SCHOOL SHOWCASE

Warren Wood Primary School Stockport
– Physical Activity and Mental Wellbeing Project

Background:

A group of pupils who had been highlighted as children struggling with anxiety, mental health when in Year 3, were chosen to take part in regular Relax Kids sessions as they moved into Year 4. There were two groups consisting of 6 children in each group. The children were selected after discussions with the class teachers about children they were worried about and also parents' views of worries about their children.

Project Aims:

The children selected needed support to develop new strategies that would help them to understand their big emotions and worries and find tools to reduce anxiety. Mrs Belsten, a member of staff, was qualified to deliver weekly Relax Kids sessions. Relax Kids is a mental health initiative that supports children's emotional wellbeing and mental health through relaxation techniques. It helps children to manage big emotions, reduce anxiety whilst building resilience. Sessions help children to develop strategies to cope when in stressful situations.

Aims and Benefits of Relax Kids

To help children:

- Learn basic relaxation and stress-reducing techniques that they can use in everyday life
- Become aware of their feelings and emotions and to manage these feelings
- Have fun whilst exercising and learning to relax
- Develop emotional and physical fitness
- Develop concentration skills
- Improve general behaviour
- Promote positive self-image and self-esteem
- Improve school performance

Implementation:

The children were asked if they would want to take part in the project. Before starting the project, they filled in questions about their mental health and wellbeing. Class teachers also completed the questionnaires.

During each weekly session, the children would go through the Relax Kids 7-step process – MOVE, PLAY, STRETCH, FEEL, BREATHE, BELIEVE, RELAX. The 7 steps include movement and dance, self-esteem games, stretches, breathing exercises, peer/self-massage, affirmations (positive statements about themselves) and visualisations (relaxing stories with music).

At the end of each session, the children would complete their own Mindfulness Passports. On each week, the children would reflect on how they would feel after each session. The passport allowed the children to practise the strategies and be able to use this in everyday situations.

Impact and Sustainability:

The children who took part in the project loved their weekly sessions and were keen to share this with the rest of their class. The school are now looking to offer whole class Relax Kids sessions over the next half term.

The children have expressed how they have developed new strategies to help them talk to grown-ups at school and home. Mrs Belsten found that during her sessions, the children were very open and honest and felt safe to share how they were feeling. Parents had commented on how their children had shared their experience at home too and were able to support them at home with the new strategies developed.

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Pupil Feedback:

"I enjoy doing Relax Kids because it's relaxing for me because I've never felt so calm before. I just love doing it." HB

"I love it because I do it with all my friends and Mrs Belsten. I love FEEL because it's so relaxing and I made new friends." AM

"I made a new friend called Luna." ET

"I can share my feelings." JB

"I can be away from noise." VM

"I like FEEL with my friends, I like the room it's nice and calm." CB

"When I feel sad, I can come in here, calm down and feel happy." MC

Future Plans for Stockport:

Relax Kids is currently in talks with Stockport Council to train more teachers and wellbeing professionals to support more pupils throughout Stockport.

Teacher Feedback:

"All the children looked forward to coming to our sessions each week and would often stop me midweek to say how much they had enjoyed last week's session and/or were looking forward to the following one.

The space we used was a small, cosy garden room and the children found that this instantly helped them to feel calm and in a 'safe space'. Each week we discussed how the strategies we were learning in our sessions could help them in everyday life both at school and at home. Many of them said as the weeks progressed that they had used an RK strategy that week or showed a family member what we had done e.g. finger breathing, breathing potion bottles, peer massage etc. It was an excellent opportunity to offer something for the children who were presenting with anxieties or stresses in school/home to spend time together in a fun, safe, calm weekly session. Each week we would share positive affirmations about ourselves and others which took some children a while to get used to as they were very modest or had low self-esteem (some not feeling that they had many 'good qualities'). Completing the weekly passports was a good way of recording their feelings at the end of each session and they loved taking home a weekly positive affirmation card to keep at home or school reminding them of all the wonderful qualities that they DO have within them!

Having such small groups also meant that many of the children would request to stay privately at the end of the session to share a worry or concern that they'd had that week. This was a fabulous opportunity to find out what real life worries the children were storing up inside. These tended to revolve around friendship troubles, pets or elderly grandparents dying, finding certain subjects or school work difficult, louder or more boisterous children being 'too much' for them at playtimes or during lessons. This gave me a great weekly opportunity to tailor the following week's session to include tackling some of these anxieties and for us as a group, to discuss how the things we had learnt in Relax Kids could help them in the coming weeks."
J Belsten

If you would like more information about introducing Relax Kids into your school please contact us

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