

Good Practice in Schools Case Study
A Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing



School Name	Western Primary School
Type of School	Primary (part of the Red Kite Academy Trust)
Area	Harrogate District

Overview

Western School values the development of the whole child. Dawn Johnson, SENCO and Inclusion Manager, noted 'After all, happy, relaxed, confident children make better learners. We focus on every member of our school community, giving them the tools to understand their mental health and the knowledge and skills to enable them to take care of it'.

The 'Junction' is a special therapeutic room found at the heart of the school. Well-trained staff offer a safe place to be and provide emotional, wellbeing and mental health support to children in school and their families.

Support offered includes:

- Supporting children with friendship issues
- Helping with homework or school work anxieties
- Building self-esteem/ resilience
- Offering Breakfast Club for disadvantaged pupils
- Helping with concerns over divorce/separation
- Supporting around illness or bereavement
- Discussing behaviour at home, at school and offering support
- Setting boundaries and routines at home
- Supporting general anxieties/ worries and suggesting strategies to overcome this
- Helping with parenting concerns

The staff in the Junction, along with their in house speech, language and communication coach, run a number of interventions for children across the school including: Socially Speaking, narrative therapy, Lego interventions, EAL support groups and sensory processing activities at a child's developmental level. They also run a resilience building intervention which is a six-week course focusing on what creates anxiety and how it can be overcome. It looks at the bodily symptoms of anxiety and strategies are taught to help children cope with anxious feelings.

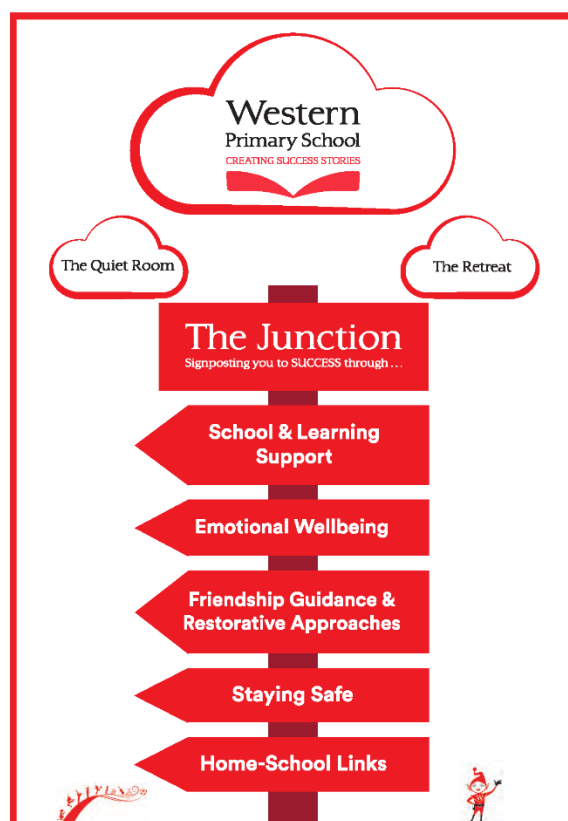
The Quiet Room is an integral part of the school and provides a place for children to talk openly about issues troubling them. It offers immediate support in unpredictable circumstances and assistance with fine motor skills and physical development. The Quiet Room co-ordinator plans individualised programmes of activities that allow children to practise skills and express individuality, thereby promoting self-esteem, enjoyment and achievement and enabling them to make a positive contribution. The co-ordinator also takes the lead on supporting young carers throughout the school. The range of fun activities available supports the creative teaching and learning within the classroom environment.

Western's trained and qualified Child and Adolescent Counsellor works from 'The Retreat.' She has a wide range of experience supporting children who are struggling with issues such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, parental separation, bereavement, loss, bullying, phobias, OCD, self-harm, food controlling, identity, school refusal, attachment and relational and developmental trauma. It is through following each individual child's process and working with a variety of creative media (sand tray, kinetic sand, clay, painting, small world and games) that guides a child to the working through of their 'stuck' feelings.

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The school is also delighted to have a family support worker who works from the 'Junction.' Their ethos is that by supporting the family, they are supporting the child to achieve their potential and get the best experience from their education and home life. Help and support may include: improving the home/school link, signposting and help to access services from external agencies and community services, helping with applications for secondary school/benefits/housing, support with school attendance and lateness issues, safeguarding or child protection concerns or simply a listening ear!



Describe what has the school put in place to support a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing

All staff have completed Level 1 Compass BUZZ mental health and wellbeing training. A large group of staff from across the school have completed levels 2 and 3 and senior leaders, including their chair of governors, have completed the level 4 training.

Mental health features heavily on Western's school development plan. Actions include promoting a whole school understanding to support positive mental health for all members of the school community.

Western has a group of staff and children who are responsible for monitoring 'Equal opportunities to be successful' across the school. This team focus on mental health within their area of monitoring. The children research various areas of mental health support across the school and have a voice to be able to feedback to senior leaders and make improvements. The school has a whole school mental health policy in place.

The school recently changed their behaviour policy to be called the 'emotion response' policy and training was delivered to all staff to support the embedding of understanding behaviour as communication and how to support/

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teach relating to emotions as opposed to punishment for 'bad' behaviour. By doing this, the school is focusing on being 'attachment friendly' and understanding how trauma impacts thoughts, emotions and behaviour.

All members of staff use restorative practice throughout school to deal with incidents ensuring all parties feel listened to and thought is given to how others feel in a situation. Staff issue relevant consequences so that children learn from incidents and have a positive plan for next time they find themselves in a situation.

Western now have a strong PSHE curriculum in place which is progressive from nursery to year 6.

A member of the team runs a weekly mindfulness club where children from across the school are invited to spend time being still and reflecting in a quiet space.

The Emotion and Wellbeing team (support staff who work from the 'Junction' and are not class based) are working hard to educate all staff in school so that emotion, wellbeing and mental health are understood by all so that it underpins all the work we do in school (or currently at home in April/May 2020!).

Describe the impact that this has had on pupil and staff mental health and wellbeing in the school

The whole school focus on mental health and wellbeing means that children feel safe and cared for in school. Visitors to Western often mention the 'feel' of the school which is difficult to evidence on a piece of paper.

Training for all members of staff has empowered all to understand issues (whether that be in the classroom or on the playground) so that they are dealt with supportively and swiftly.

The work of the Emotion and Wellbeing team supports the children and families needing additional help so the teachers have the time to be able to teach their classes.

With plenty of knowledge and training in place, staff know when to seek support from outside agencies and do so to ensure all families get the level of support that they require.

Staff see the impact of all the above through the children's behaviour in school. Observation is the most useful tool but this is backed up with evidence in terms of progress made in learning, lateness/ attendance data improving and fewer CPOMs incidents being recorded for an individual. The school uses simple monitoring of progress tools and more formal methods in some cases where improvements on an emotional literacy score can be seen.

Western staff receive many positive comments and thanks from parents who have noticed a difference in their home life/ their child's behaviour at school/ home following advice given or through interventions completed with the team.

Comment from parent about her KS2 son: *'I was just so proud he felt in control and confident that he could be resilient, even when things aren't exactly how he'd like them. I just think back to how things were when I was a child when I felt so disempowered and a real yes person, plus no-one really asked how I felt. Just a thank you really.'*

A parent request for support from a member of the team: *'I was wondering if lovely Mrs Harrison would be able to have some talk time with my daughter please? She was so wonderful with her in the last few weeks/ months. She's having a few wobbles so if it's possible please?'*

The children are aware that this level of support is available to them in school. They know where to go and who to approach to get help. They are keen to get the help when they need it. They are proud of having the 'Junction' in

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school. It is a pleasure to hear the older children showing visitors around school and talking so highly of the Junction and the support in place.

Provide feedback from the school in relation to Compass BUZZ

“A huge thank you to Compass BUZZ for the free training provided which has been informative and led brilliantly by Alice Sotirchos. She makes it interesting and so is able to get everyone on board. The level 1 training which addressed stigma around mental health and asked participants to consider everyday language use was particularly useful. We have used all the training levels to further inform our practice and are grateful for the newsletters and resources that are regularly sent into school, helping all staff to stay up to date with relevant information. We have held awareness days in school for World Mental Health Day, raising money for Compass BUZZ to show our gratitude for the support provided.”

Dawn Johnson, SENCO and Inclusion Manager

What future plans do the school have in place to further develop a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing?

- The school wants to remain at the forefront of understanding mental health in children, staff and parents, continuing to stay updated with training and ensuring mental health remains on the school development plan for improvement.
- The school would like to introduce a more structured approach to having children as ‘Wellbeing Champions’ in school. A member of the team has shown interest in moving this forward.
- A further aim is to increase the involvement with outside agencies to enhance connections so that there is joint working when supporting a family (e.g. CAMHS).
- The school is also exploring ways of providing supervision for staff dealing with the highest need children and families across school so that they have support for their own wellbeing.
- Whilst being very proud of their team and the experience that they have collectively in school currently, they would like to expand the team in the future by drawing on experience from people with medical backgrounds (e.g. school nurse) to enhance the provision they already have in place.