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Therapeutic Approaches to Improving Student Behaviour

Introduction For Parents

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Why is therapeutic thinking being introduced across West Berkshire?

- Therapeutic thinking has been implemented across the Hertfordshire LA, where it has had a significant impact on reducing fixed and permanent exclusions
- Therapeutic thinking is now being implemented across the West Berkshire LA

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- Taking a therapeutic approach to behaviour is not about giving every child therapy
- It is about creating a culture in which each student is given the help he or she needs to overcome barriers to learning and achieve success
- This will be complemented by more intensive therapeutic interventions for the students who need them

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Think of your own childhood

- What were the worst things that happened to you?
- What effect did they have on you?
- What helped you to get through it to be the successful, well-adjusted person you are today?

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What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

- The concept grew from a study in San Diego that explored the causes of childhood obesity, eventually covering 17,000 respondents
 - Similar studies have been conducted in other countries, including the UK, and the results have been similar
 - Every Adverse Childhood Experience someone has experienced contributes to his or her score
 - Someone who has had none has an ACE score of 0; someone who has experienced 10 has an ACE score of 10
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Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences

As a person's ACE score increases, so does the likelihood of the person experiencing a range of different negative outcomes.

An ACE score of 4 or more makes you:

- 3.9 times more likely to have lung disease
- 2.4 times more likely to have hepatitis
- 4.6 times more likely to have depression
- 12.2 times more likely to attempt suicide.

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Children who experience lots of ACEs are deeply unlucky

- They haven't chosen to experience the ACEs
- It doesn't make a difference if the ACE came as a result of their own actions: they are children; they are still unlucky
- Boys with five or more ACEs are 11 times more likely to have a conduct disorder
- Girls with five or more ACEs are 19 times more likely to have a conduct disorder

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There are no good or bad children:
There are just lucky and unlucky children

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In nearly all circumstances,
lucky children will do well

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But unlucky children need a
lot more help to do well

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In The Downs the vast majority of our children are lucky: but some are certainly unlucky

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A key role for school staff is to promote some types of behaviour and reduce others

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Pro-social behaviour –
behaviour that supports other people

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Anti-social behaviour –
behaviour that harms individuals,
groups or the community

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Unsocial behaviour –
not doing as instructed,
but not to the detriment of others

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School is a protective factor
for most unlucky children

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- School is calm, orderly and safe
 - It has other children who are generally behaving and achieving well and most human beings mirror the behaviours around them
 - Students are part of a community
 - Students have friends
 - Students have adults in the school who are kind to them and form positive relationships with them
 - Students might be able to see that education offers them a way out
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How are therapeutic approaches to behaviour
being implemented in The Downs?

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Therapeutic Approaches to Behaviour

1. Create positive feelings
2. Respectful relationships
3. Equity not equality
4. Consequences not punishments
5. Consistency not rigidity

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1. Create Positive Feelings

- Staff should avoid doing things that will make students feel bad (even if staff want to make them feel bad for their own long-term good!)
- Instead, staff should find ways to create positive experiences for your students
- Positive experiences create positive feelings
- People with positive feelings display pro-social behaviour
- For example, if you are a Latin teacher and a student says she hates Latin, plan what you can do to inspire her to feel more positively

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2. Respectful Relationships

Question: why are relationships based on trust and respect so important in ensuring students behave well?

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How do you act when
people don't like you?

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How do we want our staff to build respectful relationships with students?

- Treat other people as you would want to be treated (not how you were treated when you were a child!)
- Model pro-social behaviour
- Remain calm and respectful, even in the most difficult situations
- Use de-escalation strategies
- Use respectful language: for example, don't talk about students 'kicking off' or being 'mental'
- Don't take student behaviour personally

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3. Equity Not Equality

- Equality is not the same as equity
- Equality is treating everyone the same
- Equity is treating people differently according to their needs
- The rigid pursuit of equality is immoral and illegal
- Equity is about providing people with the support they need so that they can achieve the same positive outcomes

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This doesn't mean we should have low expectations for our vulnerable students: we just have to help them to achieve our high expectations

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4. Consequences Not Punishments

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Have you ever broken the law?

- Why did you do it?
- How did you justify your actions to yourself?
- Why weren't you deterred from breaking the law by the punishment?

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Punishment just doesn't work

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We don't have punishment:
we have consequences

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What are consequences?

- They help people understand what is difficult or dangerous about their behaviour
- They help them to understand how they can do things differently and why it is better for them and for others that they do
- They are also protective, put in place to protect other people from harm
- Protective consequences should only be removed when the underlying issue is resolved
- Consequences help to solve the problem
- Consequences are developmental not punitive
- They help foster a sense of internal discipline

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What is internal discipline?

- Internal discipline is self-imposed
- The move from external to internal discipline is the journey from child to adult
- For unlucky children that journey takes longer and they need more support along the way



5. Consistency Not Rigidity

- Our Behaviour Policy is about creating routine
- Routine is created when we are all clear on how to use praise and consequences
- Routine is reassuring, creating a sense of order and calmness



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A consistent behaviour policy ...

- Provides staff and students with guidance on how to use rewards and consequences
- Creates routine that promotes a feeling of calmness
- Develops internal discipline
- Takes into account students' individual needs

A rigid behaviour policy ...

- Provides staff and students with guidance on which behaviour earns which punishment
- Creates conflict that promotes a feeling of resentment between staff and student
- Imposes external discipline
- Doesn't take into account students' individual needs

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What are the benefits of therapeutic approaches to behaviour?

- More positive experiences mean happier children
- Happier children means fewer behaviour issues
- Fewer behaviour issues means improved learning opportunities
- Improved learning opportunities means improved results – for the whole school and for individual students

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Any questions?

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