



Noise

Dr Rebecca Wood

Senior Lecturer in Special Education

University of East London

@thewoodbug

rwood@uel.ac.uk



**University of
East London**

Pioneering Futures Since 1898

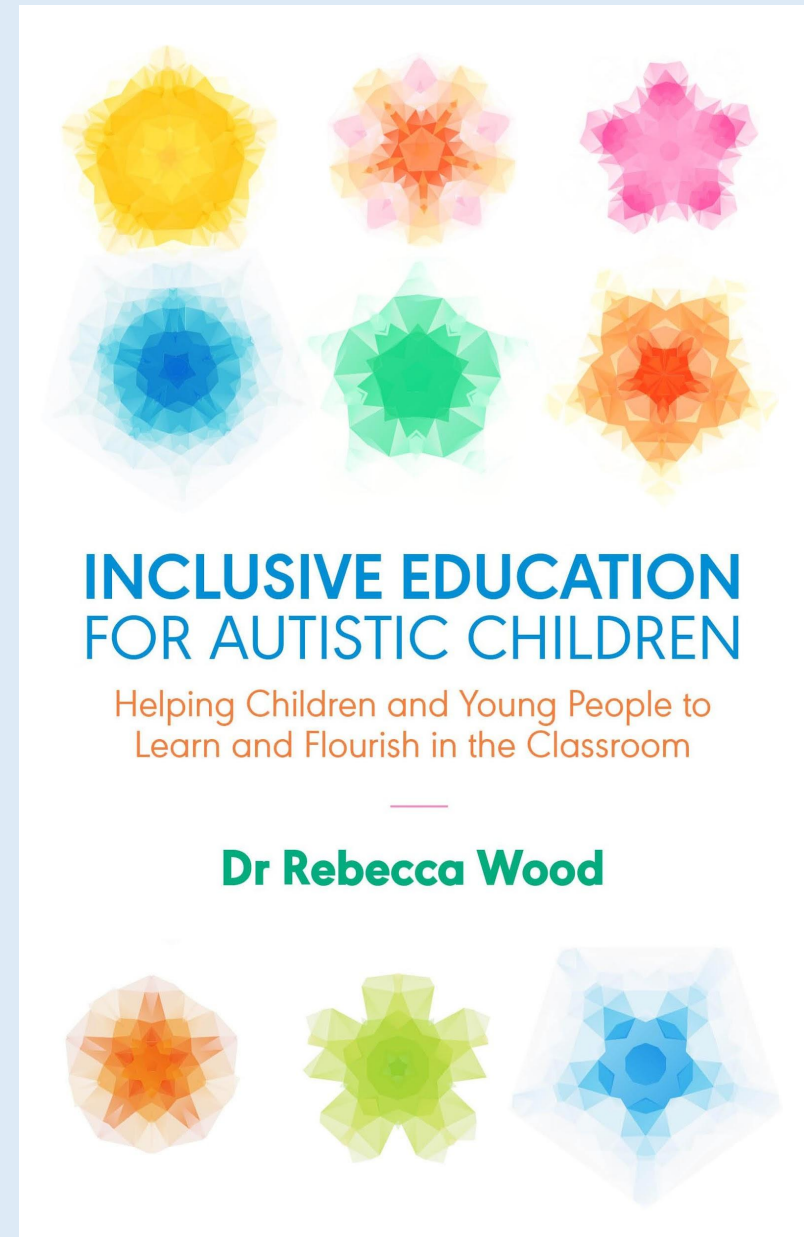
Noise in schools

- External noise often exceeds recommended levels (Shield and Dockrell 2004)
 - Aircraft and traffic noise
- Internal noise levels can be high (Dockrell and Shield 2006)
 - Varies according to time of day and activity
 - Silent classes can be quite noisy
- All children can be negatively impacted by excessive noise levels
 - Reading, memory, motivation
- Children with SEND particularly adversely affected by excessive noise levels (Dockrell and Shield 2006; Klatte et al. 2013)
 - Background chatter
- Picture detail by Sonny Hallett



Exclusionary factors

- “Noise makes my ears bleed”
- Energy taken up trying to cope with noise
- Autistic child “doesn’t understand the need for silence”
 - Autistic children have to put up with more noise than others
 - Their own requests for silence not respected
 - Linked with power, control, stigma etc.
- Exclusion from different aspects of school
- School library
 - Can be a refuge
 - Not always clear what constitutes ‘a library’
 - Opening hours, size, staffing etc. (Great School Libraries Campaign 2019)



Autistic school staff

- Survey: 149 participants
- Range of roles in schools: teachers, TAs, SENCOs, Headteachers etc.
- Noise difficult to cope with
- Sensory environment: important reason for no longer working in a school (n = 49)
 - Burnout the main reason
- Improving sensory environment main factor that would facilitate work (n = 100)

Complexities of noise

- Issue can be the type of noise
- Not a question of volume levels alone
- Some people need to be noisy...
 - ...but can't cope with noise of others
- Our response to noise is highly subjective
- Auditory acuity in autism (Remington and Fairnie 2017; Davies 2019)

The right to quiet

- Quiet spaces needed in schools
 - School libraries under threat
 - Larger primary schools
 - Large class sizes
 - Fewer school playing fields
- Acoustics: linked to space and textures
- Holistic approach to noise solutions (Woolner and Hall 2010)
- Quiet Festival of Noise, Silence and Autistic Well-Being
 - Spring 2021

