

# SUCCESS REPORT SUMMARY

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Challenging behaviour continues to be a cause of increasing concern in many schools. This report focuses on the Mulberry Bush School's SUCCESS project, which was funded for three years as an Action Research Project to work with four Oxfordshire mainstream schools, broadening our work in line with the school's charitable objectives of sharing the skills and expertise developed since 1948. Ofsted has consistently recognised the Mulberry Bush School as outstanding over the last five years. The schools were self selected from a partnership group identified in conjunction with the local authority.

The project encouraged teachers to reflect on their practice and develop a shared understanding of the causes of emotional, social and behavioural difficulties using a collaborative problem solving approach. The report documents how this has led to an understanding of children's behaviour as a communication and to education staff becoming more inclusive, leading to better outcomes for children.

The project identified how such an approach can improve reflective practice and reduce children's challenging behaviour. It also explored the role of school management teams in supporting a reflective school based culture, and how sustainable development is achievable.

The project's aim was to see how established methods of working at The Mulberry Bush School could be transferred to mainstream primary schools to develop the skills and confidence of staff to more effectively support children displaying challenging behavioural difficulties. The approach was to identify the core values that underpin the therapeutic work at The Mulberry Bush and develop methods of practice in the schools which embody these. These were;

- Psychodynamic approach
- Reflective culture
- Collaborative Working

The core values were translated into underlying concepts which were shared with schools and embodied in practice through:

Reflective Groups and Training which encouraged and enabled teachers to develop a shared understanding of the causes of emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and their impact on staff

Clinics, using a collaborative problem solving approach, which engaged staff in creative discussion with all participants supportively sharing their ideas and experience leading to new learning about effective strategies for supporting children in their mainstream classrooms

Three out of the four schools which began the project continued engagement right through to completion. The fourth school, which was more resistant to wholehearted involvement, went through major changes in leadership midway through the project. This resulted in the early cessation of the project with this school. The report details the quantitative and qualitative data which were collected during the project, and analyses these for each school. Data were collected from all staff in the four schools, and from schools' tracking of pupils' progress. As might be

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expected, the results from the three schools which participated fully show significantly more positive results than the fourth school.

The feedback overall was that;

- The project had a positive impact in enabling staff in schools to work more collaboratively. This was confirmed by the Heads, who experienced a more cohesive 'whole school' atmosphere, with staff sharing and supporting one another – evidence suggesting fundamental changes in culture
- The clinics helped staff to better understand children's emotional needs and challenging behaviours and to adapt and improve provision in a more integrated way
- Schools experienced a greater capacity for reflective practice
- Provision improved for children who displayed challenging behaviour
- Pupil assessments showed good improvements in progress from early in the project to the later stages (as measured by the schools for children who were causing concern). This data also showed a significantly higher rate of improvement for those children identified by staff for support through clinics, observations or individual meetings with staff
- Support staff were particularly positive in their feedback

The final report reaches a number of conclusions;

- The core values of the Mulberry Bush School are transferrable to mainstream schools through the model used
- That the work can take slightly different forms and can therefore be adapted in individual schools without compromising on the underlying principles
- Factors were identified that enabled schools to fully engage and which would also contribute to sustainability
- Schools felt able to take on and run aspects of the project so that they could be sustainable; skills were enhanced, so that staff could move towards supporting each other in solving problems in-house
- Supporting the development of understanding behaviour, working together and reflective practice can be extremely valued in mainstream settings
- Collaborative work between schools supports inclusion and provides opportunities for mutual support and reciprocal learning
- The project provided a developmental opportunity to improve and enhance practice, but was not designed as a remedial tool to correct poor practice

The report concludes by considering the recommendations for future projects, including the helpful factors that should be assessed when planning partnership work with schools. By so doing, thinking and practice can be embedded in a sustainable way.

You may read the report in full using the following link;

<http://www.mulberrybush.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/SUCCESS-PROJECT-REPORT.pdf>