

Case Study

Setting Name	Bosmere Junior School
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Audit Focus Area	There are person-centred and solution-focused systems and processes in place to identify need, plan and implement support. These are used effectively to problem solve, plan and identify shared outcomes, skills and strengths.
Title of Research Project	Transition support for vulnerable pupils within the key stage
Action Research Question	How can we improve the transition experience for vulnerable pupils, ensuring the approach and expectations remain consistent?
Brief description of your action research project	To ensure a smooth and supportive transition for our vulnerable pupils, we adopted a structured and collaborative approach using the Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting format. These meetings were strategically scheduled during assembly times to allow full staff participation without disrupting the school day. Each TAC meeting brought together all staff members who had previously worked with the pupil, alongside those joining the new support team. The meetings began with a focus on the pupil's strengths, fostering a positive and constructive dialogue. This strengths-based approach enabled the incoming team to gain valuable insights into the pupil's interests, motivators, and preferred learning styles. Following this, we reviewed previously implemented strategies that had proven effective in supporting the pupil. To further enhance the transition process, we utilised the AFIT tool to identify additional strategies tailored to the pupil's evolving needs.

	Post-transition, follow-up meetings were planned and conducted to evaluate the success of the transition and to identify any further support required. This ongoing review process ensured that interventions remained responsive and pupil-centred, promoting continuity and emotional security during periods of change.
Share one aspect of the project in more detail	
Person/situation background	I have included anonymised information from one of the TAC meetings. Below are overviews of the behaviours the child was displaying. The teaching staff and support team in his 24-25 class had developed effective strategies to support this pupil and it was important that all this information was shared with his new year team. Overview if Pupil D's need Emotional Regulation and Mental Health: • The pupil frequently presents in a heightened emotional state, particularly following transitions such as break and lunch times. • Displays significant emotional distress, including expressions of self-harm and suicidal ideation (e.g. "I want to die", "I want to kill myself"), often linked to perceived unfairness or interpersonal conflict. • Demonstrates low self-esteem and negative self-talk (e.g. "I'm dumb", "I don't deserve love"), with limited ability to accept reassurance from adults. • Struggles to identify and articulate the root causes of emotional dysregulation, often stating "I don't know" when asked about triggers. Behavioural Presentation: • Exhibits impulsive and aggressive behaviours, including hitting, kicking, biting, and throwing objects, often in response to frustration or perceived injustice. • Has difficulty accepting boundaries and consequences, sometimes responding with defiance or further escalation.

- Displays controlling behaviours and a need for dominance in peer interactions, particularly during games or group activities.
- Demonstrates a pattern of seeking adult attention through disruptive or provocative behaviour, including attempts to “escape” school or elicit a reaction.

Social Interaction:

- Experiences challenges with peer relationships, including conflict, rejection, and difficulty sharing or compromising.
- Often misinterprets social cues and struggles with cooperative play, leading to isolation or altercations.
- Shows a preference for parallel play or adult-led interactions, and may resist peer-led activities.

Cognitive and Learning Engagement:

- Shows a strong preference for subjects perceived as strengths (e.g. maths), while avoiding tasks in areas of difficulty (e.g. English).
- May refuse to engage in learning tasks, particularly when feeling overwhelmed or unsupported.
- Demonstrates a need for high levels of adult scaffolding and reassurance to complete work.

Family and Environmental Factors:

- Reports incidents of parental conflict and inconsistent emotional responses at home, which may contribute to anxiety and emotional instability.
- Historical safeguarding concerns have been raised, including disclosures of physical punishment and emotional distress at home.
- Engagement with external support services (e.g. MHST, ELSA, PBS) has been initiated, though parental involvement has been inconsistent.

What happened?	At the meeting we created a document outlining the strategies to be used and which had been proven to work in the past. This is an example of the approaches discussed and then trialled following the TAC meeting, Approaches and Strategies Used to Support D 1. Behavioural and Emotional Regulation Strategies • Remain stable and calm: Adults are encouraged to maintain a calm presence to help D regulate. • Be clear about the outcome: Clear expectations and consequences help reduce anxiety and confusion. • Pick your battles: Prioritising key behaviours to address avoids overwhelming D. • Go to a quiet place: Providing a calm space helps D de-escalate and process emotions. • Use short sentences: Simplified language aids understanding and reduces cognitive load. • Firm instructions: D responds well to clear, firm boundaries. • Fidgeting is not disengagement: Though he may appear distracted, he is often still engaged in learning. 2. Relational Support • Consistent, calm adults: D benefits from adults who can manage their own emotional state and remain composed. • Valuing the child: Maintaining a positive view of D, even during challenging moments, supports his self-worth. • Seeking support when needed: Staff are encouraged to know their limits and involve others when necessary. We

used the “do you want a cup of tea?” strategy to allow staff to facilitate a change of face.

- **Helping D manage feelings:** Adults model and guide emotional regulation strategies.

3. Learning Environment Adaptations

- **Safety and predictability:** Creating a secure environment is essential for D’s engagement. An individual table inside the class with D’s belongings and various activities in a box nearby.
- **Alternative responses to anger:** Adults model calm and constructive reactions to distress.
- **Validation of feelings:** Acknowledging D’s emotions helps him feel understood.
- **Processing time and space:** D needs opportunities to reflect before re-engaging.

4. Language and Communication Techniques

- **Use ‘and’ instead of ‘but’:** This helps validate D’s feelings while maintaining expectations.
 - *E.g., “I understand that you think this is unfair, and you do need to stay behind to do your work.”*
- **Curiosity-based prompts:**
 - *“Help me understand how it happened...”*
 - *“I wonder if...”*
- **Direct and respectful requests:**
 - *“I need you to move over here so you can get on with your work.”*
- **Modelling vulnerability:** Adults are encouraged to model asking for help and admitting uncertainty.

5. Strength-Based Engagement

	• D thrives when given responsibilities and opportunities to share his ideas. • He responds positively to humour, praise, and structured choices (e.g., “this or that” scenarios). • His deep thinking and general knowledge can be harnessed to build confidence and engagement • D loves Lego. Have this nearby. It will seem as though he is playing and not engaged in a lesson, but this is not the case as he is always able to answer questions relating to the input.
What has changed/developed?	Having a clear pathway with suggested strategies meant staff felt supported and empowered. They already knew D’s possible triggers and were aware of the strategies that had been used to support him in the past.
What impact has this had on the individual/the setting?	Child D has had a successful transition to his new year group. Teachers and LSAs are aware of his needs and how to deal with any situations that may arise. The new class teacher has created a bank of resources for D to use and is aware what triggers may cause an escalation in negative behaviours. Time is given after break and lunch for D to share any issues which may have occurred. He works with an LSA to explore these situations and is often able to consider disputes from others point of views. Staff being highly aware of potential triggers mean that D is not always reaching a state of dysregulation. D is more able to engage in learning after breaks as he feels issues are resolved. Support is place for D at break and lunchtimes when he needs extra adult support at these independent times.
What has been learned for the whole setting community?	Other pupils are not disrupted in their learning as D is more settled. Staff feel supported and able to deal with D as they are aware of some of his possible triggers.

What is essential for other settings to know from this case study?

A collaborative approach with all staff members is highly beneficial. Starting with looking at the child's strengths in these meetings allows all staff to create and then build upon a positive relationship with the child.

We identified a small number of children in the school who needed this level of support with transition. There was on average 1 per class. In total we held 10 meetings in the summer term and will revisit these 10 pupils in the autumn term.

We have found that pupils felt secure and supported as they moved to their next class. This led to reduced anxiety for some of the pupils. Early observations suggest that most pupils have settled well, with fewer incidents of emotional distress or behavioural disruption.

School staff have reported feeling more empowered, informed and prepared. They were able to implement strategies from day one, and sometimes even in the summer term, if supporting the child at break or lunch times.

When appropriate we shared with parents that these meetings had been held and were able to reassure parents that their child's needs would continue to be met.

Staff have been aware of potential triggers and so have been able to plan for difficulties before they have arisen, allowing support to be proactive rather than reactive.

It has also supported and encouraged team working within the staff with adults having a shared responsibility for pupil's wellbeing and progress.

Early indications are that the majority of these pupils have settled into their new classes and that less time is being lost to behavioural and emotional challenges.

We will revisit each of these pupils this term and monitor and adjust the support as needed.



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