



CASE STUDY

1. Title: BUDDIES, Ravenshall School – Support at break times

Ravenshall School is a Special School for children with complex needs covering the age range 4 – 16: its pupils have a range of special needs including some (17%) designated for emotional and behavioural difficulties.

2. Area: Kirklees Local Authority (Yorkshire and Humber Region)

3. What was the issue?

The school has worked over recent years to build an inclusive ethos where considerable emphasis has been placed on developing pupils' personal, emotional and social skills. The school has embraced SEAL and places considerable emphasis on its PSE programme. As part of this work it has looked for opportunities to give pupils increased responsibility.

The school has been concerned to improve the physical environment of the school and school playground and the quality of pupil experience at breaks and lunchtimes. It wants to ensure that pupils feel safe and are engaged positively in activities with others.

The school works to promote positive relationship based on respect and trust, where everyone recognises the need to care for others.

4. What action was taken?

The lead member of staff (Mrs. Kilbride) attended a training course delivered by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and presented a paper proposing the introduction of a Peer Support / Buddy Scheme. Pupils were selected and trained and the scheme was introduced in the 2009 / 2010 school year.

The essential role of the Buddy is to "help and support other pupils during lunchtime and break times".

The pupils involved as buddies are currently all in Key Stage 4, but it is recognised that some Key Stage 3 pupils could have the personality and skills to fill the role.

Posters outlining the role of the buddy were displayed around the school and interested pupils were asked to complete an application form (with adult support if necessary). Some were initially referred by members of staff. They were then interviewed with questions based on:

- Why did they want to be a buddy
- What skills did they bring

Successful applicants were provided with a job description and asked to sign a contract.

All buddies had to undertake initial training and training has been provided throughout the year. All buddies have received at least ten hours of training.

The training programme, written by the lead member of staff and delivered by her and learning mentors, was based on:

- Developing “helping” skills – how to engage: how to ask questions sensitively: emphasis is on looking after / supporting
- Understanding confidentiality
- Golden rules for engaging with pupils, including knowing when not to get engaged and report to staff – role is not to sort out conflict but to look after: not to force yourself on someone
- Setting targets – for example, chatting to someone new: playing a game with someone once a week
- Record keeping

Training has involved role play and games with emphasis on “enjoyment” and “fun”.

The current buddies will play a key role in training the next group of buddies.

The pupils are closely supervised by the lead member of staff.

The role has had two aspects:

- Playground – checking out those who look lonely or upset: helping to bring pupils together if fall out (not physical) / mediating: playing games
- Lunchtime Buddy Club – variety of games, books, art / colouring books

The Buddies have publicised their role by delivering assemblies. They wear “Buddy Badges”.

The pupils involved are able to use their records to submit as evidence for the ASDAN Award Scheme.

5. What impact has this had (so far)?

The five buddies all feel that they have been successful and they fully own the work. They have developed a group identity and work as a team. They enjoy their role.

Members of staff recognise the positive impact on the personal and social development of those involved, recognising the skills they have developed. The lead member of staff reflects on how little support they have needed.

At the end of the summer term there has been an evaluation of the programme to date. This evaluation has sought the opinions of:

- Buddies
- Members of staff

- Pupils

The evaluation results are very positive. Members of staff want the scheme to have a higher profile.

The current buddies were awarded Certificates at the end of the year and although the programme is not focused on bullying they will be nominated for the Diana Anti-Bullying Award.

6. How did the above action help to embed anti-bullying work in your area?

There are relatively few special school peer support schemes. The ABA Regional Adviser is to produce a Briefing Paper on "Developing Peer Support in Special Schools". This will highlight the work at Ravenshall School and he will carry out research for other examples. This work will involve looking for examples from CHIPS and Diana Anti-Bullying Award.

ABA Regional Adviser is discussing with Kirklees Local Authority how to provide training for schools on Peer Support.

Discussions are taking place with CHIPS re joint ABA / CHIPS "Peer Support: Training for Trainers" course.

7. Additional information:

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