



case study

Being an attachment aware school

Lower Farm Primary School, 31 January 2019

the need

Lower Farm Primary is a larger than average Primary School in Walsall serving a mixed catchment area. Over the past three years there has been a sharp increase in the numbers of children attending school from the most deprived households (currently 40% of the school population).

Lower Farm Primary has expanded in recent years and offers two year olds provision and wraparound which are both well established. The school offers 30 hours Nursery provision which approximately 30% of 3 year olds access.

The school established a Nurture House provision for identified Lower Farm pupils and other primary aged Walsall Looked After Children from September 2017. The provision is part funded by Walsall Virtual School and has had a very positive impact on behaviour and exclusion rates. The school has seen a sharp reduction in behaviour incidents and has not excluded any children (fixed term or permanent) since the Nurture House opened.

the solutions

Through KCA Lower Farm Primary has undertaken whole school training on attachment awareness to support the provision for pupils with unmet attachment needs. Staff understand and apply the key principles of the emotion coaching approach. This is fully integrated into the school approach to behaviour management providing a more personalised and appropriate response to individual needs.

Further training on social & emotional wellbeing and mental health has helped staff to understand the importance of taking a holistic approach to pupil wellbeing. The Nurture House provision is utilised to support pupils who require therapy with mental wellbeing as a result of unmet attachment needs or because of a traumatic event in their lives. For example, using Drawing & Talking therapy for children who have suffered bereavement.

Transitions & Vulnerability training has been particularly useful in managing key life transitions for pupils with unmet attachment needs. This could be starting or leaving school or a change in home circumstances. This has been particularly successful for Looked After Children in providing a curriculum which promotes positive mental health and consistency whilst they are experiencing changes in their home circumstances.

the outcomes

For Walsall Looked After Children who do not attend Lower Farm Primary their access to the Nurture House for a consistent period of time has provided a safe and secure base during transitions between schools or from mainstream to special school. Often these children

have refused to attend school or are at risk of permanent exclusion. Consequently, other schools have taken strategies and approaches from the Nurture provision to apply in their own settings which further eases transition for these vulnerable pupils.

Lower Farm Primary has seen a hugely positive impact on vulnerable pupil outcomes over the course of last academic year. This is measured through attendance, behaviour incidents and developmental strands on the Boxall Profile.

Child A is an example of a child with unmet attachment needs who benefitted from the change in whole school approach and intensive Nurture provision:

Attendance improved from 85% to 98% over the course of the academic year.

Behaviour incidents: 6 in Autumn term, 8 in Spring term, 1 in Summer term.

Boxall Profile: Large increase in developmental strands: Showing insightful involvement & being accommodating to others. Large decrease in developmental strands: Showing negativism towards others & having an insecure sense of self.

Lower Farm Primary is committed to continuing this successful work to meet the needs of Walsall children. An external review conducted by a serving OFSTED Inspector in Sept 2018 where Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare is cited as a strength as follows:

"Attitudes to learning are exemplary"

"Adults have consistently high expectations"

"Very effective support ensures that pupil's social, emotional and behavioural needs are very well met"

"The school has a reputation for dealing with pupils who have either been excluded or are in danger of exclusion, whose behaviour had been challenging in their previous schools. At Lower Farm there is particularly good provision for these pupils so they settle well and make good progress. They are able to participate fully in school life."

customer response

"KCA training is an integral part of Lower Farm Primary becoming Attachment Aware. We have been able to adopt many of the suggested approaches as a whole staff and integrate the principles into our policies.

The results speak for themselves through dramatically reduced exclusions and well developed provision supporting all children to be fully included in all aspects of school life. Training is refreshed regularly for all staff in order to maintain the golden thread of attachment awareness through the whole school."

Sarah Milner, Headteacher, Lower Farm Primary