

Mental Health in Schools What about the Staff ?

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The impact of work discussion groups

Mental Health Outreach Projects: Levels of Work I

- Individual and group work with pupils
- Parent and family work
- Individual consultations with staff
- Referrals to CAMHS etc
- Work discussion groups for staff



Mental Health Outreach Projects: Levels of Work II

Work discussion groups for staff

- prioritised when possible
- most far reaching impact over last 11 years
- massive potential for further development




What are work discussion groups?

- A regular meeting, outside the pressures of the classroom setting, open to **all** staff, to bring **any** concerns, issues and difficulties relating to their work with individual pupils or class groups.
- Group thinks about situation together; – like a group consultation.




What are work discussion groups?

- Reflective seminars for **any** direct work with any client group
- Group members feel supported in their work (teaching) role; less self critical and anxious; open to seeing and thinking differently.



**Work Discussion Groups:
Key Aims**

- Understand emotional factors that impact on teaching and learning
- Understand that behaviour has meaning and develop skills in understanding meaning of behaviour
- Extend staff skills with challenging, worrying, disruptive, hard to reach and 'at risk' students
- To help staff feel more confident and supported as teachers
- To consider group processes and institutional factors impacting on learning and teaching
- To reduce teacher isolation and stress by sharing and discussing difficult students and situations




Why attend?

- Almost no prior training in child/adolescent development
- Slows down pace of life in school
- Space and time to think
- *Reflective* model taken in by teachers

Interested in developing thinking and work (cpd)


- Concerns about specific pupils/classes
- Current strategies not working.
- Help to identify and address actual rather than perceived problems.

- Increase support
- Reduce isolation and stress




Work discussion groups are NOT...

- Therapy groups
- Slagging off sessions
- Gossip sessions
- Management meetings
- Alternative leadership groups
- Opportunities to criticise one another



Common Themes 1


- Child and Adolescent Development
 - attachment and separation
 - secondary transition (eg. less secure children/parents)
 - impact of puberty, sexuality and adolescence



Common Themes II

Emotional Factors in learning and teaching

- anxieties evoked through 'learning'
- importance of creating 'emotionally safe' learning environment
- 'feelings' treated as taboo subject when they are a potentially rich source of information



Common Themes III

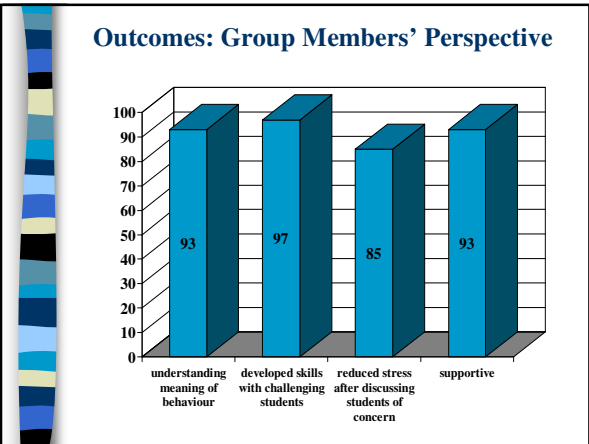
- Range of pupils/difficulties/issues discussed
 - withdrawn, aggressive, disturbed, worrying, hard to reach
 - pupils who generate strong feelings in staff and each other
 - Managing public exams, leaving school and separations
 - fear of failure and fear of success

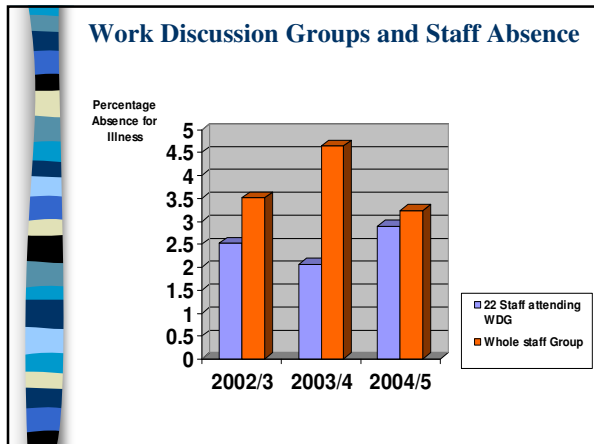
Work Discussion Groups for Managers

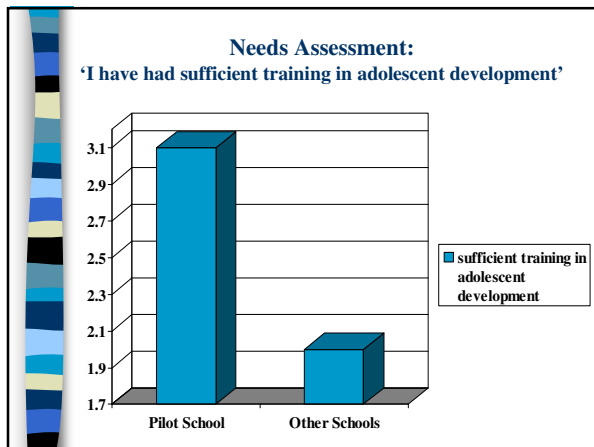
- Middle & senior managers, principals & headteachers
- Opportunity to consider issues, dilemmas and challenges facing school leaders and managers
- Line management relationships
 - Authority and delegation
 - Managing relationships, anxieties and conflict
 - Leadership and follower-ship in the school hierarchy

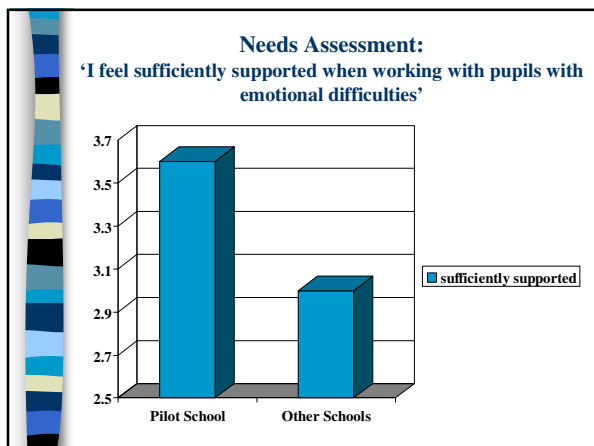
Work Discussion Group Evaluation

- Model of Good Practice (DCSF/DoH)
- Potential for far reaching impact at different levels
 - Individual teacher with individual pupil
 - All teachers with range of pupils
 - Increased capacity for peer consultation outside group
- everyone is a consultant as well as a consultee









Outcomes: Headteacher's Perspective

"... As the project has progressed I have witnessed the change in the perceptions, understanding and practice of the teachers attending the seminars. I have seen my staff growing in perception, tolerance, patience and confidence in containing and motivating challenging children. Of course, such is the collegiate nature of schools that the participants' practice in turn influences that of other staff - triggering a cascade effect, even if unconsciously. I have been far less under pressure to exclude or discipline children and would go so far as to say that the project has had a civilising influence upon my school."

Headteacher, Pilot School

References

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