Yours sincerely,

[name]

Appendix I

School of Education & Social Sciences



Participant Consent Form: Questionnaires

Researcher: [name]

Research title: *What inclusive practices support the social, academic and cultural integration of refugee learners within mainstream primary education?*

Dear participant,

I am a B.A.4 Honours student studying at the University of the West of Scotland. My supervisor is [name], an Honorary Professor at the University of the West of Scotland. I would appreciate your participation in the form of completion of a questionnaire. Please read the participant information sheet provided and ask any necessary questions before signing this form. You can contact either myself at [email] or my supervisor at [email] if you have any questions.

Please answer yes or no to the following questions:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet provided for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to end the questionnaire without completion at any point.
3. I understand that my data from this study will be securely stored by the researchers (on UWS OneDrive), and my individual information will not be identifiable (name, institution, specific location, specific role).
4. I understand that by continuing to fill in the questionnaire I agree to take part in the above study.

Appendix J

×View results

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet provided for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to end the questionnaire without completion at any point. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

3. I understand that my data from this study will be securely stored by the researchers (on UWS OneDrive), and my individual information will not be identifiable (name, institution, specific location, specific role). *

☒ Yes

☐ No

4. I understand that by continuing to fill in the questionnaire I agree to take part in the above study. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

Questions

5. For each statement below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree *

I have significant experience working with refugee learners in my classroom or school.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Strongly disagree			

Inclusion is a critical factor in ensuring the success of refugee learners in school.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Strongly disagree			

Supporting the academic progress of refugee learners is challenging.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Strongly disagree			

Refugee learners have the same access to the mainstream curriculum as other learners.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Strongly disagree			

Refugee learners are more likely to be placed in lower ability groupings

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Strongly disagree			

Cultural representation plays an important role in integrating refugee learners into the school environment. (For example, this could include incorporating cultural holidays, literature from various backgrounds, utilising learners' home language, or visual representation of different cultures in the classroom)

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Race and prejudice are important factors to consider when supporting the inclusion and learning of refugee learners.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Trauma, displacement and interrupted education significantly affect the learning of refugee learners.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Connecting with refugee learners' families is important for their progress.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

There is enough professional learning for teachers on the inclusion of refugee learners.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

There is enough support and resources to effectively support refugee learners.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

I feel confident when approaching the planning and teaching of refugee learners.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

6. Rank the following factors in order of importance for facilitating the inclusion and supporting the learning of refugee learners, with **1** being the **most** important and **10** being the **least** important. *

1 EAL Support

2 Emotional Support

3 Targeted Academic Support

4 Cultural Representation (for example, including diverse cultural traditions, holidays, and literature in the curriculum to reflect the backgrounds of all learners.)

5 Professional Development for Teachers

6 Addressing Racial Bias and Prejudice

7 Trauma-Informed Practice (understanding and addressing the effects of past trauma on learning and behaviour, such as using calming strategies, flexible approaches to deadlines, or providing safe spaces for reflection)

8 Parental Partnership

9 Social Cohesion (fostering a sense of belonging and unity within the school community through team-building activities, inclusive group projects, and encouraging diverse friendships)

10 School-Wide Initiatives (examples include buddy systems for new learners, cultural awareness days, or anti-bullying campaigns tailored to promote inclusivity)

7. What further improvements do you think could be made to support the learning and inclusion of refugee learners?

More EAL teachers

8. Are there any other points you would like to add?

The staffing for EAL services has been cut each year yet the numbers are high in our schools.

Appendix K

Strongly agree ●

Agree ●

Neither agree nor disagree ●

Disagree ●

Strongly disagree ●

I have significant experience working with refugee learners in my classroom or school.

Inclusion is a critical factor in ensuring the success of refugee learners in school.

Supporting the academic progress of refugee learners is challenging.

Refugee learners have the same access to the mainstream curriculum as other learners.

Refugee learners are more likely to be placed in lower ability groupings

Cultural representation plays an important role in integrating refugee learners into the school environment.

Race and prejudice are important factors to consider when supporting the inclusion and learning of refugee learners.

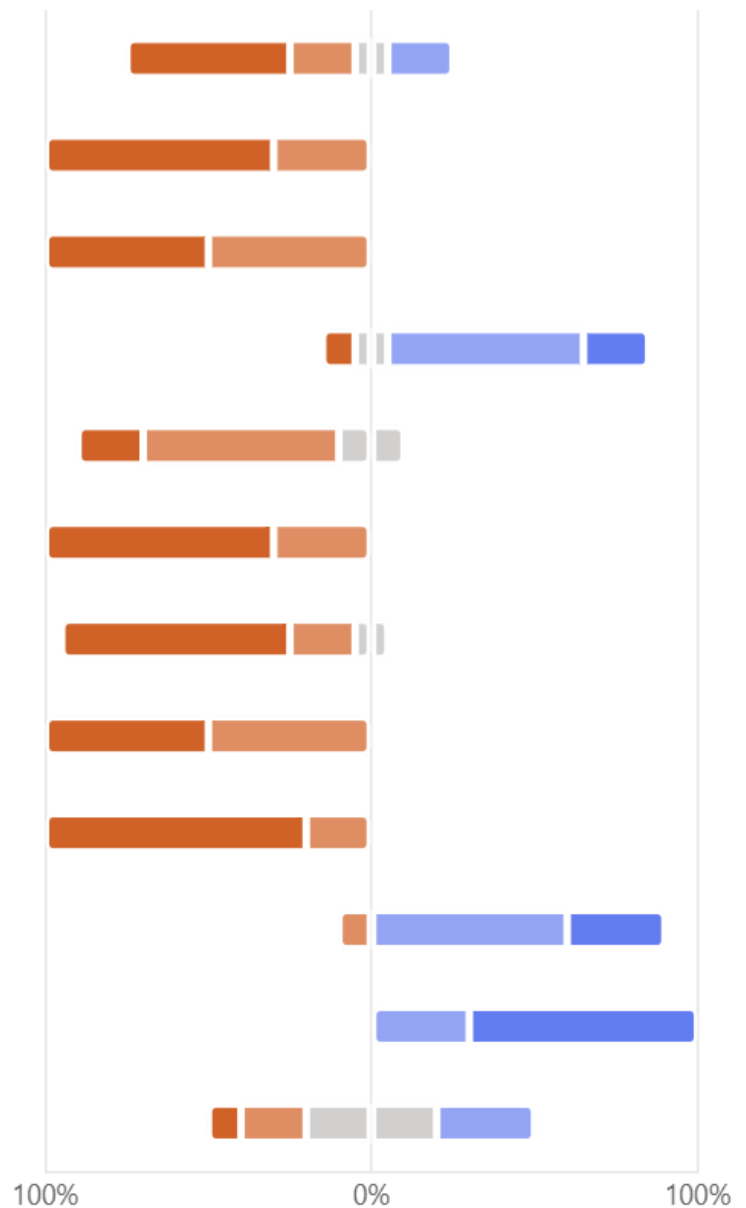
Trauma, displacement and interrupted education significantly affect the learning of refugee learners.

Connecting with refugee learners' families is important for their progress.

There is enough professional learning for teachers on the inclusion of refugee learners.

There is enough support and resources to effectively support refugee learners.

I feel confident when approaching the planning and teaching of refugee learners.



Appendix L

