

Penair School

Healthy Schools Plus case study

1. Introduction

In 2010, Penair School, as part of its Healthy Schools work, decided to take part in the enhanced programme, Healthy Schools Plus.

We identified emotional health and wellbeing as a key issue for our school. We were also keen to publicise and increase use of our new integrated health centre, the Bywva Centre.

We also wanted to use the PASS survey (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School) to monitor how pupils felt about their school and education.

Emotional health and wellbeing was identified as a focus because of problems in a small section of pupils with low self-confidence, friendship issues, low self-esteem and poor self-image; these were leading to poor attendance, behaviour problems and a risk of permanent exclusion from school.

2. Target group

A target group of ten Year 9 girls was selected for intensive intervention work. The group was selected on a range of criteria including attendance, lateness, behaviour issues, low self-esteem and poor self-image, but the key factor was risk of permanent exclusion.

The baseline data is shown in Appendix 1.

(Note: the appendices are not published on the Cornwall Healthy Schools website but can be made available to another school doing similar work if required – contact Cornwall Healthy Schools through the website.)

The intervention work with the group was carried out in the summer term of 2010.

The follow-up data is shown in Appendix 2.

3. Intervention work with the target group

The work with the target group was led by the Pastoral Support Workers at Penair with the help of the Bywva Centre.

This started with a session for parents to explain why their daughters were in the group and how it should help them.

The target group were taken out of normal lessons on a weekly basis for sessions on improving problem-solving, team-building, relaxation techniques, body image and

health. These sessions were held in the Bywva Centre and used outside speakers where appropriate. The sessions are detailed in Appendix 3.

Some of the Powerpoint presentations used in the sessions are attached as Appendix 4.

4. Use of the health centre

One of the aims of holding the session in the Bywva Centre was to familiarise the target group with the centre and encourage them to use it on a regular basis for any health-related issues.

A summary of the work carried out there is attached as Appendix 5.

As can be seen, the centre covers a huge range of issues in the area of emotional health and wellbeing.

Although all visits to the health centre are confidential, a record of visits is kept and this has enabled us to look at the use of the venue by the target group. This is attached as Appendix 6.

This is very useful as it shows what sort of topics the target group are visiting the health centre for and how often, but without identifying individuals.

As can be seen, pupils are visiting for help and support on a wide range of issues. Attendance at the health centre certainly increased this year, with six out of the ten in the target group accessing the centre. Also highlighted is the fact that some individuals are attending a large number of times and others not at all. The reason for this is likely to be that some individuals are looking for a large amount of support that the health centre can provide.

The fact that four of the target group did not attend at all could either reflect their feeling that they do not need to, or it could be that they are particularly hard to reach.

5. The baseline data

Not surprisingly, the baseline data shows that the target group had lower attendance and higher levels of lateness than the school as a whole. However, the exclusion risk is striking. Of fourteen fixed-term exclusions made in the whole school during the autumn to spring terms 2009/10, five came from the target group of the ten Year 9 girls. The target group was therefore clearly at risk of permanent exclusion.

We used the PASS survey as a baseline. This is an online survey taken by the whole year group. A summary of the survey details is attached in Appendix 7, including the questions asked.

The baseline data from the PASS survey again is very interesting. It shows that for some factors there is not much difference between the target group and the average for the year group, but for others a large difference.

For feelings about school, preparedness for learning, attitudes to attendance and response to curriculum there was little difference.

On average though, the target group had low perceived learning capability, poor attitudes to teachers and low confidence in learning, but this was coupled with high self-regard as a learner and a higher than average work ethic.

This implies that in Year 9 they wanted to do well, but did not feel that they could.

6. The follow-up data, one year on (Appendix 2)

Attendance and lateness were still lower and higher than the average respectively, but did not appear to have got any worse.

The number of fixed-term exclusions has shown a huge decline with the target group. Only one out of the twenty-four fixed-term exclusions during the autumn to spring terms 2010/11 was from the target group.

The results of the PASS survey do not show large changes in attitudes to school and self. Self-regard as a learner has increased and response to the curriculum has improved, but these are coupled with a fall-off in work ethic. Attitudes to teachers remain low.

7. Conclusions

The main success of this project is clearly the reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions in the target group. This surely reflects an improvement in behaviour and attitudes.

The fact that attendance and lateness have not changed much is probably due to outside influences that are difficult to change.

The PASS survey results are very interesting because they are about the feelings of the target group towards self and school. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions from them as each member of the target group is individual and differences are masked by averages. For example, one pupil may have very poor attendance but gets on fine with teachers whereas another is nearly always present but is always in trouble.

However, it is clear that in the target group as a whole attitudes to teachers are poorer than average, work ethic is poor and perceived learning capability is low.

Interestingly, feelings about school are more positive than average and self-regard and response to the curriculum are high.

Overall the intervention with this group must be regarded as successful on the exclusion data alone.

8. Further work (where do we go from here?)

The work is being repeated with another group of girls in the current Year 9. It is also being extended to a Year 9 boys' motivational group. The details of their intervention sessions is shown in Appendix 8.

This is therefore becoming an ongoing and sustainable project.

The project will also be feeding into other schools. At present Penryn are observing to see if they could do something similar.

The focus will be continuing on building and maintaining relationships.

The work done improving self-image with the target group will be rolled out to the whole target group as part of PSHE lessons.

9. Thanks

Many thanks to all the people at Penair that have helped with this project. Especially the Pastoral Support Workers: Carole Butler and Ian Jones, Linda Wicks and Gemma Bruford at the Bywva Centre and Jill Longden and Simon Merrick for help and advice about the PASS survey.

Daniel Eva,
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