

Shropshire Educational Psychology Service

Action Research Project

A school contacted us due to being unsure as to which intervention within our brochure would be the most applicable to a complex situation they were currently encountering. An initial consultation was held in order to collaboratively explore the situation and clarify concerns. The challenge being faced related to a particular class including the behaviour being displayed and the relationships that existed between the pupils. It was felt that a bespoke Action Research project was required which would utilise the Research and Development in Organisations model (Timmins 2006). Action Research is part of the repertoire of approaches to real world research used by EP's for a number of reasons including its empowering nature and practical value within real life contexts. The project aimed to support the school to undertake a process of enquiry with the view to effect change.

We began with a consultation/supervision session with the class teacher to ensure that the project was planned WITH them and not something that was done TO them. During the session we further developed the research focus and developed frameworks for information gathering. A series of observations were then conducted according to an observation schedule that was created with the class teacher. The class teacher also observed the class with us to support collaborative reflection. We then facilitated a series of pupil focus groups using the Ideal School/classroom technique based on Personal Construct Psychology whilst also exploring the relationships within the classroom using the Social Inclusion Survey template (Frederickson, 1994) which aimed to highlight the social acceptance and inclusion of individual pupils. The information collected was then processed to provide themes.

A collaborative solution focussed session was then held within school with key members of staff, supported by Trainee EPs, using an Appreciative Inquiry framework. Within the session a clear action plan was created. The school expressed the desire to embed many of the actions on a whole school basis to support the wellbeing and resilience of all pupils. One of the key outcomes was the need to support the inclusion of a small number of students. A bespoke intervention was created and facilitated by our Graduate Psychologists alongside a T.A within the school which upskilled them to allow for delivery of the group with other pupils in the school.

Feedback

The EP has been absolutely brilliant in getting to know our school, needs and staff, and has worked tirelessly in the background (and foreground) to develop a bespoke package of support for us. Part of this work has involved liaising with other EPs within the team and each and every one of them have been fantastic in sharing their expertise – in the most supportive and non-judgemental of ways.

Some of our pupils have been able to work directly with the EP and TEPs, and there are plans for this work to continue, in a model that will upskill our staff, and the children have spoken so highly of members of your team.

I know things in education can be very tough sometimes, no matter what aspect we are each working in, but I thought it important to take the time to share when things are working well: this is absolutely the case for our experience of the EP Service.

So - on behalf of our children and staff - many thanks.