



Therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusion and truancy: evaluation of three contemporaneous projects

Final report to Paul Hamlyn Foundation

December 2013

OPM
252B Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1X 8XG

tel: 0845 055 3900
fax: 0845 055 1700
email: office@opm.co.uk
web: www.opm.co.uk

Therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusion and truancy: evaluation of three contemporaneous projects

Client	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Document title	Therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusion and truancy: evaluation of three contemporaneous projects. Final report
Date modified	5 December 2013
Status	Final
OPM project number	8471
Authors	Lucy Smith, Linda Jackson, Natasha Comber
Quality assurance by	Dr. Chih Hoong Sin
Contact details	
Main point of contact	Lucy Smith
Telephone	020 7239 7882
Email	lsmith@opm.co.uk

If you would like a large text version of this document, please contact us.



Contents

Executive summary	2
1. Introduction	13
1.1 Evaluation aims	13
1.2 Evaluation methods	13
1.3 This report	15
2. Key findings from the scoping phase	16
2.1 Our conceptual framework	16
2.2 Understanding the factors which facilitate positive outcomes	17
3. Policy context update	18
3.1 Education, behaviour and attendance	18
3.2 Mental health in schools	19
4.1 Summary of key findings	21
4.2 Project overview	22
4.3 Project evolution	28
4.4 Impact	34
4.5 Factors which have facilitated and hindered success	49
4.6 Recommendations	54
5. SWIFT, Family Groups	56
5.1 Summary of key findings	56
5.2 Project overview	57
5.3 Project evolution	58
5.4 Impact	62
5.5 Factors which have facilitated and hindered success	103
5.6 Recommendations	110
6. Teignmouth Community School, Learning 2 Learn	112
6.1 Summary of key findings	112
6.2 Project overview	113
6.3 Project evolution	115
6.4 Impact	118
6.5 Factors which have facilitated success	130
6.6 Recommendations	133
7. Conclusions and cross-cutting learning	135
Appendix 1: Methods	140
Mounts Bay, Care Guidance Support Stages	140
SWIFT, Family Groups	141
Teignmouth Community School, Learning 2 Learn	143

Executive summary

Introduction

In March 2011, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) commissioned the Office for Public Management (OPM) to conduct an evaluation of three therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusions and truancy. The three projects were funded under PHF's Education & Learning Programme's '*Add to the Learning – preventing school exclusion and truancy*' grant scheme. The projects are:

- Mounts Bay School's Care Guidance Support Stages (CGSS)
- Services Working in Feltham and Hanworth Together (SWIFT) working with The School and Family Works to deliver Multi-Family Therapy Groups
- Teignmouth Community School's Learning 2 Learn project.

The three projects vary considerably in terms of scope and ambition, type and intensity of support provided, and degree of family involvement. Our aim therefore was not to make direct comparisons across projects, but to generate tailored recommendations for improvement for each project and identify common learning of value to the wider sector.

The evaluation had three phases: scoping (April - August 2011), Year 1 (September 2011 – July 2012) and Year 2 (September 2012 - July 2013). This report was produced at the end of Year 2, and builds on the findings from Year 1 to produce an overall report on the three projects over the two years.

Evaluation aims and methods

Evaluation aims

The evaluation had three aims:

- To assess the **impact** of the three projects through measuring outcomes for children and young people, schools (including but not limited to truancy and exclusion), wider communities (where appropriate); and success in replicating the practice in other schools (where appropriate)
- Facilitate **learning and develop recommendations** for the projects
- Generate **knowledge and recommendations, if appropriate, for the wider school sector** about approaches to preventing exclusion and truancy and/or improving pupil wellbeing and other key outcomes.

Evaluation methods

Our methods were tailored to each project and included collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Because SWIFT works intensively with a small number of families over many months, we undertook in-depth **qualitative** case studies with six families in each of Years 1 and 2. We spoke to families taking part in family therapy groups, school staff and professionals delivering the intervention. With Learning 2 Learn and Mounts Bay's CGSS, which are targeted at a wider range of children and young people in schools, in both years we visited the projects and undertook one-off interviews and focus groups with a range of

stakeholders, including children and young people, parents, school staff and other professionals involved in delivering the intervention.

We collected **quantitative** data on numbers of permanent and fixed term exclusions, and levels of attendance and unauthorised absences, in the participating schools in each project.

It was important to collect both types of data, because relying solely on quantitative data on exclusions and attendance does not give a complete reflection of a project's impact.

Exclusions in particular occur in a wider context, for example, a school may have no choice but to exclude a child when she or he is involved in a serious incident, even if the child has been making good progress overall. Quantitative data therefore often has to be interpreted with caution, and it is essential to draw on qualitative feedback to generate a more comprehensive picture of a project's impact.

It is also important to take into account other impacts such as those on wellbeing, relationships and learning. In this evaluation we found that the qualitative impact data offered a richer picture of the success of their interventions than quantitative data alone, and enabled a deeper and more useful understanding of the mechanisms that bring about impacts.

Directly attributing the impact of a project on attendance, exclusion and behaviour is challenging, particularly with a whole school approach (such as Mounts Bay) rather than a targeted one (such as SWIFT). We therefore aimed to identify other possible contributing factors to avoid over-claiming impacts.

Key findings for each project

Mounts Bay School, the Care Guidance Support Stages

Context

Mounts Bay secondary school in Penzance, Cornwall has a large intake of children from some of the most challenging estates in the area and, whilst the school is oversubscribed and its performance is strong, it wanted to reduce the overall number of short and fixed term pupil exclusions whilst maintaining or improving academic performance of the most vulnerable pupils. The Care Guidance Support Stages (CGSS) were introduced as part of wider changes including the school's transition to Academy status and a move to a four-semester system.

The project

The CGSS is an approach to managing behaviour in schools which aims to identify pupils with behavioural issues as early as possible, and offer targeted support to address these issues. It is designed to facilitate positive relationships and communication between pupils, schools and parents. The system allows all members of staff to raise concerns about pupils so that they are picked up straightaway and a clear action plan put in place. Other pupils are identified through the school wide member of staff on call (MOSOC) behaviour management system, which entails Learning Support Mentors being on call to respond to specific issues or incidents in classes.

The CGSS define different 'stages' of support (from levels 0 – 6) depending on the severity of a pupil's behavioural problems. Each of the stages includes a range of indicators to help decide where pupils best fit in the model, and a set of 'consequences' which clearly explain which actions will trigger which response. Working with the Administration Lead, and according to the referral route, the pupil is placed onto a stage from 1 to 6, depending on the

nature of the issue. The relevant intervention may take place in school (for example, a Skills Workshop to focus on an issue, one-to-one counselling, a Common Assessment Framework (CAF – a tool for assessing children’s additional needs), mentoring, or advice on housing or further education), or outside school (for example, referral to anger management, art therapy, youth club, youth worker or family support worker).

Following the appropriate intervention at each stage the pupil may then move up or down a stage according to whether their need has been successfully addressed.

The support is managed and delivered via the PHF-funded Intervention Coordinator, who designs and trains Learning Support Managers (LSM) to deliver Skill Workshops, coordinates case study care plans, manages the externally funded Shifting Horizons Forest School learning programme, directly supports pupils and facilitates their access to other services. As such, the CGSS is a whole school intervention that tailors support depending on the nature of the individual pupil’s situation.

Impacts

The impacts of the project have been seen at a number of levels, as follows:

- **Impacts on individual pupils vary** according to their specific issues. A common thread was around pupils having learned coping strategies, so that when they feel stressed they can take a moment to rationalise their behaviour and think through an appropriate, considered response, or reach out to a specific staff member for support. Pupils who attended the external Forest School leaders course reported increased self confidence and maturity. Other individual examples of impact include a pupil who was supported during bereavement through anger management sessions, which enabled him to avoid being excluded due to bad behaviour, and another who was supported to find new housing following a breakdown in family relations.
- **Across the school, pupils have a greater sense of security**, because they know how to seek help. The tight systems in place allow staff members to identify problems at an early stage and prevent issues from escalating. Because pupils can be placed on the CGSS after referral through the MOSOC disciplinary process, they have a clear sense of boundaries and consequences of their actions. Pupils therefore feel supported and reassured that the school wants to help, rather than simply penalise poor behaviour.
- **Parents report improved relationships** and communications with the school. Parents are pleased that their children are being supported by tailored activity plans rather than just reactive discipline. Parents and staff reported more two-way communication, with parents being automatically contacted when their child is ‘picked up’ by the system and informed of the reasons for this and next steps. Parents are encouraged to make contact with the relevant member of staff with their concerns.
- **Staff can focus on other school business**: because a smooth and systematic approach to discipline and pastoral support is in place, school staff can focus on their core work with fewer incidents and distractions. The introduction of the CGSS and the Intervention Coordinator has freed up senior staff to focus on strategic leadership, and junior teachers to focus on lesson planning and teaching.
- The **rate of fixed term exclusions has declined** since the CGSS came into effect. There was a small increase in permanent exclusions, however most of the excluded pupils joined Mounts Bay after being permanently excluded from a different local school.

Success factors

Key to the success of the CGSS is a rigorous **administration process**, ensuring that staff have the information on pupils that is needed to implement appropriate support. Referral forms are collated each day to produce an 'at a glance' database that shows which pupils have been placed on which stage. This is broken down into year groups so that staff, including Form Tutors, can see exactly what has happened with each pupil the day before, and understand their role in the strategy for helping the pupil.

Also key is the role of the PHF-funded **Intervention Coordinator**. The role is responsible for coordinating support for pupils at certain stages, and provides the link between the administration of the referral process and the pupil activity plan that is created in response. This role demands a specific skill set and depth of experience, including the ability to work with vulnerable young people, design project materials, influence school staff to engage in the activity plans and have a clear understanding of external referral agencies.

Year on year tweaks to MOSOC and other referral structures that identify pupils requiring additional support have led to an appropriate **balance between a punitive and supportive approach**.

Finally strong **leadership** and **communications** around the system, as well as having the time to adapt the programme over two years, has helped to embed it into the school routine and culture. This has been particularly important at a time when many other changes have also been taking place in the school, to ensure that the CGSS did not get 'lost' amongst other priorities.

Next steps

The CGSS is an evolving system and continues to be refined and embedded into the everyday life of the school, underpinning a positive whole school culture around addressing behavioural issues. Our recommendations for project leads are to:

- **Continue to look for opportunities to embed the system** further, for example, inductions for new teachers and by streamlining and tweaking CGSS systems. Ensure that any changes are communicated effectively, for example by circulating updated materials and presenting updates to all staff at inset days.
- **Review and streamline data management systems** to help the sustainability of the programme and enable rich analysis of all the data collected. One aspect of this could be to document the process of using the systems, so that other staff can take over in the event of key staff members' absence.
- **Consider formally incorporating a positive feedback loop**, encouraging teachers to reflect on the positive impact of the CGSS and to share it with pupils and parents, for example, through keeping a record of the 'positive postcards' that are sent home to inform parents of good feedback.

One marker of success will be that the system becomes so embedded into the school culture that it sustains itself, even without the intervention of the PHF-funded staff member who is currently overseeing it.

SWIFT, Family Groups

Context

Prior to the award of the PHF funding, a pilot of four Family Groups had been successful in engaging 'families at risk' (families that experience multiple and complex problems which

restrict their life chances, such as poor mental and/or physical health, low income, poor housing, alcohol and drug misuse, domestic abuse, etc¹). The pilot provided some evidence of having reduced exclusions, as well as generating other positive outcomes for the families involved. There was a high level of need in relation to families at risk in the Feltham and Hanworth area, in the London Borough of Hounslow, and consequently, there was a strong appetite among local partners to apply for PHF funding to support the continuation of the model in three local schools, two primary and one secondary.

The project

Family Group is a highly targeted intervention working with children and parents in school-based, multi-family therapy sessions using the Marlborough model². Therapeutic support is provided by the School and Family Works (SFW). Run by an SFW therapist and a school-based partner (usually the deputy head or someone in a pastoral role), Family Groups aim to reduce the risk of exclusion, increase attendance, increase wellbeing and support attainment, by working with the whole family to address problems rooted in family relationships and dynamics. Sessions take place weekly, in school, for half a day. Families continue to attend for as long as necessary, rather than for a fixed number of sessions.

Family Group sessions are highly structured and comprise a number of sections. Families identify their problems and devise 'targets' to address them, supported by the therapist and school-based partner and other members of the group. They take part in activities – including games, drawing and crafts – which are designed to promote positive parent-child interaction and to help members to articulate and understand their feelings and identify unhelpful patterns of behaviour and responses that they can then work to change. Children return to class and there is 'parent time', in which parents can discuss problems and offer mutual support. Throughout the session, members are encouraged to develop their capacity for self-reflection, equipping them with the skills and tools to cope with future challenges.

Those running Family Groups liaise with other school staff to share information about the families, and to draw in external agencies to offer specialist support where appropriate.

In Year 2 of the evaluation, a Graduate Group has been established to support parents after leaving the group, while children continue to receive support at school as and when needed.

Impacts

The impacts of Family Group have been uniformly positive and families and schools both strongly endorse the intervention. This is demonstrated in the fact that all three participating schools intend to continue funding their Family Groups after the end of the PHF funding. It is also evident in the willingness of many parents to promote the intervention, by encouraging other parents to join, sitting on the project steering group and volunteering to participate in the evaluation.

Impacts include the following:

- **Parent-child relationships are improved** because parents feel more confident and empowered in their parental role. They are reassured to learn that they are not alone in

¹ See definition of 'families at risk' in Reaching Out: Think Family; Analysis and themes from the Families At Risk Review, Cabinet Office, 2007 <http://www.devon.gov.uk/reachingoutthinkfamily.pdf>

² Asen E, Dawson N, McHugh B: Multiple Family Therapy – the Marlborough Model and its Wider Applications (Karnac, 2001)

struggling to cope with their child. They gain tools and skills to manage their child's difficult behaviours (such as how to set and enforce boundaries and avoid conflict). Parents are encouraged to recognise their own strengths, to model positive attitudes and behaviours, and to recognise their responsibility as parents to do so.

- **Children experience improved emotional wellbeing, behaviour and learning.** These areas of impact interrelate and flow from each other. For example, increases in emotional wellbeing (such as feeling more secure) often underpin improvements in behaviour (such as less attention-seeking behaviour, which means fewer disruptions in class and conflicts at home), which is a pre-requisite for increased capacity for learning (such as being able to concentrate on classroom tasks and homework).
- **Parents have increased confidence and reduced stress levels** around coping with their child, which has led to positive knock-on effects such as parents becoming able to take on volunteer roles and jobs. They become better able to articulate their views, which helps them to negotiate with the school and other services too.
- **Schools report improved relationships with parents and children,** fewer disruptions in class, and improved understanding of the causes of and capacity to manage problematic behaviour. In the primary schools especially, the ethos of Family Group - around understanding the causes of poor attendance or behaviour, rather than simply penalising it - is becoming well-embedded into the whole school. In one school, Family Group staff have been instrumental in developing a new whole school behaviour policy.
- **Impacts on attendance** varied greatly by child but broadly, numbers of unauthorised absences tended to stabilise or decrease (for some children, to a great extent). A very small number of fixed term exclusions occurred, in the secondary school only.

The longer-term aim is that **knock-on effects spread into the community.** While it is difficult to assess the extent to which this is being achieved, many of those involved feel that Family Group is having a positive influence. Parents talk to others outside the group and take their new learning to their friends and neighbours, and impacts flow from families to other families - particularly in small, close-knit but deprived communities such as those in this area.

Success factors

Factors in the success of Family Groups include the effective **engagement of parents,** which often requires persistence at the outset but which is becoming easier as Family Group gains a positive reputation amongst parents. Also key in the initial stages of a family's involvement is the setting of a clear expectation that parents take responsibility for supporting their child and effecting positive change. They must recognise that they are not there to 'fix a problem with the child', but to change their own parenting approach.

One of the most important success factors for parents is the empathetic, non-judgemental support of the **therapists.** Parents felt that this created a genuinely caring environment and that staff modelled nurturing, listening and supportive behaviours for parents to then adopt in relation to their children. Another effective aspect of the intervention is the **group format,** which enables parents to support each other, building trust so that they can share their problems and mutually develop solutions. The group fosters a sense of belonging, and encourages members to recognise their potential to 'give back' to the group as well as gain from it.

Finally, strong **backing from schools** is vital. The school must commit the time of the school-based partner to co-facilitate the group and to provide a vital link point between group

and school. Once Family Group is embedded in a school, the focus can move to engaging all staff, so that progress made in the group is supported in the wider school environment. Schools must support this by allowing time for training on inset days and encouraging staff to engage with the Family Group therapist and school-based partner.

Next steps

The Family Group model is working as intended and shows extremely positive impacts. It is recommended that project leads at the School and Family Works, and leads in participating schools, continue their good work in relation to:

- **Integrating Family Groups into schools** and influencing the whole school ethos. This will be built into future contracts between the School and Family works and participating schools, for example, requiring that teaching staff take part in training and have dedicated time to meet with the group therapist to discuss the families taking part. This and other measures should help to ensure a consistent and supportive approach in the wider school environment, as well as within group sessions.
- **Building links with outside agencies** which can support families on specific issues, such as adult mental health, domestic violence, special educational needs, family support worker services and housing.
- **Monitoring impacts** in order to demonstrate the benefits of the intervention. Collecting and analysing a mix of quantitative and qualitative data will help to make the case for future Family Groups, including data on attendance and exclusions, attainment and MyOutcomes (a wellbeing measure), as well as case studies and video interviews with parents, children and school staff. The Family Groups project already has accreditation from Project Oracle Youth Evidence Hub which shows that it is committed to long term evaluation.

As well as continuing to run in the evaluated schools, new Family Groups will be established in a number of other schools in the area, funded by a range of sources.

Teignmouth Community School, Learning 2 Learn

Context

Teignmouth Community School in Devon leads a Learning Community also comprising six local primary schools; it receives nearly all of its pupils from the schools. Each school had previously developed its own strategy for supporting vulnerable young people at risk of exclusion. The Learning 2 Learn (L2L) project aimed to ensure all of the schools have common strategies to identify and support young people at risk, and their families, building on earlier successes such as a common attendance policy. This was intended to smooth the transition from primary to secondary school. L2L also aimed to support children who did not meet criteria for external support, but who nonetheless had support needs.

The project

The project delivers creative, therapeutic support in primary schools to children who have been, or are identified as being at risk of being, excluded (for example, having persistently poor attendance or high numbers of behaviour incidents). L2L is underpinned by the THRIVE approach, which draws on current thinking in neuroscience, attachment theory, child development, and research into the role of creativity and play in developing emotional resilience. The aim is to enable children to develop their self-awareness, empathy and reflective capacity, express their feelings and take responsibility for their behaviour. Children

receive support from Intervention Workers, who are qualified counsellors, in group or one-to-one sessions. The project also aims to improve relationships between parents and schools by involving parents in the intervention and joining up with other support around the family including CAF meetings. The project works with children with multiple vulnerabilities and complex family lives, as well as children with lower levels of need (for example, addressing specific topics such as low self esteem and low confidence through themed one-day workshops).

The project has a base at Teignmouth Community School, which is called the Nest. Much of the support is delivered there. In Year 2 of the evaluation, the project is embedding the THRIVE approach across schools in the Learning Community, with two members of staff in each school receiving THRIVE training. Two primaries now have dedicated space in which to deliver L2L support (in addition to continuing to access the Nest). A new employee has been recruited to support vulnerable children in the transition from primary to secondary school, as this has been identified as a critical time for children.

Impacts

Impacts on children, parents and schools have resulted from L2L, as follows:

- **Children's behaviour has improved** and this is credited to their improved emotional expression and use of coping strategies (for example, using a 'password' to tell a teacher when they feel angry or upset). Children are more engaged in learning because they are better able to focus and communicate, and have to leave the classroom fewer times due to being disruptive. Parents observed improved behaviour at home as well as in school. Many children reported increased levels of confidence and emotional wellbeing, and some have made more friends through the activities.
- **Parents reported improved relationships with school** because they are no longer receiving as much negative feedback or 'complaints' about their child from the school. Parents are better able to understand their children's behaviour and some have learned techniques for managing it from the Intervention Worker, which they can replicate at home. Parents reported feeling less anxious, in the knowledge that their child is being supported appropriately at school.
- **Schools experience fewer disruptions** in class, which is positive for staff stress levels as well as creating a calmer atmosphere for children. Staff also have more tools to deal with challenging behaviour in a supportive way; working closely with the Intervention Workers has helped schools to adopt new tools and techniques in the classroom.
- **Consistency across the Learning Community.** THRIVE training and the adoption of the approach means there is now a consistent understanding, language and practice in terms of identifying and supporting children at risk of exclusion or truancy. This consistency strengthens the positive impact of the approach, through children receiving consistent strategies wherever they go within the Learning Community (including when they move from primary to secondary school), and means that staff have a common understanding when they speak with one another.
- **There were fewer fixed term and permanent exclusions** while pupils were being supported by L2L than previously, and fewer days lost to fixed term exclusion. Attendance levels improved for around half of pupils and the overall number of days lost to unauthorised absences fell.

Success factors

One of the facilitators to success was the pre-existence of the **Learning Community**. The seven schools have a history of collaborative working and TCS is located in the centre of the community with the six primary schools dotted around it, which means it can operate an informal hub and spoke model. TCS is the only secondary school in the area, and given this, there is a strong impetus for TCS to intervene early and help support the transition to secondary school, and ensure that children's needs are met once they are at TCS.

Another important factor is having **support from the highest levels** in the lead school. The project has engaged with teaching and non-teaching staff and built good relationships across the schools. Bringing staff together for a joint inset day across all of the schools demonstrated a commitment to the project as a shared endeavour.

A further important factor is that the project is **complementary to, but not part of, the schools**. The external workers helped to make parents and children feel comfortable because they are not part of the usual school-parent dynamic, and many complimented their skills and approachability. The Nest, as an off-site location, offers a number of advantages including the opportunity for children from different schools to mix, a place for interaction with parents, opportunities for parents and school staff to observe the Intervention Workers with children, and a chance to support transitions for Year 6 pupils.

Finally the project has sought to **ensure sustainability** of its impact, through THRIVE training of school staff who can implement the underpinning principles in their interactions with children.

Next steps

The project continues to adapt in response to feedback. For example, a formalised exit strategy for children receiving interventions has been established, tapering support rather than a sudden cut-off. The extra provision at some of the primary schools has meant that the intervention can now 'step up' and 'step down', according to need. For example, a young person may have a staged exit from the Nest to school-based provision, before going back full time into class.

Year 2 of the evaluation has provided the opportunity to fully embed THRIVE principles and practice across the Learning Community, as two members of staff from each of the seven schools have completed their training. L2L should continue to act as a conduit between schools, supporting the **continued integration of THRIVE** within schools, particularly in those schools which are less connected to the project currently.

In order for the project to continue to be embedded and sustained, it is important for the project to continue its **capacity building** work with schools, where school-based staff are given opportunities to observe and co-deliver sessions with the Intervention Workers, and also receive ongoing mentoring support from the Intervention Workers in the school setting.

Conclusions and cross-cutting learning

All of the projects, although different in their approaches, generated positive impacts at a number of levels:

- **Children and young people** experienced improvements in emotional wellbeing (such as confidence and self-expression), behaviour (including use of strategies to manage it), ability to learn (by focusing in class) and relationships (with family, peers, school staff).
- **Schools** increased their understanding of behaviour and their capacity to manage it, and enjoyed fewer disruptions from problematic behaviour.

- **Relationships** between children, schools and parents were improved.

A summary of the cross-cutting learning to emerge from the evaluation is as follows.

Learning around therapeutic school-based interventions

- **Parental engagement:** The projects have underlined the need to engage with parents in order to break intergenerational patterns of poor relationships with schools and develop a shared responsibility for their child's progression as well as a more positive home environment. The projects have involved parents in many different ways, including sharing decisions, offering support and advice and seeking their regular feedback.
 - Examples include *SWIFT*'s persistence in engaging with initially reluctant parents and *L2L*'s practice of encouraging parents to observe the project's activities with children so they can learn techniques to take home.
- **Appreciative models of support:** All three projects move away from a 'deficit' model to one where children and families are helped to recognise that they have strengths, resilience and skills, as well as areas for development and improvement. This has been shown to help improve parents' relationships with school and increase their confidence as parents.
 - An appreciative approach may be reflected in language, for example Mounts Bay's decision to 'intervene' with rather than 'isolate' pupils following a behaviour incident.
 - It is also evident in *L2L*'s practice of seeking positive feedback from teachers about children, as well as information about problems.
 - *SWIFT*'s intervention encourages parents to recognise and develop their strengths and take responsibility as parents.
- **At whole school level,** success factors include: being prepared for the investment of time and effort required and willingness to make changes along the way; strong strategic-level support to champion the intervention; consistency of messaging and practice throughout the school; use of inset days, line management meetings and staff team meetings to reinforce staff roles in implementing the intervention; dedicated administration support to develop and manage databases and other information sharing systems; and sharing early examples of success across the school to help maintain momentum and enthusiasm.
- **With targeted approaches,** success factors include: working holistically with the child and family to address all relevant issues, by being linked into the wider infrastructure of support for a family; accessibility of project workers to establish a power dynamic that is different from the traditional teacher-parent relationship; regular communication and information sharing with schools; opportunities for school-based staff to observe and, where appropriate, co-deliver sessions with project workers in order to develop their practice and increase their confidence in working with children and young people with emotional and behavioural issues.
- **Individual and school-level impacts:** Targeted approaches have the capacity to translate into wider school-level benefits, for example, a change in the way schools understand and interpret children's behaviour, and fewer disrupted lessons.
 - This can be enabled through all-staff training and sharing of good practice from project workers to wider staff, as demonstrated in the *SWIFT* and *L2L* projects.

- It could also be useful to develop a more comprehensive and systematic plan for how individual-level outcomes will translate into school wide benefits. *SWIFT* has developed such a plan for the implementation of Family Group in future schools, which includes actions such as a contractual requirement for schools to release their staff for training.
- **The importance of early intervention:** timing is crucial to the effectiveness of the projects; schools have seen the value of addressing issues at an early stage before they reach crisis point, and all of the projects have made adjustments to intervene even earlier than initially planned.
 - For example, *Mounts Bay* decided to increase the focus on the earlier ‘stages’ of its intervention.
- **Exiting from targeted support:** Careful consideration of how children and families exit the project is important to sustaining impacts. Depending on the needs of the children and families involved, the exit may need to be different for different children/families, as the improvement trajectory cannot be assumed to be linear.
 - For example, *L2L* has responded to this need by establishing therapeutic spaces in two of the participating primary schools, where children who have finished attending interventions at the project’s main site (the Nest) can go as part of a phased step-down.
 - *SWIFT* has set up a Graduate Group where parents can access peer support, once they have left Family Group.

Learning around evaluation

- **Benefits of joint evaluation:** While the three interventions were different and individual, they had a common aim (to reduce truancy and exclusion) and some similarities in their approaches. Through joint meetings, the evaluation provided opportunities for project staff to establish relationships, learn from each other and apply some of this learning to their own project.

1. Introduction

In March 2011, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) commissioned the Office for Public Management (OPM) to conduct an evaluation of three therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusions and truancy. The three projects were funded by PHF's Open Grants scheme. The interventions included in the evaluation are:

- Mounts Bay School's Care Guidance Support Stages (CGSS)
- Services working in Feltham and Hanworth Together (SWIFT) working with The School and Family Works to deliver Multi-Family Therapy Groups
- Teignmouth Community School's Learning 2 Learn project

We conducted the evaluation in three main phases:

1. A scoping phase, from April 2011 until August 2011
2. Year 1 of the evaluation, from September 2011 to July 2012
3. Year 2 of the evaluation, from September 2012 to July 2013

A report was produced at the end of Year 1³.

This is our final report and sets out the findings of the evaluation across Years 1 and 2.

1.1 Evaluation aims

The evaluation has three aims:

- To assess the **impact** of the three projects through measuring i) outcomes for participating children and young people; ii) school level outcomes, including but not limited to truancy and exclusion; iii) outcomes for the wider community (where appropriate); and iv) success in replicating the practice/models successfully in other schools (where appropriate)
- Facilitate **learning and develop recommendations** that help to improve and enhance the projects to maximise their impact
- Generate **knowledge and recommendations, if appropriate, for the wider school sector** about effective approaches to preventing school exclusion and truancy and/or improving pupil wellbeing and other key outcomes.

As the three projects are delivering quite different interventions, our intention was not to compare them, but to generate common learning across projects that will be of interest to the wider sector.

1.2 Evaluation methods

Likewise, our methods were tailored to each project. As SWIFT works intensively with a small number of families over a period of many months, we undertook in-depth case studies with 6 families in each of Year 1 and Year 2, visiting them at two points in time over the

³ Available on the Paul Hamlyn Foundation website at <http://phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=766>. Accessed 24.05.13

course of the year. With Learning 2 Learn and Mounts Bay's Care Guidance Support Stages, which are targeted at a wider range of children and young people, we undertook one-off interviews and focus groups with a wider range of stakeholders, in both Years 1 and 2. Quantitative data on attendance and exclusions was obtained from schools participating in each project. Two considerations informed our choice of methods.

1. Attribution of project impact

Directly attributing the impact of a project on truancy, exclusion and behaviour becomes increasingly challenging the more we move from a targeted approach (for example, SWIFT) to a whole school approach (for example, Mounts Bay). Isolating the specific change mechanisms that have led to particular impacts is extremely challenging, and would require a complex evaluation design. With projects working at the whole school level, it is therefore essential to identify the other possible contributing factors, to avoid the possibility of over-claiming positive impacts and successes.

2. Limitations of quantitative data as an indicator

The stated aim of the three projects is to reduce truancy and school exclusions; data on attendance levels and on the numbers of exclusions that have taken place in the schools concerned is therefore a key indicator for the evaluation.

However, it is important to be aware of the limitations of this type of data in terms of what it tells us about the impact of the interventions. There are a number of reasons that this kind of quantitative data is not, by itself, a comprehensive indicator of impact and does not capture other types of impacts which are important, such as those around wellbeing, relationships and learning.

For example, in relation to **exclusion data**, a child who may or may not have been excluded might have left the school for another reason, such as the family moving out of the area. Schools may avoid recording a child's departure from the school as an 'exclusion', by instead arranging a 'managed transfer'. Schools may have no choice but to exclude a child even where they have been making good progress, because this progress may not occur in a consistent upward direction – for example, a serious incident may occur during a period where the child is under stress and experiencing a 'bad patch' even in the context of an overall improvement.

In relation to **attendance data**, there can also be reasons that data may not be a useful indicator of outcomes. For example, many children who are experiencing problems at school do not have poor attendance to start with, so there is no scope for improvement on that indicator. There are also instances in which having started the intervention, there is no immediate improvement in attendance because it takes time for this impact to be realised; or they may initially improve, and then experience setbacks in relation to specific challenging circumstances.

We do not suggest that any of these issues necessarily apply to any of the children or schools involved in these projects; simply that they are possible scenarios and that for this reason, it is essential to consider other sources of data in order to give a broader picture, and understanding, of impact. In this evaluation **qualitative impact data has offered a richer picture of the effectiveness of the interventions than quantitative data alone**, and enabled a deeper and more useful understanding of the mechanisms that bring about impacts.

A detailed description of our methods is provided in Appendix 1.

1.3 This report

We have used a common structure for reporting our findings on the three projects, however differences in the way that evaluation data was collected, and the types of monitoring data that projects themselves have collected, mean that the chapters on each project are slightly different. Please note the following when reading this report:

- the term 'parent' has been used throughout the report to refer to a child's main caregiver
- all names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

The remainder of this report is set out as follows:

- Chapter 2: Key findings from the scoping phase
- Chapter 3: Policy context update
- Chapter 4: Mounts Bay School, Care Guidance Support Stages
- Chapter 5: SWIFT, Family Groups
- Chapter 6: Teignmouth Community School, Learning 2 Learn,
- Chapter 7: Conclusions and cross-cutting learning

2. Key findings from the scoping phase

This chapter provides a brief reminder of the key findings from the scoping phase which helped shaped the design of our fieldwork tools, and guided our interpretation and presentation of the findings.

2.1 Our conceptual framework

As part of the scoping phase, we produced an individual Pathways to Outcomes model for each project, which we examined to identify any commonalities across projects. Whilst the three projects are quite different in nature, our analysis revealed some commonalities in terms of inputs and outputs as well as a common aim to transform different sets of relationships. The generic Pathways to Outcomes model is presented in Figure 1.

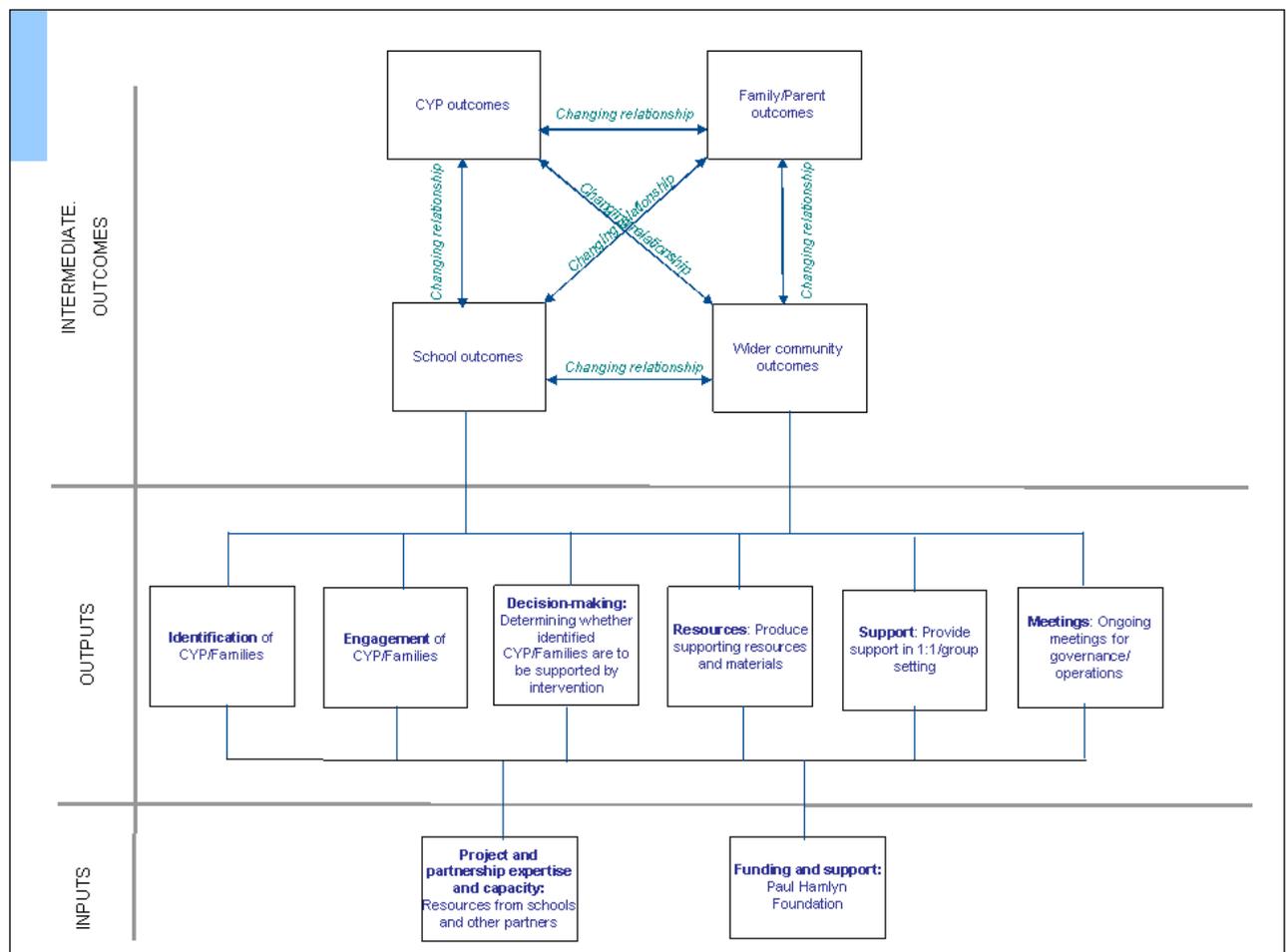


Figure 1: Generic Pathways to Outcomes model

In our fieldwork, we sought to explore projects' impact on individual stakeholder groups (children and young people, families, school-based staff, wider community etc), as well as the relationships between these different groups. We also explored project delivery in terms of the different outputs described in the model, for example, how children/families are identified and the kinds of support provided.

2.2 Understanding the factors which facilitate positive outcomes

Our evaluation is concerned not only with identifying impacts, but exploring the factors which have helped, or conversely hindered, projects in achieving their aims. Our evidence review indicated that there may be five groups of 'enabling factors' underpinning projects' success at bringing about positive outcomes. These are:

- **Project planning and set up** for example, awareness of intervention, perceived benefits, staff buy in and involvement,
- **Operating environment** for example, leadership support, shared vision, integration with other aspects of the school
- **Intervention characteristics** for example, fidelity to original design (if evidence based intervention), adaptability, innovation
- **Implementer characteristics** for example, skills, experience and behaviours of those involved in delivering the intervention
- **Support systems** for example, structure and content of training, support and supervision of those delivering in the intervention.

In our fieldwork we explored the combination of enabling factors underpinning each project, however we were not restricted to those identified above.

3. Policy context update

This chapter provides a brief update since the previous report on the changing policy landscape around education, behaviour, attendance and mental health.

3.1 Education, behaviour and attendance

Last year witnessed a consolidation of education policies as the coalition government embarked on a mission to raise attainment levels across the board. The drive for more academies and free schools, as well as the introduction of a pupil premium and the establishment of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), were billed as major steps towards the achievement of greater social mobility⁴. In addition to this, serious attention was devoted to behaviour management with heads and teachers acquiring more power to ensure discipline in the classroom and promote good behaviour^{5 6}.

Over the most recent academic year, the coalition government's key educational policies have evolved along a similar path. Combating truancy remains a key priority and stricter guidelines have been issued in relation to parental responsibility for school attendance. In early September 2012 local authority powers to prosecute parents who fail to secure their children's regular attendance at school were extended to include cases where a young person is failing to attend alternative provision. As such, parents are now legally responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age attend the alternative provision arranged for them⁷.

Improving provision for those children who are considered too 'unruly' to remain in a mainstream classroom environment has been a major policy focus over the last 12 months⁸. In November 2012, the government's expert adviser on behaviour, Charlie Taylor, published a review of alternative provision⁹. This was followed shortly after by statutory guidance on the matter from the Department for Education (DfE) which emphasised that it is the responsibility of each local authority to arrange suitable education for permanently excluded pupils and

⁴ The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is geared at raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in England over the next 15 years through funding a range of different projects.

⁵ Accessed on 24.05.12 <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f0076882/ensuring-good-behaviour-in-schools/powers-to-discipline>

⁶ Accessed on 24.05.12 <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/u/use%20of%20reasonable%20force%20%20%20advice%20for%20headteachers%20staff%20and%20governing%20bodies.pdf>

⁷ Accessed 21.05.13 <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/a00213512/la-prosecution-power>

⁸ Accessed 21.05.13 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/some-pupils-too-unruly-for-school-says-governments-behaviour-tsar-charlie-taylor-7893049.html>

⁹ Accessed 21.05.13 <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/b00204776/taylor-review-of-alternative-provision>

condoned the practice of directing students off-site for education in order to help improve their behaviour¹⁰.

The Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Troubled Families programme has now been in operation for over a year¹¹. Recently released figures show that by the end of the first year of the three year payment-by-results scheme more than 35,000 'troubled families' were being worked with¹². From the outset, one of the key objectives behind the programme has been to get children back into school and reduce youth crime and anti social behaviour¹³. DCLG has specified that intensive, wrap around family support should be offered to targeted families¹⁴. The prescribed approach includes dealing with each family's problems as a whole rather than responding to each problem, or person, separately and using a mix of methods that support families and challenge poor behaviour. Correspondingly, a significant amount of attention has recently been devoted to evaluating the effectiveness of family intervention services and projects. An evaluation report produced last year by the National Centre for Social Research examined the trajectory of all families had who had been referred to an intervention between February 2007 and March 2011¹⁵. The findings offered support for the government's approach by highlighting the many positive consequences of intensive interventions, such as the fact that 57 per cent of the families completing an intervention during this period were reported to have experienced a successful outcome in the area of truancy, exclusion or bad behaviour at school. In December 2012 the Troubled Families team built on this evidence base by publishing a report which scrutinised the academic evidence underpinning family intervention techniques. It drew attention to the importance of building and supporting a highly skilled family intervention workforce and reinforced the potential for this particular approach to succeed where numerous interventions and services have failed in the past¹⁶.

3.2 Mental health in schools

In 2012, the final report of the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) evaluation was published. TaMHS was a large-scale national evaluation using a randomised controlled design and was of key interest during the scoping phase of this evaluation.

¹⁰ Accessed 21.05.13: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/g00211923/alternative-provision>

¹¹ Accessed on 28.06.2012: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/troubledfamilies/>

¹² Accessed on 22.05.2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/eric-pickles-hails-progress-in-troubled-families-programmes>

¹³ Accessed on 22.05.2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-troubled-families-turn-their-lives-around>

¹⁴ Accessed on 22.05.2013: <http://www.familyaction.org.uk/uploads/documents/Whats%20needed%20to%20deliver%20outcomes%20on%20school%20attendance.pdf>

¹⁵ Accessed on 22.05.2013: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184031/DFE-RR174.pdf

¹⁶ Accessed on 22.05.2013: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/66113/121214_Working_with_troubled_families_FINAL_v2.pdf

The TaMHS evaluation report corroborated the findings of Graham Allen's 2011 report¹⁷ by suggesting that it makes sense to prioritise mental health work with primary school pupils, to avoid problems becoming entrenched¹⁸. Shortly after, in July 2012, the government published plans for implementing its *No health without mental health* strategy¹⁹. The framework sets out how employers, schools, businesses, local authorities, housing organisations, voluntary groups and care organisations can promote good mental health. In the case of schools, the report found that '*Good schools and colleges develop the right skills, behaviour and support all children and young people's wellbeing.*' Suggestions for realising such a culture included schools taking steps to:

- Understand links between emotional wellbeing and good educational/wider outcomes
- Have a 'whole school' approach to supporting all pupils' wellbeing and resilience
- Address bullying
- Ensure staff are aware of how mental health relates to their work.

This year the government has identified making mental health services more effective and accessible as a key policy priority²⁰. This includes a commitment to conduct a review of health visiting and school nursing services. The emphasis will be on making sure that staff have the right training to identify and help parents, children and young people with mental health problems. The Department of Health has also pledged to develop a new online service to provide guidance and training on child mental health for teachers, police, health professionals and other people working with children by 2014, which will be produced in collaboration with the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#), [Royal College of Psychiatrists](#), [National Children's Bureau](#) and [Youngminds](#).

The following chapters present descriptive overviews of the three projects, identifying key changes that have happened over the course of the intervention, the extent of which varies from project to project. In each case, it is important to describe these changes clearly if we are to understand their impact.

Each chapter also discusses key findings in relation to impact on different groups, identifies key factors for and barriers to success, and makes recommendations for each project.

We start with Mounts Bay which takes a 'whole school approach'; move on to SWIFT which, in contrast, is a highly targeted intervention; before rounding up with Teignmouth, where the 'Learning 2 Learn' intervention is pitched at a level between 'whole school' and 'targeted'. Due to the diversity of the interventions and the different degree of specificity, the types of impact discussed and the extent to which they may be attributed directly to interventions vary.

¹⁷ Allen, G. (2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*. Cabinet Office: London.

¹⁸ Wolpert et al (2012) *Me and My School: Findings from the National Evaluation of Targeted Mental Health in School 2008 – 2011*, p 94- 95.

¹⁹ Accessed on 23.05.2013:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/156084/No-Health-Without-Mental-Health-Implementation-Framework-Report-accessible-version.pdf

²⁰ Accessed on 23.05.2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-mental-health-services-more-effective-and-accessible--2>

4. Mounts Bay, Care Guidance Support Stages

4.1 Summary of key findings

The project

The Care Guidance Support Stages (CGSS) is an approach to managing behaviour in schools which aims to identify pupils with behavioural issues as early as possible, and offer targeted support to address these issues. The system allows all members of staff to raise concerns about pupils so that they are picked up straightaway and a clear action plan put in place, and other pupils are identified through the school wide member of staff on call (MOSOC) behaviour management system.

The CGSS define different 'stages' of support (from levels 0 – 6) depending on the severity of a pupil's behavioural problems. It is designed to facilitate positive relationships and communication between pupils, schools and parents. The support is managed and delivered via the PHF-funded Intervention Coordinator who designs and trains Learning Support Managers (LSM) to deliver Skill Workshops, coordinates case study care plans, manages the externally funded Shifting Horizons Forest School learning programme, directly supports pupils and facilitates their access to other services. As such, the CGSS is a whole school intervention that tailors support depending on the nature of the individual pupil's situation.

Impacts

The impacts on individual pupils have been very varied as the CGSS lead to a tailored assessment and activity plan to meet the specific needs and issues of pupils. However, examples of intensive intervention include one pupil who was supported during bereavement with anger management sessions, which enabled him to manage his bad behaviour (driven by grief) to avoid exclusion. Another pupil was helped to find a new place to live following conflict at home, after which she greatly increased her levels of attendance at school. In other examples, pupils describe the way in which they have been supported to devise day to day strategies to better cope with school and home life.

Across the school as a whole, pupils have a greater sense of security because they know how to seek help when needed and, because there are tight systems in place to identify problems at an early stage, issues are less likely to escalate. Parents report improved relationships with the school, including better communication due to early involvement, and LSMs suggest that parents are seeking them as a first point of contact rather than stretched senior staff in the first instance. For the school, the introduction of the CGSS and the Intervention Coordinator has freed up senior staff capacity to focus more on strategic leadership and for junior teachers to focus more on lesson plans and day to day teaching.

Facilitators to success

Key to the success of the CGSS is a rigorous administration and communication process, led by a Programme Administration Lead which ensures that staff have access to the information on pupils that is needed to implement appropriate support. A second key success factor is the role of the PHF-funded Intervention Coordinator, who has the necessary skills, experience and connections to work with vulnerable children, who has designed a suite of workshop materials and who manages relevant outside agencies to ensure that pupils' problems can be addressed holistically. Thirdly, the CGSS has benefited by year on year tweaks to MOSOC and other referral structures that identify pupils who require additional

support, finding an appropriate balance between a punitive and supportive approach to behavioural problems. Finally effective leadership and communications around the CGSS system, as well as having the time to adapt and tweak the programme over two years of delivery, has helped to embed it into the school routine and culture. One marker of success will be that the system becomes so embedded into the school culture that it sustains itself, even without the intervention of the PHF-funded staff member currently overseeing it.

Recommendations

The CGSS is an evolving system and it continues to be refined and embedded into the everyday life of the Mounts Bay, with the aim of underpinning a positive whole school culture around addressing behavioural issues. Our recommendation for project leads is to continue this work and look for opportunities to embed the system further, for example inductions for new teachers and by streamlining and tweaking CGSS systems. A second suggestion for the project is the review and streamlining of data management systems, which will help the future sustainability of the programme and enable rich analysis of all the data collected as part of the CGSS process. Finally, the CGSS would benefit from formally incorporating a positive feedback loop into the system, by encouraging teachers to reflect on the impact of the CGSS, to share positive feedback with individual pupils and their parents, and disseminate strong positive messages out into the community.

4.2 Project overview

In September 2011, Mounts Bay secondary school in Penzance introduced a new approach to managing in-school pupil behaviour. The approach is called the Care Guidance Support Stages (CGSS). The primary aim of the CGSS is to identify pupils with behavioural and other issues at an early point in their school career and to provide them with targeted support to prevent them from reaching the point of exclusion. The school has a large intake of children from some of the most challenging estates in the area and, whilst the school is oversubscribed and its performance is strong, it aims to reduce the overall number of short and fixed term pupil exclusions that occur each year whilst maintaining or improving academic performance of the most vulnerable pupils.

Other aims of the CGSS include:

- **Pupils** – will feel relaxed and supported because they know who they can speak to and ask questions to. They will feel in control of their behaviour and school careers. They will be encouraged to identify key underlying drivers of their behaviours and to embrace the referral plan put in place to create positive change. The ultimate outcomes of the programme – beyond decreasing school exclusions whilst maintaining academic levels of performance – meet with the broader objectives of the school, namely creating a generation of mature, resilient, fulfilled and confident pupils with a clear and positive future trajectory.
- **School** – the school will have a positive learning atmosphere where teachers feel prepared and supported to encourage pupils, and discipline them when appropriate, and where pupils feel in control of their studies. It will help standardise teacher approaches to discipline and free up time of Directors of Progress (Heads of Year) who are involved with intensive parent liaison.
- **Parents** – parents will feel they have a voice and a say in their child's schooling, and the school will be repositioned as a partner in care of their child and leading their academic

performance. Parents will want to approach the teaching staff member who has the most contact with their child – namely Learning Support Managers and Form Tutors – and work with the school to support their children.

- **Community** – as well as improving the reputation of the school in the local area and encouraging the local community to use the sports facilities offered by the school, Mounts Bay aims to influence Cornwall local authority as well as influencing government policy and thinking in the areas of behaviour and early intervention.

Underpinning these stakeholder group aims is the desire to change relationships between them. As such, the project aims to strengthen relationships between the school, teachers, parents, pupils and the local community by introducing an overall system that opens up channels of communication between them and which focuses on positive, relevant actions rather than being framed in negative terms of discipline.

The principles of the CGSS stages, as outlined above, have remained in place throughout the two years of the project. What has been tweaked however, between Year 1 and Year 2, are the processes by which pupils are identified to join and the ways they are supported through the stages, as described in more detail below.

Understanding the CGSS in more detail

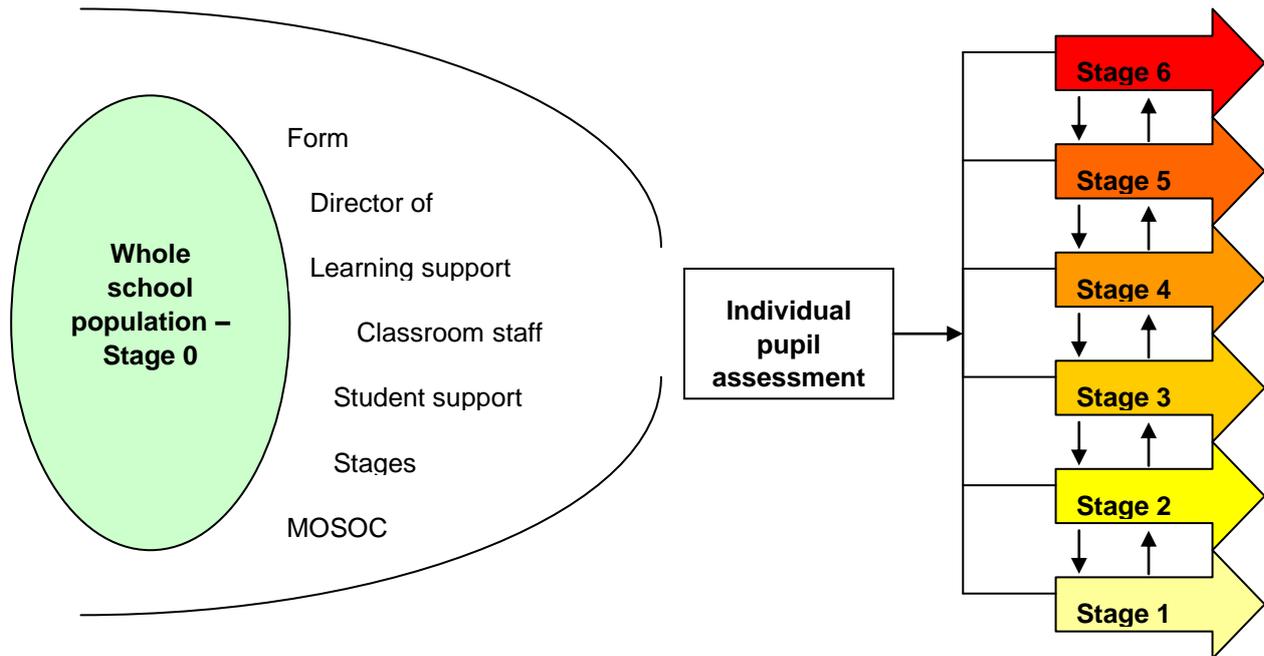
Identifying pupils for the stages

The CGSS stages provide a clear process by which teaching staff can identify problematic or worrying behaviours in pupils from across the whole school population on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Pupils can either be referred by any staff member or picked up by the member of staff on call (MOSOC), a system led by Learning Support Managers (LSM) who are called into classes to respond to specific issues or incidents, or identified through services outside of the school. These routes are described in more detail below:

- More minor issues - such as being disruptive in class, an increase in late attendance or incomplete homework – might bring the pupil to the attention of one of their subject teachers or Form Tutors. Any member of staff can fill out an Initial Concerns sheet which will go to a tutor for them to put the pupil on a stage and report to the Director of Progress.
- Pupils picked up through MOSOC are taken to an isolation room to reflect on their behaviour, before a ‘shakedown’ in the intervention room. The shakedown allows pupils to be reprimanded for their behaviour as well as explore the reasons behind the behaviour so as to identify appropriate and targeted support in response.
- If the pupil has more serious behavioural issues - or is brought to the attention of staff as being at risk in the home (through referral agencies or other means) - they can be placed immediately at a higher stage. In this way, the CGSS are not just there to pick up on behavioural issues, but also act as a way to highlight and address broader concerns.

The following diagram shows how this identification and placement process is a whole school intervention, involving all pupils and all teachers.

The identification process



The process and description of what happens at each stage is described in more detail below, as well as a short overview of the PHF-funded role of Intervention Coordinator.

The role of the Intervention Coordinator

The Intervention Coordinator, a post funded directly through PHF funding, is responsible for managing the overall process of the CGSS intervention, alongside the school-based Stage Lead. This role is described in more detail later in the report, but key aspects include:

- designing and launching the workshops run in the Skills Workshop, working closely with the LSM staff
- holding Common Assessment Framework (CAF) sessions with at-risk pupils, asking them to 'rate' different areas of their lives, and using this to understand where the issues lie
- arranging regular one-on-one sessions to discuss these issues and monitor the pupil's progress, or contract external agencies or services to run therapeutic sessions, such as art therapy or anger management
- booking pupils onto and managing the Shifting Horizons Forest School leaders programme, which has been trialled for the first time in the academic year 2012/13
- coordinating paperwork with the Administration Lead.

The Intervention Coordinator is a pivotal role within the CGSS structure. However, the longer term aim of the CGSS is that it becomes embedded within the school culture, so much so that the system is sustained in the future without the need for the dedicated staff member.

The journey through the CGSS in more detail

Each of the CGSS stages includes a range of indicators to help decide where pupils best fit in the model, and a set of 'consequences' which clearly explain which actions will trigger which response. Working with the Administration Lead, and according to the referral route, the pupil is placed onto a stage from 1 to 6, depending on the nature of the issue (which in turn implies that the broader school body sits at stage 0). The CGSS outline a relationship between the stage and the level of perceived risk: in other words, the higher the stage, the

more severe the behavioural issue. Therefore, the stage on which the pupil is placed will influence the specific activity plan which is drawn up.

For all stages, pupils are logged on a database and assigned to a relevant Skills Workshop: a short, targeted session with the LSMs, based in the Skills Centre. The individual pupil is notified that they are 'on report', although they might not be made aware of the specific 'stage' on which they have been placed. They are asked to work with their tutor (at Stage 1) or Director of Progress (at Stage 2) to create targets to address their key issue - such as improving attendance or punctuality.

These activity plans are shared between the pupil and relevant teaching staff, and provide a means by which to monitor the progress of the pupils against their targets. After a prescribed period of time, or after each Skills Workshop, the pupil's behaviour is reassessed. If it has improved, they will drop down a stage, or even step out of the process altogether, into Stage 0. If it does not improve, or if further needs are identified, they may stay on the same stage and be assigned to another Skills Workshop. If their behaviour declines or their situation worsens, they may be moved up a stage or more, once the full range of actions and activities designed for that stage has been completed.

Stage 3 of the CGSS triggers a full diagnostic assessment led by the Intervention Coordinator. This member of staff looks at what has already been tried, and considers which pathway to try next, from the following options:

- Behavioural issues are allocated to the Stage Lead
- Learning issues are allocated to the Special Educational Need (SEN) Lead
- Personal issues are allocated to the Student Support Lead.

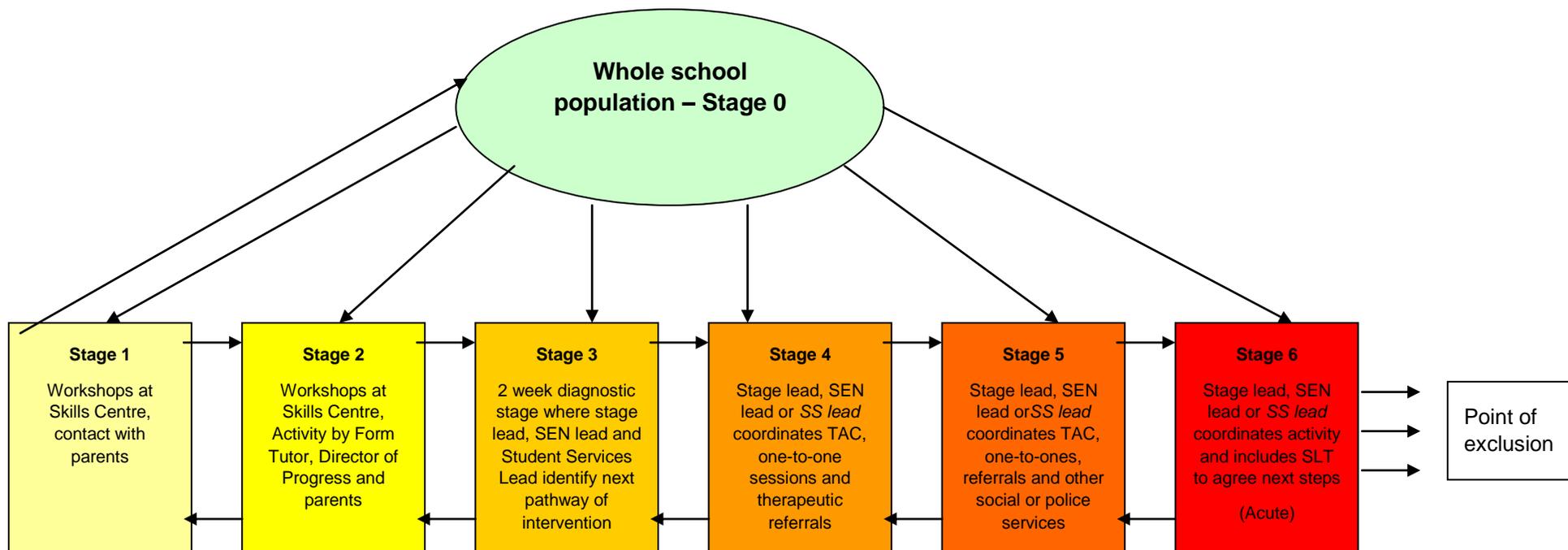
Often a pupil will have issues that span these three areas. All three leads meet each week to discuss their cases, and to decide how and where they need to work together to best meet the needs of the young people as they occur. For more complicated cases, the Intervention Coordinator manages the activity plans. Form Tutors and Directors of Progress are updated daily on all of this activity and are brought in as and when needed, depending on the issue.

The higher the pupil travels up the stages, the more at risk they become of reaching the point of permanent exclusion. This happens at the assessment point after Stage 6. One of the key benefits of this model is not only that it presents a systematic way to address issues before they reach Stage 6, but also that should a pupil reach that point there is a detailed audit trail which describes the exact forms of behavioural problems as well as the exact nature of the interventions designed to address them. This means that any decisions to exclude pupils – or not - are based on the best available evidence.

The pathways through the CGSS are presented in the diagram on the next page.

Pathways through the six stages

The following diagram describes the journey throughout the stages, and the different activity plans which might be introduced at particular levels. After Stage 1 assessment a pupil might be directed out of the process and back into the whole school. After Stage 6, a pupil might reach the point of exclusion - but only after considerable efforts to try and avoid this.



As already described, the Intervention Coordinator (known in Year 1 of the evaluation as Student Support Lead) is the post funded by the PHF monies. The role is described in more detail later.

Numbers of pupils engaged in the stages over the two years

At the time of writing, in Year 2 of the evaluation (academic year 2012/13) 217 pupils across all years have been involved with one or more of the stages at some point over the year. This is out of a total roll of 913 students, and equates to nearly 24% of all pupils.

This compares with 151 pupils in Year 1 of the evaluation (academic year 2011/12) out of a total roll of 908, which equates to nearly 16% of all pupils.

Resources and materials to support the intervention

Interviewees in all roles agreed that this type of school wide intervention could not run without a coherent and rigorous administration system underpinning each activity. The CGSS are reliant on the resource provided by the PHF-funded Intervention Coordinator but the school has also produced a number of resources and materials to lead to streamline the overall process. These materials include:

- Initial concern forms for any school staff members that pick up an issue
- MOSOC paperwork for the MOSOC call out and follow up
- Shakedown check list
- The Isolation and Intervention rooms
- 8 Skills Workshop packages and the Skills Centre room
- Detailed case templates, to be filled out by the person managing the case
- Communications to staff, to launch and embed the process
- Daily packs for Directors of Progress, detailing issues with each child in their year group
- Weekly meetings for the Stage Lead, SEN Lead and Student Support Lead
- Leadership meetings between the Strategic Lead and the Stage Lead to make sure the system runs smoothly.

As already stated, the long term aim is for the GCSS is that it is a process that becomes embedded within the school so that it can run 'organically' and without the need for dedicated support from the Intervention Coordinator or other staff member.

It is also worth noting that the Administration Lead is responsible for managing the administration around the CGSS, logging the journeys of pupils as they move through the CGSS and collating and reporting on data. This role is not funded through PHF monies but is crucial to the success of the project. Additionally, this list is exclusive of meetings to ensure that additional conversations are happening around each pupil.

Freeing up the capacity of school leaders/teaching staff

While PHF funding directly funds the role of the Intervention Coordinator, it is very important to acknowledge that the funding of this role has also had positive knock on effects in the school by increasing capacity of the Student Services Team. The role has freed up the time of key leaders to spend on designing, refining and quality assuring the stage system, so that there is maximum benefit and measured outcomes. Without this funded role, the day to day as well as strategic management of the process would have had to be undertaken by the leaders, so it is likely that the system would not have been so well developed or embedded, or other aspects of school delivery would have suffered as a result.

4.3 Project evolution

As the CGSS came into effect in 2011, so did a number of wider, structural changes to Mounts Bay School. Furthermore, the CGSS itself has evolved over the two year evaluation period, as it has been tweaked in order to become more embedded and streamlined in school. This section reviews some of the ways the project has landed in a changing school and how it has evolved over the two year period.

Major changes to the overall running and structure of the school

Mounts Bay School, previously a specialist sport college, was converted into an academy in September 2011, at the same point that the CGSS were formally launched. Mounts Bay had previously moved to 100 minute classes three times per day and recently changed from three terms to four semesters per year, which each lasts nine weeks. Some teaching staff had their role names changed to reflect the transition, for example Heads of Year are now known as Directors of Progress, and Key Workers (Higher level Teaching Assistants allocated to each year group) are now Learning Support Managers – each managing a small team of teaching assistants.

The first week of each semester is set up as an academic diagnostic week with evaluations and further assessments occurring in weeks six to eight. This means there is the same routine for pupils in school each week, and the new routine incorporates regular feedback slots to parents and meetings for staff. In 2011 Mounts Bay was one of the first schools in the country to give each pupil an iPad to help their in-class access to learning. In addition to these structural changes to the school set up and delivery, Mounts Bay has also begun to advertise their Child Protection Team more publicly in school to the students. Parents have also been given staff email addresses, to encourage a new means of two-way communication.

Changes to MOSOC process

Linked into the launch of the stages is the way in which attitudes to punishment and discipline have changed within the school. In the academic year 2010/11 for example, senior teachers took it in turns to be the member of staff on call (MOSOC). Any pupil picked up MOSOC was put into an 'isolation room'. They were left alone, in silence, for the remainder of the class and then put into detention.

From 2011/12, LSM staff became responsible for MOSOC calls, although the process which they follow has changed year on year. In 2011/12, LSM staff took MOSOC pupils to the 'intervention room'. They talked with the pupil to understand what had happened to lead to the call and the triggers that led to such behaviour. They usually returned the pupil to the classroom to meet with the teacher or pupil who was involved in the incident, and try to resolve the problem straightaway. These incidents were filed and later picked up by the Director of Progress. This could lead to a change of stage, or to specific actions to address the issue.

The MOSOC process was tweaked between the first and second years of the CGSS as the strategic staff reflected on the new process. There are a number of reasons why the senior management team decided to review and change the process including:

- Whilst the system was preventing the escalation of call-out incidents, the numbers of call-outs were just as frequent as before. This suggests the system was not acting as a deterrent to bad behaviour in the first place

- Students were learning how to 'manage' the system for example, they knew that if they caused disruption in class, they could say 'the right things' to the MOSOC and be let back in
- The school needed to introduce a process of 'due care' regarding iPad usage
- Opportunity to reiterate that whilst the school adopts the Child Protection arch – from universal service to unmet, complex and acute needs – its primary function is the focus on teaching, learning and the curriculum.

To reflect these findings, the new MOSOC process takes the pupil firstly to the isolation room for them to reflect on what happened, before going to the intervention room for a 'shakedown', led by the LSM. The 'shakedown' is a check list for LSM staff to check a range of student indicators, from iPad usage to handwriting skills. The LSM contacts the parent to explain what has happened which is followed up by a letter home from the Administration Lead. However, through this shakedown process, the LSM is able to ask a range of questions to understand the triggers behind the behaviour that led to the MOSOC call and identify areas where the pupil might need additional support, before booking the pupil onto a relevant workshop. As the administration lead is based in the intervention room, the shakedown and follow up action is immediately logged.

As such, the major change between Year 1 and Year 2 is that the MOSOC intervention now includes a clear punitive element, before assessing and addressing the support needs of the pupil. This new process means that:

- students understand that if they disrupt the class they will be automatically sent to the Isolation room as a point of punishment
- the shakedown provides an opportunity to review iPad usage
- the Administration Lead has direct links with the system which makes it easier to complete and monitor paperwork
- the Form Tutor is engaged in the first instance and can discuss with their Director of Progress about the next steps.

Changes to the PHF-funded role and approach

For the first year of the project, Mounts Bay employed an ex-Connexions worker in the PHF-funded role of Student Support Lead. The staff member had previously worked in the school before taking up the PHF-funded post. Her main responsibilities included working with problem children, leading the Team around the Child (TAC) meetings, managing referrals and case file administration.

Mounts Bay reviewed the role for the second year of the project and recruited a new person for a revised Intervention Coordinator role. This successful candidate has previous experience working in challenging schools across the country and most recently worked as manager of Penzance's PRU unit. As such, the Intervention Coordinator has in-depth understanding of how to work with challenging young people and knowledge of relevant systems, and recognises the value of early intervention in preventing exclusions.

The Intervention Coordinator designed the suite of Skills Workshops and trained two LSMs to deliver these in the Skills Centre. As any pupil can be assigned to a Skills Workshop, this is a way in which her work is directly affecting the whole school, as well as the young people who have been placed at Stages 3 and above. For these young people, the Intervention Coordinator manages the TAC process and assigns targeted support, described in more detail below.

Changes to the tools on offer through the intervention

In the first year of the project, the initial meeting between the pupil and Student Support Lead usually started with a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) session – a tool which the Student Support Lead suggested was a helpful way, particularly for younger pupils, to talk through their emotions. From this session, the Student Support Lead tailored the next steps, which could include any of the range of activities below:²¹

In school provision

- A CAF session to identify the specific areas that are causing problems in a pupil's life and to underpin the activity plan
- Counselling with the Student Support Lead, for example support around bereavement, bullying and mental health issues
- One-to-one support with the Stage lead (for behavioural issues) or SEN lead (for learning needs)
- Other personal support from the Student Support Lead including further education applications and access to housing
- Advocacy work by the Student Support Lead on behalf of the pupil, whether with specific teachers, social services or during family conferences with parents
- Internal mentoring sessions with other staff members
- Use of alternative education programmes like Freestyle – aimed at boosting self confidence and development and vocational skills.

External provision

- Referral to Dreadnaught or other organisations which provide anger management counselling
- Referral to SHARE, a local youth service organisation which offer external mentoring;
- Referral to Arts therapy sessions
- Referral to Trelia, a youth club organisation which works with children and young people with some disadvantage
- Use of the local authority Locality team, to access a package of support including a family support worker and targeted youth support worker
- Use of a family information service directory with development opportunities from army cadetships to different clubs and activities
- Use of work experience, putting young people into local placements.

In Year 1, project staff agreed that they would like to access more external provision, but that this was not possible due to funding limitations. The PHF grant funded the Student Support role but does not cover access of other external interventions. Further, the change to Academy status means that some resources, which were previously free to it as a state school, now come with a charge.

²¹ This list excludes the broader range of activities led by the School Support Lead, including the coordination of and communications with the Team around the Child (TAC), all of which underpin and systematise the CGSS process.

In Year 2 of the evaluation, the changes in the PHF-funded role, from Student Support Lead to Intervention Coordinator, occurred alongside changes to the provision on offer for students assigned to the CGSS. Many of the options from Year 1 still remain, such as mentoring from staff members and one-to-one sessions with the Stage or SEN leads. However there are some changes to provision, including the Skills Workshops already discussed, where the following workshops are on offer for all pupils:

- iPad usage
- Self organisation
- Study Presentation
- Conduct
- Self Awareness and Self Management
- Study Skills
- Manners and Communication
- Futures and Health.

In addition to these workshops, Mounts Bay has access to the externally delivered Shifting Horizons Forest School leaders programme. This is a seven week programme where a small number of pupils are taken out of school for one afternoon a week, to the woods or the beach. They take part in games, art, music, bushcraft, foraging and cooking designed to develop their teamworking and social interaction skills. Whilst this programme is run in partnership with the National Trust and will be evaluated by a separate organisation, it presents a targeted and therapeutic intervention for pupils identified through the CGSS and it is managed in school by the Intervention Coordinator.

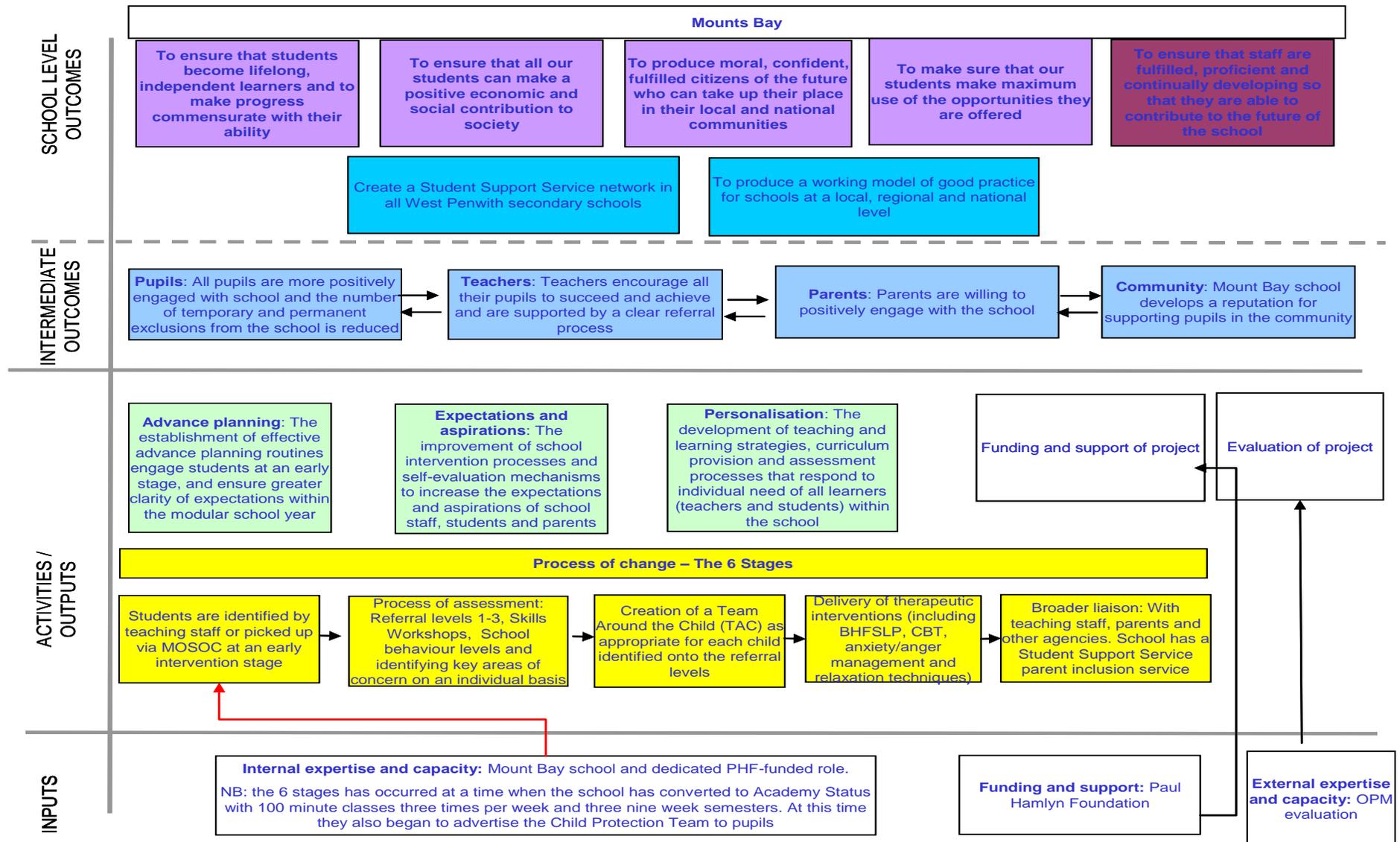
Impact of changes on the evaluation approach

All of these changes have had their own impacts upon the four key stakeholder groups, including pupils, teachers, parents and the broader community. From an evaluation perspective, the CGSS and PHF-funded staff roles must therefore be seen as part of this broader sweep of change. It is difficult to isolate the impacts which are the direct result of the CGSS and PHF funding alone.

However, as discussed in more detail in the impact section, the PHF-funded staff member works alongside and to complement the wider body of school staff. Their work embeds the CGSS which in turn, by streamlining behaviour management processes and designing tailored resources, frees up staff capacity to focus on other aspects of their work such as teaching. As such, the impact of the PHF-funded activities cannot be discussed in isolation from the overall impacts of the CGSS.

The project's logic model has been updated, by capturing these changes in the 'inputs' section. The remainder of this section aims to describe the impacts of the PHF funded intervention within the broader context of Mounts Bay School as opposed to a distinct and 'measurable' strand of activity.

Therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusion and truancy: evaluation of three contemporaneous projects



As the immediate and school level outcomes have, however, remained the same over the course of the evaluation, this model is based on revising or fleshing out many of the theories and assumptions contained in the scoping report. These are:

- That regulating the process around behavioural issues will enable teachers to identify issues at an earlier point and for pupils to have access to influence their own referral plan
- That pupils will feel supported as a result of their personalised intervention plan, and take ownership of their own development and progress
- That the early interventions will prevent a larger number of pupils from reaching the point of exclusion, as issues will be identified sooner and appropriate measures put in place to address the behavioural problems or other wider needs of the pupil
- That providing clear guidance around levels of behaviour will ensure more consistent practice across teachers, ensuring all teachers discipline and mentor the pupils appropriately. This will 'provide a support service to staff so they can do their jobs'
- That a dedicated Student Support Lead/Intervention Coordinator, with the SEN Lead, the Stage Lead and the Strategic Lead, will be able to coordinate all the different figures in a child's life at school including Directors of Progress, subject teachers, tutor teachers, learning support managers, key workers and other support staff, and so create a more coherent plan where fewer (if any) pupils can 'fall through the gap'
- That the teaching staff can learn from the relationships built between the LSM staff and parents and that a new personalised approach will encourage parents to reassess their attitudes towards and relationships with the school. As one staff member commented during the scoping phase, 'several key workers have first name contact with parents which personalises their contact'
- That the increased engagement of parents will encourage them to encourage their children to engage with school, leading to a future generation of children with more positive attitudes towards the school
- That the evidence trail of the 1-6 stage referral plans will support or undermine exclusions when and if they need to occur, rather than exclusions occurring or being rejected through insufficient evidence.

The next section of this report reviews the characteristics and changes to the Mounts Bay intervention and the implications this has on the impact of the project upon the individual pupils, teachers, parents and the wider school.

4.4 Impact

This section presents our findings on the impact of the CGSS. Whilst reading this section it is important to note that we spoke to a limited number of school staff, pupils and parents during the two main fieldwork visits and that there are many other recent changes in Mounts Bay that have also had an impact on the school. Furthermore, neither pupils nor parents are generally made aware of whether they or their children have been placed on a specific stage (although the Shifting Horizons Forest School leaders programme cohort are a definable group within the school), which can make it difficult to isolate change mechanisms specific to the CGSS.

Nonetheless, it is clear from these findings that the processes underpinning the CGSS have contributed to broad, positive change across the school.

Exclusion figures

The following table details the number of exclusion incidents per term or semester, from academic year 2008/09 to the 2012/13 academic year. These are not permanent exclusions but short fixed-term exclusions, where a pupil is not allowed to return to school for a certain number of days. There are a higher number of exclusions than pupils involved in them, which indicates that several pupils are responsible for more than one fixed term exclusion. Both the total number of exclusions and the total number of pupils involved in exclusions are shown in the table below.

The number of exclusion incidents and the number of pupils involved in the incidents have declined over the previous four academic years. Whilst the picture for the 2012/13 year is so far incomplete (meaning that there are still two months of figures to be included into the 2012/13 numbers), the figures provided for September 2012 – April 2013 suggest that the rate of exclusions have declined since the CGSS came into effect, and have broadly stabilised over the last two years.

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Total no. of incidents	153	45	69	27	27
Total no. of pupils involved	77	32	25	19	21
Total no. of pupils on roll	897	887	893	908	913
% incidents	17%	5%	3%	2.9%	NA
% pupils involved	8.6%	3.6%	2.8%	2%	NA

There were no permanent exclusions in 2008/09 or 2009/10, with one in 2010/11, two in 2011/12 and two in 2012/13. However, there are contextual reasons why pupils have been excluded over the previous two years, as they were part of a small number of pupils who joined Mounts Bay after being permanently excluded from a different local school. As such, it is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from the permanent exclusion numbers.

Impact on pupils

As already noted, one of the challenges of this evaluation is that the CGSS launched in school alongside significant other structural changes. The CGSS has been specifically designed to fit around the other changes and help to make these changes more coherent and impactful. However, this does mean it is difficult to isolate the change mechanisms that led to the specific impacts on pupils.

Further, pupils are not made aware that the stage system has replaced previous systems, or indeed if they are on the stages and if so, at what stage that they are at, as the CGSS is a tool for teachers, not pupils. This meant that asking pupils directly about the impact of the stages on them could be a challenge. Nonetheless, pupils that had been involved with the CGSS and those on the Shifting Horizons Forest School Leaders programme were able to describe the interventions they had experienced and the ways in which they had contributed to their engagement in school.

Personalised sessions with the PHF-funded staff member

For the pupils interviewed as part of the evaluation, many described their individual time with the PHF-funded staff member and the various ways they had worked together to identify the reasons behind their problems and to put tailored solutions in place. Interviewees in Year 2 of the evaluation in particular described the 'strategies' which they had learnt during these sessions to address their issues on a day to day basis, and how they are increasingly hopeful to a more successful and positive school career. The impact of the personalised activity plans driven by the PHF-funded staff member on pupils at Stage 3 and above is described in more detail below, through three vignettes taken from interviews in Year 1 of the evaluation. We have included these short vignettes as they demonstrate the specific ways in which the intervention responds to very specific issues.

Vignette 1

This vignette describes how the PHF-funded staff member in Year 1 of the evaluation (the Student Support Lead) supported Rosie²², a pupil in Year 11, to manage her anger and improve her attendance by acting as a single point of reference, providing specific and relevant support and referring to other services, and by keeping everybody around her updated with what she needs.

In November 2011, a child protection issue arose when Rosie had problems at home and had to move in with her grandmother. During this time, Rosie found it very difficult to concentrate at school. She felt very emotional and was distracted by thinking about the home situation all the time. She also had problems with anger, which had been going on since earlier in her time at the school, but which were worse during this crisis.

A teacher referred Rosie to meet with the Student Support Lead when her home problems worsened. The Student Support Lead referred Rosie to social services and worked with her closely on a one-to-one basis, as well as with her family, through a Family Group conference. As her grandmother has health problems which mean that Rosie cannot continue to stay with her, the Student Support Lead is helping her to find a new place to live after the summer.

²² All names have been replaced with pseudonyms and only contextual detail agreed with the pupil has been described in these case studies. This means that some information – such as their reason for being placed on a stage or other problems – might not be included in any of the case studies.

The lead also ensures that other school staff members are updated with Rosie's situation so they can help her achieve at school by setting long term goals and giving her extra support with her work.

Rosie has been helped enormously by Student Support Lead, who supports her both practically, by liaising with social care and attending meetings with her, and emotionally, by playing a counselling role. Rosie says that the Student Support Lead listens to her and understands her situation. Because the lead knows all the details, Rosie feels like she does not have to explain herself over and over again to different services. She can go to find the Student Support Lead or make an appointment to see her whenever she needs to talk:

'She's a good listener. I can get it all off my chest so it's not building up.' (Rosie)

Rosie likes the intervention room as a place that she can go to talk to Learning Support Managers if she has to leave a class. She says that the MOSOCs all know what she is dealing with, they are understanding and if they see her out of class they will let her go to see the Student Support Lead instead of sending her back to class or to be told off. She can have time to calm down, instead of things getting more heated and stressful.

Through the work with the Student Support Lead, Rosie has become better at managing her emotions. Although she is 'still working on it', she says she is now less likely to lash out – instead she will walk away from conflict and try to calm down. Her attendance has also improved recently. When she was having home problems, she would attend school only about three days a week and was not eating properly. Since living with her grandmother, she has felt more stable and attended school full time. Rosie now thinks that Mounts Bay 'is a very supportive school.'

Vignette 2

This vignette describes how the PHF-funded staff member in Year 1 of the evaluation arranged relevant therapies to support Chloe to deal with her emotions alongside broader liaison with services to improve the home situation.

Chloe is in Year 9, a high achieving student with ambitions to become a teacher in either music or creative arts. She began experiencing severe problems at home which made her very depressed, anxious and withdrawn and began to have a severe negative effect on her mental health and physical wellbeing. The Student Support Lead met with Chloe several times over a number of weeks:

'We talked it through, what was going on and troubling me. She gave me a booklet and some advice.... I would recommend her – she's cheered me up and helped me find ways to increase my self esteem through the tips and advice.' (Chloe)

Chloe was referred to arts therapy to help her find creative ways to deal with her feelings. She continued to meet with the Student Support Lead over several months to assess how she was feeling. She found the whole process helpful and a good opportunity to talk to someone other than friends. The Student Support Lead also coordinated activity between the team around Chloe including teachers, various social services and her family.

Now Chloe feels that she could approach her form tutor for support, conversation and one-to-one activities. She enjoyed the arts therapy which helped confirm her ambition to be a teacher, as well as building her confidence. Whilst Chloe is still experiencing problems at home she feels comforted that the Student Support Lead is working for her on her behalf. When asked whether her friends had noticed any change in her behaviour as a result of the support she had received from school, Chloe said:

'I like to think they do. I'm running around more with a smile on my face and laughing. I'm happy and it has helped me with my friends...Now I can stop worrying and start to forget. It's a nice feeling to forget and it takes my mind off it as well.' (Chloe)

Vignette 3

The following vignette describes how the PHF-funded staff member in Year 1 of the evaluation ensured that Tom, who was in Year 10, had appropriate support and advice from a range of teachers following the death of his mother. He is now planning for his future at college, rather than having had to be excluded due to his reaction to grief.

After Tom's mum died he found it very difficult to attend lessons: he was ok with being at school, but was not able to be in classes. The school agreed that he could spend time in the music room instead of lessons, and he gradually worked back up to attending all of his lessons over time. All of his teachers are aware of his situation, because the Learning Support Manager circulated his picture and explained that Tom should be allowed to leave a lesson if he needs to. He has a 'time out' card which he can show when he feels that he is not able to remain in class, so that he can go and find a key worker to talk about how he is feeling.

Tom is aware that school staff members are keeping a close eye on him, and is very happy with the support he has received from members of the Child Protection Team, the Learning Support Manager and the Student Support Lead. He says that all of them are very accessible and approachable and have given him an enormous amount of support; spending time with him so that he can talk about what he is going through, helping him to deal with his emotions so that he has been able to stay in school, attend all of his lessons, prepare for his GCSEs and plan for the future. Tom feels ready to leave school and embark on an apprenticeship, because he feels he has grown up a lot over the past year. But he has a lot of appreciation of the support he has received from the school:

'If it wasn't for the school I would have been kicked out by now.' (Tom)

Tom also observed that the atmosphere of the school had changed over the past year. He thought that the intervention room, where students can go when they have been removed from a classroom, was a big improvement on the previous 'isolation room'; in the intervention room, they can talk to a Learning Support Manager about what has happened and how it can be resolved, whereas in the isolation room they would simply be left to get on with some work. He thought there was less fighting in the school since the CGSS approach had been introduced, because the school was stricter.

Impact of the workshops

In Year 2, of the CGSS, the Intervention Coordinator designed 8 Skills Workshops as the starting point for all pupils referred onto the system. Once the pupil is signed up to the relevant workshop, they visit the Skills Centre to run through the session with one of the two LSMs stationed there. The LSMs open up each workshop by asking the pupil to fill out a workbook which asks them to explain how they are feeling across a range of school and home life indicators. This provides another way for LSMs to explore any broader issues that the child is facing and helps set the tone for a supportive, trusting relationship between them.

Once the workshop is complete the pupil is assessed to see whether there are any other workshops from which they could benefit and are either re-booked onto the system or formally discharged from the stages. As one LSM explained:

'The first thing they do is a referral booklet. They're not rushed to fill it out, they are asked to have a think about what they think and what they are about. They could come in with one workshop – it's an open door for another one. We're patient and listen. We keep the Year Head up to date, have links with the school nurse and Teaching Assistant contacts to keep an eye on certain subjects. Once they get into it, it opens lots of doors for listening and is a quiet place for them to come and do it.' (LSM)

The young people we spoke to describe a range of ways in which they benefitted from the Skills Workshops, in terms of learning strategies to cope with daily issues, and helping them build up strong, supportive relationships with their LSM. The following vignettes explore some of these stories, taken from interviews in Year 2 of the evaluation, and building on case studies already produced by the Intervention Coordinator.

Vignette 4

The following vignette describes how the new MOSOC and the CGSS Skills Workshop approach are working in a complementary way – by picking up the issues that are driving the poor behaviour and working to address them. Sherry, a pupil in Year 9, has seen dramatic improvements since engaging with the workshops and working with LSMs, leading to a wealth of positive feedback from her teachers.

Sherry was referred into the Skills Workshop when she was in Year 9, due to her poor conduct and aggressive verbal outburst in lessons. These were resulting in frequent MOSOC interventions. The 'shakedowns' highlighted that she was poorly organised. In the initial 1:1 referral session, and through completion of the workshop referral booklet, it became apparent that she had formed a very negative self-image that was impacting on her attitude to school and her academic progress. She was booked into six further workshops on activities from the Self Organisation, Self Awareness and Conduct Toolkits. These workshops have given her strategies to help manage her anger and focus on her positive qualities.

The outcome of this intervention was improved attendance, reduced frequency of MOSOC calls and an improved attitude to schoolwork. Sherry received four positive postcards home from subject teachers in the six weeks following the start of the intervention. The LSM also received an email during this period reporting that:

***'Sherry's work is improving and her recent test results are excellent. I don't know what has changed but I hope it continues!'* (School-based staff)**

Other recent comments from staff include:

***'Sherry contributes more in class discussion; makes more of an effort with class work; is generally very personable in English. She has improved a great deal. Polite, sensible and producing much better work.'* (School-based staff)**

***'Sherry is calmer this term, less argumentative, a lot more willing to get class work finished, a little bit more polite than before – small improvements all round.'* (School-based staff)**

***'Sherry's attitude to school in general has been a lot more positive. She is making a real effort to get to school on time and seems to be enjoying her time here a bit more.'* (School-based staff)**

Vignette 5

The following vignette describes the experiences of Aidan, Year 11, who was at the penultimate point before exclusion. It demonstrates how the Skills Workshop sparked a range of discussions with the Intervention Coordinator and senior management team (SMT), and how together they devised strategies to help Aidan cope with the trigger points to his bad behaviour. Not only have parents and friends noticed the change in his behaviour, Aidan is also looking forward to a positive future upon leaving Mounts Bay to start a college course.

Aidan, in Year 11, was rude to senior management and put on Stage 6 with a final warning. With a long record of behavioural issues he was told that it would only take one more incident for him to be excluded. While he was still angry, he didn't want to leave his friends, or education. Through the Intervention Coordinator, Aidan was assigned to an anger management course in the Skills Workshop. This helped structure discussions with his LSM and other members of the SMT to work out how he could stop issues from escalating in future.

'I did do anger management work in primary school but this time I did it with [the Intervention Coordinator] and, she helped go through the sheets. It's good, I get help, I appreciate it.' (Aidan)

As a lot of issues were happening at lunchtime the school agreed that he should go home for lunch and spend the rest of the time playing football. He was also allocated a mentor in the library, someone else he could turn to for support. Aidan commented on the range of different support he has experienced to prevent him from taking the next step into exclusion:

'Since then I've been no trouble... If I've a problem I go to Miss X [LSM] who has helped me to do something before I make it worse and Mr X [SMT] came up with a few strategies to help me. I thought it would be nice to see how it would work out. Now I go home at lunchtime – it is good to go home, I can chill out. With the mentor I go to them in free lessons and they help me catch up on work. If I've a problem I go to talk to her about it.' (Aidan)

The impact of this support has been noticed by Aidan's parents and friends who are also working hard to keep him in school:

'My mum and dad think it's good – I have school, friends and family all helping me. People like to wind me up and friends say to me to leave it. They keep me out of trouble. Mum and Dad used to keep me in at home to make sure I don't do it again. They say, don't do it.' (Aidan)

Aidan is now looking forward to completing the school year, and has positive plans for his future in college and continuing his love of football:

'I used to be a little troublemaker, now I keep my head down and focus on work. Then I'm out of here – I have an interview tomorrow for vehicle maintenance at college and with the football academy. These are my new plans.' (Aidan)

Impact of Shifting Horizons activity

Another change to the way the CGSS are delivered in Year 2 is through the Shifting Horizons Forest School Leaders programme. The Intervention Coordinator is responsible for identifying pupils who would benefit from the programme, in conjunction with input from teaching staff and reference to behavioural records, and for managing the overall process.

Initially, the Intervention Coordinator experienced some minor resistance from teachers who questioned why certain pupils were included and were being seemingly 'rewarded' for their bad behaviour by being taken out of school. However, the impact of the programme on these pupils is being felt: they are reporting increased self confidence and levels of maturity, and teachers are now recognising the benefits of the intervention.

Vignette 6

The following vignette describes the experience of a pupil on the Shifting Horizons Forest School Leaders programme. John was causing increasing concern for teachers, regularly prompting MOSOC call outs and showing a range of negative behaviours. Through the programme, John had the opportunity to explore his feelings and build up a range of leadership skills which he is now willing to share, as a peer mentor, with the next cohort of pupils joining the programme from the year below.

John, a Year 9 pupil, was selected for Phase 1 of the Shifting Horizons programme. He was described by his Director of Progress before he joined the programme as:

'Very lazy, lethargic, attention seeking. Can be very aggressive, has strange eating habits, is a possible smoker and substance abuse, at risk of anti-social behaviour.'
(Staff)

Phase 1 of the Shifting Horizons programme consisted of seven half day sessions of Forest School activities, in the woods or on the beach. John took part in team games, bushcraft, art and nature activities. The sessions had a therapeutic approach with lots of opportunities for discussion and reflection.

John responded well to this approach and enjoyed being outside. He bonded well with his group, who showed a lot of respect for his physical skills and his gentle nature. He was very active on the session but not 'manic', as he had appeared in school. John commented on how being outside calmed him down, and felt that attending the sessions helped him to stop getting into trouble.

During his sessions he set his target to 'receive fewer MOSOC call outs', which he has achieved: John had 27 entries into the behaviour system in term 1, and in term 2 this fell to just seven. John commented on this change in his behaviour, and how he is now able to stop issues from escalating into larger problems:

'My friend has noticed I've changed – he said I used to be really immature and apparently I've got better in school. In lessons I've chilled out a lot. I used to be MOSOC'd three times per week, or every day, sometimes twice a day, and now I haven't been MOSOC'd for ages. I was threatened on Monday but I turned it around, I backed down and apologised, went back in class and did my work. In Year 8 I wouldn't have done that, I would have argued and made it worse.' (John)

At the end of Phase 1, John put together a slide show to present his experiences to Year 8 and helped to arrange a small party for parents. He is now a buddy in Phase 2 of the programme and has already shown excellent buddy behaviour. John also won a school award for the improvement in his behaviour, which was fed back to his dad at home:

'When I got the award I went bright red. I walked up to the stage like a zombie and when I didn't get back to my seat I didn't look at anyone. When my dad got the phone call – well that's all that counts. He was happy. And I've been pretty happy lately.' (John)

Impact on pupils across the school

The CGSS and Skills Workshops are a whole school intervention. Furthermore, the Intervention Coordinator role frees up the time and capacity of senior staff to make system changes and develop the school's ethos, policies and procedures to support the wider school. Therefore while the PHF-funded staff member spends more time with individual (and more vulnerable) pupils at Stage 3 and above work, it enables the Stage 0–2 work to take place, and for the stages to work effectively as a whole school system.

As such it is important to look at the impact of the CGSS (Stages 0–2 and Stages 3 above) on the entire school population, to understand the impact of every pupil being provisionally held at Stage 0. These impacts are described in the following sections.

The positive impacts of early intervention

One of the key impacts of the CGSS, reported by interviewees across all roles, is the way in which the stages pick up pupil issues at an early point. In this way, the school wide population is seen as provisionally held at Stage 0, until any point at which they demonstrate behaviour that is cause for concern. Any incident that is picked up by teaching staff or MOSOC is automatically referred to the CGSS which then triggers a series of specific follow up actions.

'Because of the stages it is noticed immediately if the child is not happy.' (Project staff)

In this way the intervention is about preventing any pupils from 'slipping through the net' and creating a system that is 'tight' – terms used regularly by interviewees across a number of roles. This systematic approach to dealing with early signs of behavioural or other issues is seen by teaching staff as one of the key outcomes of the CGSS which has a hugely positive impact on the wider school environment. It also means that pupils are not only aware that their problems will be picked up on, but also that they will get a tailored, supportive package – rather than a punitive reaction – in response.

A greater sense of security

One impact of systematising the identification of and response to issues at an early stage is that students feel more secure in school. As a teacher commented:

'They know that we're looking out for them, and they do appreciate it.' (School-based staff)

Teaching staff interviewees suggested that this means that pupils feel school is 'on their side' and wants the best for each pupil, whilst the new MOSOC approach is also sending out a message that pupils have a responsibility to be well-behaved or else they will face the 'shakedown'.

Whilst these interviewees feel that creating a supportive school environment is part of their standard duty of care, they suggest that it is especially important for Mounts Bay, which has a number of pupils who have less support at home. Interviewees describe the feeling of Mounts Bay school as a 'family', where the CGSS (as well as broader changes in the approach to discipline and school structures) create an inclusive environment which has had led to greater mutual respect between students and staff:

'I think we are forming more personal relationships with students. They see us as more human, because we treat them like a person, not like an object or a number.' (School-based staff)

Again, whilst a duty of care is seen by teachers as a core element of their role, interviewees also felt that the system supported teachers who might not be as 'naturally nurturing' to pick up on issues early and build a support network around the pupil.

Impact on parents and families

A key aim of the CGSS is to create stronger relationships between school and parents. This is primarily to improve and coordinate the support offered to a child by ensuring that parents are kept updated with their behaviour and the activity plan in place, or by involving parents in family conferences or TAC meetings, depending on their part in their child's situation. The second aim of improving links with parents is to encourage them to engage in a two-way dialogue with teachers (particularly LSMs and Form Tutors, rather than Directors of Progress) so that they see the school as a partner in their child's development. This is especially important in the case of parents who had negative experiences of school during their own childhoods, whether when attending Mounts Bay or other school.

The report has already described the ways in which the CGSS involves parents in their child's referral plan from the perspective of teachers and pupils themselves. The parents we spoke to feel that Mounts Bay is good at keeping them in touch with their child's behaviour and progress, for example:

'The school have been very supportive, phoning me, talking to me. And sharing what's going on. It's good - then I know everything that's gone on and what's happening.'
(Parent)

It is important to qualify this finding somewhat as the parents we spoke to did not know the specific detail of the CGSS, as it is deliberate school policy not to communicate to pupils or parents which stage they are on. Despite this, in Year 1 of the evaluation there was a sense amongst parents that the school's communication has improved, and that their children are being supported by tailored activity plans rather than just reactive discipline. Additionally, the changes to MOSOC introduced in Year 2 include the automatic contact of any parent that has a child picked up through the system. This means that parents hear both about the reasons why their child has got into trouble as well as the measures to prevent this from happening again in future.

Teaching staff also describe the ways in which parents are changing how they approach the school. Whilst the dissemination of teacher email addresses has impacted on *how* they contact the school, the CGSS have had an impact on *who* parents choose to contact. In previous years, parents would typically ring the school and ask for the most senior person (usually the Head, Deputy Head or Head of Year) available to discuss the issue. Now, parents are approaching other teaching staff – namely Form Tutors – directly, on the understanding that they best know the needs and attitude of their children. As one interviewee commented:

'When they ring up they ask to speak to Tutors not the Head, they come into school and use email.' (Project staff)

In the second year of the evaluation, LSMs report increasing two-way communication with parents. One interviewee gave an example in which a parent emailed the LSM to say that she had just seen a tweet (social media activity) posted by her daughter while in maths class, and wished for the LSM to intervene. The LSM called the pupil out of class, reprimanding her for inappropriate iPad use and, as a Stage 1 entry, signed her up to a workshop in response.

It is not possible to claim that all parents of Mounts Bay pupils see the school as a partner or know who to contact in times of trouble. Nonetheless, it is clear that the CGSS and the

broader school wide changes are working to improve the relationships between parents and children, and between parents and school.

Impact on teaching staff

Sharing workload

The Directors of Progress have traditionally had a heavy workload involving lots of different responsibilities. They were responsible for all pupils in their year groups, from chasing up attendance notes and dealing with behavioural issues to liaising with parents, as well as their teaching and other pastoral duties. This workload could lead to intense pressure on Directors of Progress, who often felt stretched or even guilty that pupil support might sometimes be neglected because of other commitments.

One of the objectives of the CGSS was to re-distribute this workload, sharing responsibility for all pupils in the year group across the broader teaching staff. The evaluation suggests that the CGSS, and in particular the administration systems and communication processes underpinning the approach, have had a demonstrable impact in this area. In Year 1 of the evaluation, Directors of Progress felt that the fact that broader teaching staff (including Form Tutors) are updated daily on the stages and their involvement in pupils' support plans, means that more teaching staff are taking real ownership of pupil progress. In Year 2, the administration processes have been further refined, working towards the school's goal of 'distributed leadership'.

As such, the structures offered by the CGSS, particularly the increased capacity in the form of the PHF-funded Intervention Coordinator, alongside other school wide changes including a more targeted MOSOC approach, have meant that Directors of Progress are freed up to concentrate on the core elements of their roles.

Form Tutors' involvement in pastoral care

Teaching staff and project staff described the impact of having greater number of teachers taking responsibility for pupils (i.e. not only Directors of Progress). The biggest impact is that Form Tutors are supported to provide students with pastoral care. As one interviewee explained, the CGSS provide a structured route for them to engage with pupils:

'As a form tutor it means I have a more structured route to follow when there is an issue to deal with. I know where to go and what to do. Before this, things would have been identified and followed up – but now there's a system and there's time to spend talking to the student and finding out why they are not attending or whatever it is. And there are clear referral pathways to follow to address it.' (School-based staff)

The CGSS have helped clarify how Form Tutors can take early action when they spot an issue developing and give pupils more advice, support and guidance. Form Tutors interviewed for the evaluation feel that the CGSS help them get to know pupils better and that they refer on fewer issues. Further, they are encouraged by senior staff to get cover in order to attend important TAC meetings, such as those with parents – which also mean they have better, more open relationships with parents.

As the following comments suggest, Form Tutors are willing to engage in the process – including making the time to phone pupil's homes - because they are beginning to see the 'pay-off' of such investment:

'It's more work but it does pay off because it makes a difference to the child, to their attendance – and to the family – they really appreciate it.' (School-based staff)

'I feel much more a part of their school lives now – it's added value to the job if you like, and more job satisfaction. I'm not just taking registration and marking down whether they're here or not.' (School-based staff).

The following vignette, from Year 1 of the evaluation, contains one teacher's comments about how the CGSS have impacted upon the experiences of both pupils and school staff in Mounts Bay School.

Vignette 6

Tracey: School staff

Tracey thinks that pupils respond to the CGSS in different ways. For some, knowing that they've been 'spotted' is a wake-up call, making them realise they cannot get away with repeated poor behaviours, for example, non-attendance. For others, it will make them feel cared for, to know that someone is aware of what they are doing and 'cares' enough to take action about it.

Keeping systematic records enables Tracey to see patterns of behaviour, incidents and absences, so that she can see if a pupil is repeatedly missing the same lesson and find out the reason for this. Tracey can also look at the information with the pupil and use it to start discussions with them to explore the issue together.

When a pupil receives a referral for something such as missing a Study Support session, their Form Tutor may choose to send a 'round robin' to all of the student's teachers asking them if they have any cause for concern about the student. Getting this overview of the student's recent behaviour enables Tracey and other school-based staff to make a decision about whether they need to be put on report.

Whole school impacts

MOSOC: working alongside the CGSS

Whilst technically separate to the CGSS, MOSOC is one of the key referral points into the CGSS. The school implemented some tweaks to the MOSOC approach between Year 1 and Year 2 of the intervention which reflect a broader change in attitude towards discipline: with punitive elements to act as a deterrent to bad behaviour, alongside supportive interventions designed to tackle the root causes of the problems. As one LSM commented about the new approach:

'It's done in such a way that we can tell them off, but talk to them like human beings.'
(LSM)

The changes to the MOSOC approach in Year 2 have been popular with the LSMs leading it. In particular they find that it provides a consistency to the approach. It means that pupils are aware that they will be reprimanded for their behaviour, but also provides an opportunity to pick up other issues that are underpinning behaviour and to place pupils on the CGSS where they know they will be supported. As one LSM commented:

'The good thing about MOSOC is its consistency. If you're MOSOC'd this will happen, you can't talk your way out of a detention; it makes them think before they do something. We all sing to the same hymn sheet – we all have that consistency. We can also flag up wider issues at home, problems in school, bullying issues – we can intervene earlier, contact home, offer referrals, all the lower level littler things...' (LSM)

The following vignette gives one LSM's view of the benefits of the 2012/13 changes to the MOSOC approach, and how it links with her broader work as a Child Protection Officer.

Vignette 7

Overview of the MOSOC approach 2012/13

The following quote is from an interview with a LSM who explained her role in the MOSOC process and its positive impact on pupils, who are able to talk about their problems, on teachers, who are able to continue teaching their class without disruption, and on parents, who are kept up to date with their child's progress:

'I am on call all day every day for any emergency. An email will go from the teacher into the room, usually about a pupil's behaviour. We take them out of class so the teacher can carry on knowing the particular pupil is taken out of the equation. I talk to the pupil and ask them to write a statement of what happened. They go through the shakedown – where we go through everything, for example, see that their writing is poor or there's a lack of understanding that's coming through their class work: this can explain why they're always acting up in a particular class. We ring parents to tell them what their child's done. They then go into isolation with a senior member of staff and have an afternoon detention.'

'It's brilliant. It's really working. One of the worst things for the pupils is telling parents – but through it we've found out a lot of things which has made us refer them to the Skills Centre workshops. We're able to take students out and talk to them. As a Child Protection Officer it's brilliant as you can check upon your students without them realising it. The students know what's done and why – we ask them to complete a think-sheet and this shapes everything we discuss and do with them afterwards.' (LSM)

Number of Member of Staff on Call (MOSOC) incidents 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13

The following information shows the number of pupils and incidents which have led to a member of staff being sent out on call (MOSOC) for the last three academic years. It is important to note that any changes to MOSOC rates cannot be directly related to the impact of the CGSS alone, as there have been so many other changes to the school structure, as described earlier. Nonetheless, these figures are helpful to understand the overall behaviour trends and are helpful proxy indicators of the engagement of pupils in classrooms across the years.

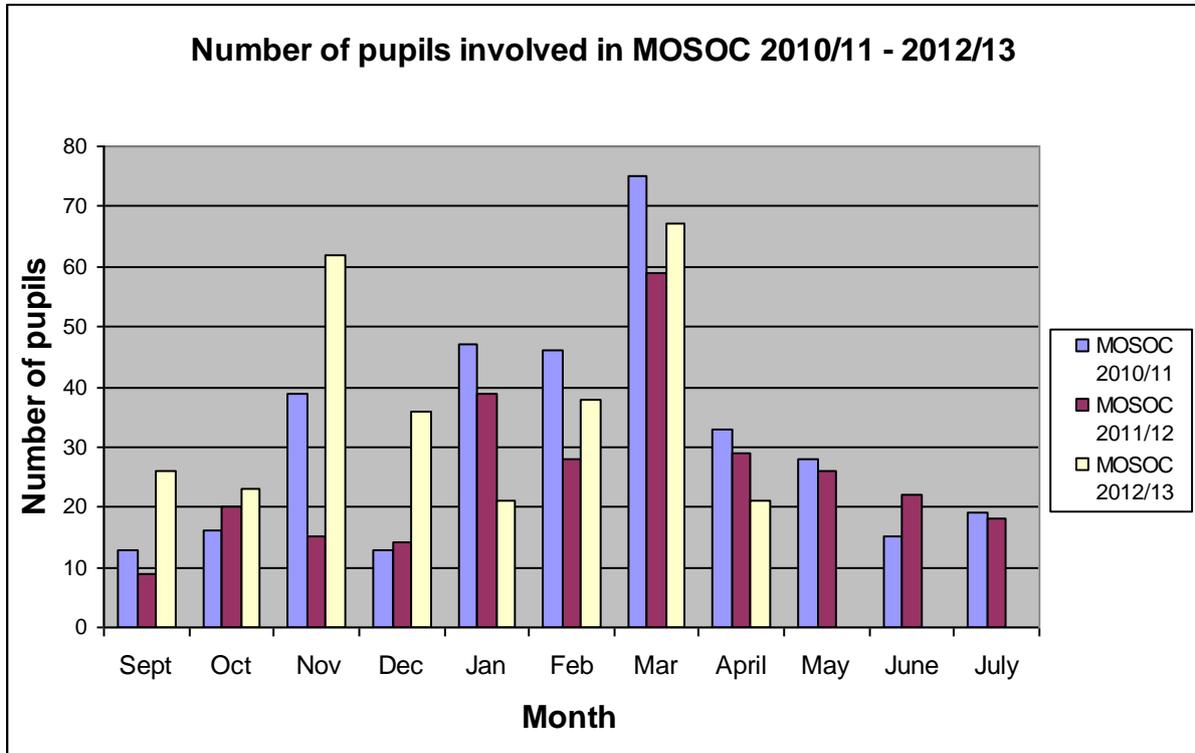
The following table splits out the number of MOSOC call outs over the last three years: whilst the information for 2010/11 and 2011/12 is for the full year, the information for 2012/13 only refers to incidents up to the end of the third semester (up to and including 3 May 2013).

	MOSOC 2010/11	MOSOC 2011/12	MOSOC 2012/13
Number of pupils	343	279	294
Number of incidents	477	376	477

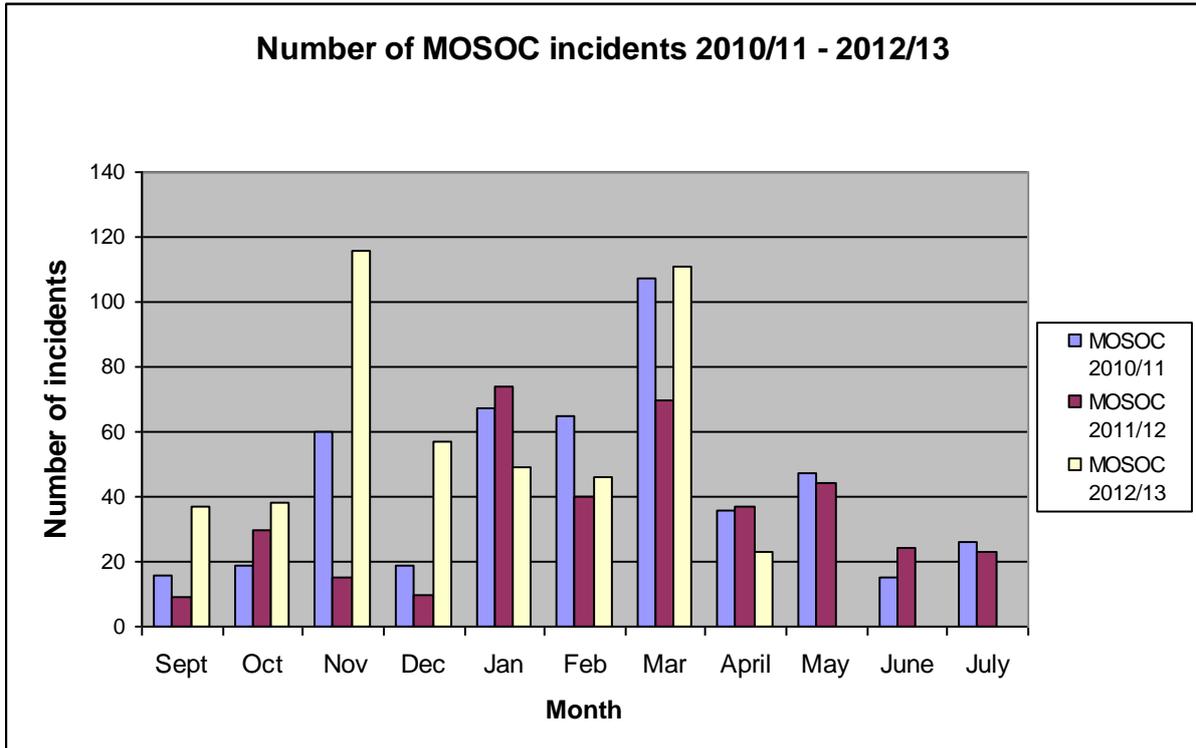
What is striking is that despite only reporting a partial year of figures, the MOSOC incidents for 2012/13 are higher than those recorded in 2011/12. This however, is explained exactly by the changes to the MOSOC system introduced in November 2012 which were introduced

partially to reflect duty of care around iPad usage. The following three graphs break down the number of MOSOC pupils/incidents per month of the 2010/11 – 2012/13 academic years and how this compares year on year as a percentage of the overall academic role, and which show the spike in MOSOC call outs in November 2012.

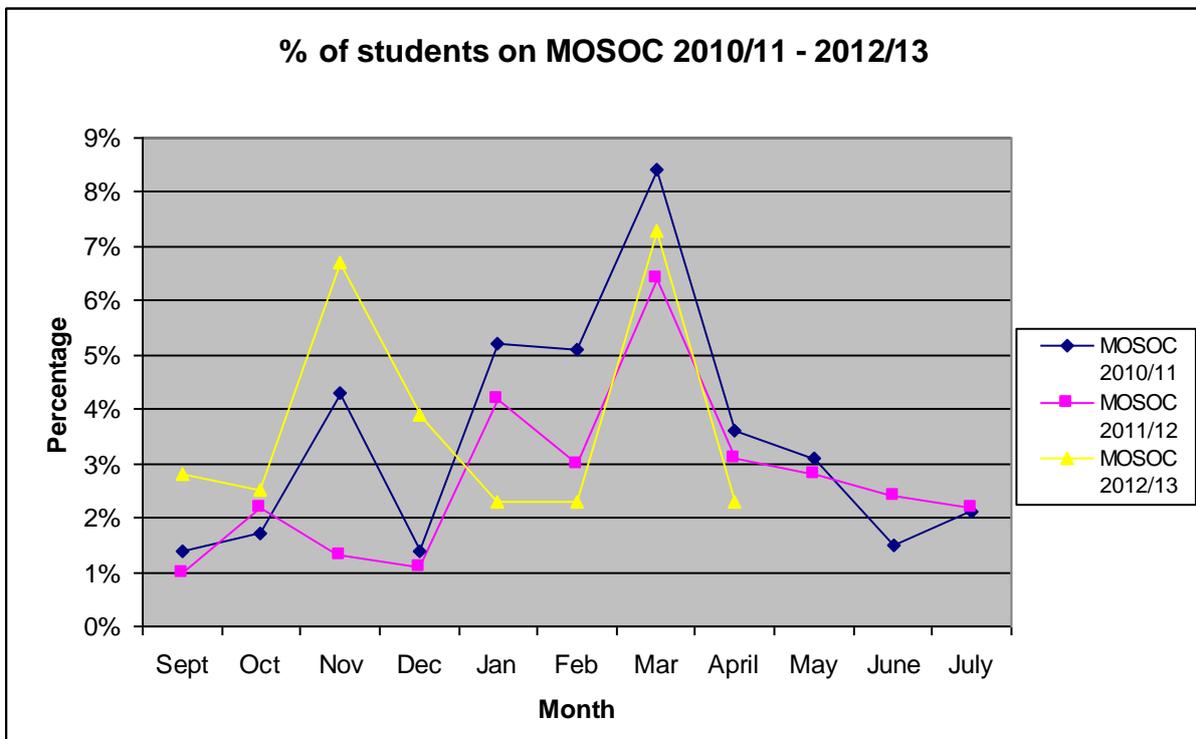
The following graph details the *numbers of pupils* involved with MOSOC call outs over the two academic years.



The second graph breaks down the *number of incidences* in total over each month of 2010/11 - 2012/13.



The final graph takes into consideration the exclusion figures in context of the school wide academic role. As such it shows the *percentage of students* involved with MOSOC calls over the three academic years:



The data shows that peaks of MOSOC incidents follow a broad path each year, with two spikes in January and March. However, the month by month trends must be treated with caution as the timings of the school year has changed since 2010/11, moving from three terms to four semesters. This change may explain the broad difference in figures for the

months of November 2010 and November 2011: pupils had semester breaks in November 2011 and 2012 but studied throughout the month in November 2010.

As with the exclusion rate figures, the ‘success’ of the CGSS programme is difficult to gauge through these numbers alone, particularly when the nature of MOSOC has changed over the three years. For example, changes to MOSOC in November 2012, which began to pick up broader student behaviour issues such as inappropriate iPad use are reflected in the jump in MOSOC call outs for this month. As such, in-school policy – for example a school ‘crackdown’ - can influence figures month by month.

However, what is interesting is that after the November 2012 spike, the MOSOC rates for 2012/13 have broadly fallen in line with – if not reduced in comparison to - previous years. The hypothesis is that once the new approach is embedded within the school, these figures should demonstrate an overall reduction in the MOSOC numbers. Indeed, our interviews with pupils suggest that they are learning and putting in place strategies to reduce the number of times they are picked up through the system and LSMs suggest that the new system is now working to reduce repeat issues:

‘It was hard at first, children didn’t know what to expect. But it’s starting to really prove its worth. We don’t have as many MOSOCs – we can go a whole day without one! The behaviour is really improving all round – pupils don’t want to be put into that position. It frees up time for me to do the other parts of my job. When it started it was all about negative behaviour, now it’s 50-50 with positive feedback.’ (LSM)

Positive behaviour analysis

The school also runs a ‘positive behaviour’ analysis. This is based on a weekly record of the number of sanctions picked up by pupils that lead to lunchtime or after school detentions: therefore the higher the percentage score recorded in the table below, the fewer sanctions that pupils picked up. Whilst it is difficult to get exact year on year comparison (as the term dates of 2010/11 do not match with the semester dates of 2011/12) the following table gives an overview of positive behaviour trends over three years:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
September to end November	93%	95.5%	95%
December to mid February	89%	90%	92%
Late February up to early May	91%	90%	90%
Late May to late July	95%	NA	NA

As the table shows, the school is recording improved ‘positive behaviour’ in academic year 2011/12 versus 2010/11, indicated by a reduction in the number of sanctions and a broad year on year stabilisation between years 2011/12 to 2012/13. Again, this data is limited in terms of what clear message can be drawn from it, but it may suggest that the CGSS are contributing to broader change in school. Nonetheless, this type of data will be more helpful in 2013/14, when like-for-like comparisons can be drawn between the four semesters.

An improved learning environment

As already described in the section on whole school impacts, interviewees feel that lessons are quieter and calmer as trouble is 'nipped in the bud' more effectively and at an earlier stage. Improved behaviour is not only found in the classroom – several interviewees described how the whole school felt 'calmer' in general, with less disruption in corridors and less tolerance of pupils 'wandering about the school'.

'There's classroom calmness and walking round corridors is calmer.' (School-based staff)

'The school feels calmer.' (Pupils)

Teaching staff interviewees feel that, overall, pupils are working better and are more focused on the curriculum than in previous years.

'There are fewer disruptions in lessons...lessons are quieter and trouble is nipped in the bud... It's about allowing people to learn, creating the conditions.' (School-based staff)

Again, it is not possible to solely attribute the impact of the improved learning environment alone to the GCSS or the work of the PHF-funded role alone but interviewees who work closely with the CGSS feel that that they have complemented the broader changes to Mounts Bay over the two years of the intervention.

Impact on the community

Data relating to the impact of the CGSS upon the broader community is limited in the evaluation. At the beginning of the evaluation we agreed that the impact on the community would not be the primary focus of the intervention and was always intended as a more indirect and longer term aspect of the work. Therefore, in order to understand the detail of school wide changes – and how the CGSS fit within the broader context – the fieldwork concentrated mainly in school, focussing on a broad range of teaching and support staff and pupils. These are the key stakeholder groups for which impacts can be identified at an earlier point and during the evaluation although we have also garnered perspectives from these group and from parents about how the intervention has had a positive impact on local relationships with the school.

Teaching staff interviewees feel that for community stakeholders more widely, the impact of the CGSS will be realised in the future through the improved relationships between parents and children, between parents and school and between school and pupils. Together these improved relationships will consolidate Mounts Bay's already popular local standing, particularly amongst local primary schools, and with the aim to act as a model for other secondary schools in Cornwall.

4.5 Factors which have facilitated and hindered success

The administration system underpinning the CGSS

'This year [2012/13] it's more prescribed. We do referral forms there and then. It's far more instant, rather than emailing a tutor. All the paperwork is done there and then and it's quicker. [Staff member] has it all online and in her filing cabinets in our room – we can take their file out and sit down with them. We phone parents right away – the LSM make the calls.' (LSM)

All teaching staff interviewees agree that, across both years of the evaluation, the CGSS could not work as a systematised whole school process without a rigorous administration and

communication plan in place. This system is what ensures open access to information for all teaching staff, a regulated approach to early identification of pupils at risk, a regulated approach to managing pupil issues and ultimately helps support the formation of a caring and supportive school wide environment. This system is coordinated by a programme administration lead who manages the whole process. As one interviewee commented:

'The system has got to be in place first, before anything else happens.' (Project staff)

The administration lead is the PA to the Student Services Team and personal PA to the Vice Principle and Strategic Lead of the CGSS. The role is therefore central to the CGSS system. The administration lead is responsible for collating all CGSS and MOSOC referral forms each day and compiling an 'at a glance' database that shows which pupils have been placed on which stage. This is broken down into year groups and shared with Directors of Progress each morning, so that they can see exactly what has happened with each pupil the day before. This is also broken down into individual case files so that Directors of Progress can share the individual details with the relevant Form Tutor each day.

As described, this process underpins the broader aims of the CGSS. It is the way in which pupil responsibility is shared across teaching staff (for example, away from Directors of Progress and onto Form Tutors). In this way, the system makes 'everyone's lives easier' because:

'One person can't be there for everyone. The team approach is vital.' (School-based staff)

Interviewees feel that the system provides the structure by which teaching staff see a regulated approach to picking up and dealing with pupil issues. As such it facilitates the clear identification process of pupils displaying early signs of risk and which means that fewer (if any) pupils can 'fall through the gaps':

'It's a system where no one goes unnoticed.' (Project staff)

The openness and regularity of the shared information means that teachers know where a pupil is at each day, the reasons for that placement and the activity plan for the future. These action plans draw in a wide range of teaching staff across personal, behaviour and SEN areas, using clear strategies to use the particular expertise of each individual that knows the pupil. Teachers who are aware of the CGSS feel that these personalised action plans have contributed to the supportive environment in school which cares for every pupil:

'I think [the benefit is] knowing which students are at what level. Before you knew the very bad ones and missed those students that needed a little bit of help. Now I can look and know who is where and what's been done for them. And everyone around the child knows... There's more care all around the child.' (School-based staff)

The administration lead

As the Mounts Bay administration lead plays such a prominent role in the CGSS, the following vignette describes the stages and her role in it from her point of view.

Vignette 8

Jacqui – Programme administrator

Jacqui has worked at Mounts Bay for 12 years. She started in the classroom as an assistant before becoming a secretary. She has moved from front of house to back of house in her new role, effectively managing the day to day administration and also acting as the Vice Principal and Strategic Lead's PA. This gives her great experience of the school and means

she knows most of the pupils by name, and many of the parents too, particularly as they call the school if the child is absent. This type of relationship with parents – and the fact that she is often the first port of call if there's a problem with the student – means that she's often the first person to know the context behind a particular child's behaviour on a day to day basis.

Reason for introducing stages

Whilst the previous system was good, Jacqui felt it could be 'loose'. This means that it was possible for pupils to 'slip through the net'. She also felt that the stages are a way of relieving the burden on Directors of Progress who have a huge workload. It is a way of reallocating responsibility to Form Tutors, as well as a way to improve communication between them.

Aim of the stages

Jacqui sees the main aim of the stages in order to '*make a safe environment for all students, where there's someone they can go to, if they are at all vulnerable*'. She also felt the stages were a way to show that '*we care about all of them... so that pupils get the feeling that we care about them, not only about their GCSEs*'. She felt this was starting to happen already:

'Because of the stages it is noticed immediately if the child is not happy. If we see a child struggle we can introduce targeted intervention, not allowing them to drop out.' (Jacqui)

For the teachers too, it's '*good for them to know where to go to and who to go to*'.

What she does

In Year 2 of the evaluation, Jacqui moved from the school reception to the 'intervention room' where the MOSOC 'shakedowns' take place. Once a pupil is picked up through MOSOC or via an Initial Concerns referral, she logs the incident and the response for example, the Skills Workshop that the pupil is booked onto as well as any detentions the behaviour incurs. Jacqui also manages the letters sent home to parents to communicate what has happened.

Jacqui produces a pack each morning for each Director of Progress, to show what has happened the day before. It includes information about call outs as well as general information about issues relating to a specific year; the MOSOC records positive observations about the year group as well as picking up on any issues. The Directors of Progress review the packs and decide whether the issue is for them, the form tutor or Student Support Lead. Then Jacqui will ask them for an update on actions, file all the information and upload it onto the system. The Form Tutor, Director of Progress and Stage lead all get a copy of what's happened, so that the pupils '*don't slip through the net. It's tight*'.

Challenges

There is great deal paperwork triggered by the stages, which Jacqui identifies as happening in peaks and troughs (for example, at the start of the year and before GCSEs). She feels that a) the benefits justify the work and b) that it will get easier once the process is ironed out. It will always change as the children change (and issues change) but means that her job is busy and interesting. '*I think it's worthwhile – it's here for the students at the end of the day*'.

Vision of the school in five years' time

Jacqui hopes that the school will benefit from improved behaviour, driven largely by the pupils feeling safer. She hopes that in this time the stages will be embedded in school and that everyone will know what each of the stages mean. She says it will be important to communicate the system to new staff as they come into school. As such, the whole system is still evolving.

The PHF-funded role – from Student Support Lead to Intervention Coordinator

Another key role in the CGSS is the one funded by the PHF monies, the Intervention Coordinator. As already described, the nature of this role changed between Year 1 and Year 2 of the CGSS to reflect tweaks to the system. The role continues to be responsible for coordinating support for pupils at Stages 3 and 4 and provides the link between the administration of the referral process and the pupil actual activity plan that is created in response. This role demands a specific skill set and depth of experience, including the ability to work with vulnerable young people, the ability to influence school staff to engage in the activity plans and a clear understanding of external referral agencies.

Strong communication and leadership to embed the CGSS across the school

With so many changes to the Mounts Bay School in 2011/12, strong communication and leadership has been vital in embedding the CGSS alongside other changes. The Stage Lead (an Assistant Principal) and the CGSS Strategic Lead (the Student Services Vice Principal) have worked to champion the CGSS in school, launching the system during team meetings and making themselves available for explanation and queries as they emerge from staff. As core staff commented, this is not an easy process:

'Trying to embed a new system is always hard – staff don't like paperwork and it's hard making sure systems are followed and not ignored.' (Project staff)

In Mounts Bay, the CGSS were launched at the beginning of the 2011/12 academic year with regular updates during training sessions or twilight sessions in the evening. However, project staff also feel that the CGSS is worth the work of embedding the process, and that school staff will see the benefits of engaging in the CGSS, which will encourage them embed it in their own practice:

'You need to have difficult conversations and get people to buy into it. In the long term it makes [teacher's] lives easier... they will see success from their hard work.' (Project staff)

Despite some initial resistance to new paperwork, there is evidence that the process is becoming embedded within the school, as illustrated in this quote from a Form Tutor:

'The paperwork's quite simple to complete once you know how it works. What's good is you can check the system yourself to get information, you don't have to ask someone. You know about things that have happened in students' lives (for example, if they go into care or have a bereavement) so you can understand the reasons for their behaviour. I get the positive behaviour reports as well, every Friday. I like them – it's not all negative and punitive. It's good stuff too. Positive, affirming conversations with students are especially helpful in Year 11 when lots of them are stressed and anxious about exams. Having all this information strengthens my role as a tutor, because I have the info on the child, I'm more aware of what to look out for – and I can then respond appropriately. It helps me to decide whether this is just a bit of a blip or whether someone is having a serious problem. In year team meetings, it's helpful to have everyone using the standardised forms – it makes it easier to share info and develop action plans.' (School-based staff)

As the CGSS are constantly evolving – for example, from tweaked referral forms to new definitions of the individual stages – communication of the programme is an ongoing task. To some extent, communication occurs every day as the programme administration lead disseminates daily data packs with pupil updates, and fortnightly data packs for line management updates.

Ongoing communication between the CGSS team

As well as the paperwork and administration requirements of the CGSS, the Stage Lead arranges regular meetings with a wide variety of staff and support members that are involved with the programme. This includes fortnightly line management meetings with Directors of Progress and weekly meetings between the Stage Lead, Student Support Lead and SEN coordinators.

These regular meetings are essential as there can be a lot of crossover, both in terms of the individual pupil's needs (that might span across behavioural, personal or SEN), and in terms of the staff members who have some responsibility for the student. The meetings provide an opportunity to debate the issues flagged up by the paperwork referrals and rationalise the plans set in place to support the child. Interviewees in these roles feel that these regular meetings clarify expectations, next steps, workloads and the overall progress of the CGSS.

The importance of the administration process, strong leadership and ongoing communication is described in the extended quote below:

'It needs good record keeping, good audit trail, recording, information sharing. It's essential that background info [on pupils] is captured at the start so there is early intervention by teachers. It's essential for the system to flow – it needs organisational skills, record keeping... We've got clear forms now for each stage and it's important that those forms are completed because they show what work has been completed, what's been tried and what's failed, so that the next level has all the info and there's no duplication of work, and there's a clear picture about where that pupil is. Communication is essential. If appropriate, we have meetings with teachers and parents at the earliest opportunity to share relevant information.' (School-based staff)

Risks and challenges to implementing the CGSS

As this report has already suggested, strong and systematic administration processes are essential for the CGSS to work effectively. Despite tweaks to the approach in Year 2 there remains a lot of pressure on the Administration Lead, especially during busy times. Additionally, as well as the Administration Lead managing the data, she also holds it in a range of different formats and in a range of systems separate to pupil data on academic performance. This means that not only is the system understood by one person, it is also difficult to cross reference behavioural information with academic performance, which is a key indicator of success for the school.

Another risk highlighted in Year 1 of the intervention was in managing the flow of referrals during these busy pressure points, to ensure that the core staff team are able to cope with the scale of personalised referral plans. However, the changes to MOSOC and the Skills Workshops are both designed to help streamline the flow of the CGSS and take the pressure off core staff by distributing leadership throughout the LSM staff base.

It is important to recognise that, as demonstrated by the tweaks to the CGSS approach between Year 1 and Year 2 of the intervention, this is still an evolving programme. Core staff are working together to address issues as they emerge and to adapt the system to resolve them. The use of the PHF money to fund an additional role within the team has allowed the Vice Principal to become – over the course of the year – less involved in detailed plans for individuals and instead able to play a strategic role in simplifying and evolving systems so that the CGSS stages flow effectively. This has played a significant role in minimising the risk of the system being overly burdensome.

4.6 Recommendations

This chapter has described the ways in which the CGSS have been established in school during the academic year 2011/12 and tweaked alongside changes to wider school systems in 2012/13. As such, our recommendations suggest ways in which Mounts Bay can build upon the stages in the future, deliver the desired impact on the relationship between pupils, teachers and parents and become embedded as part of everyday practice without requiring the support of a dedicated staff member.

The following recommendations are carried over from Year 1 and reflect the importance of continuing to embed the stages into everyday school life:

- **Regular communication about the CGSS:** It is important that staff members are continually updated with the CGSS process, to ensure that new teachers joining the school understand the stages and that existing teachers are encouraged to follow the protocol. This might be through the existing channels (evening meetings, line management catch ups etc) but also at the start of each school year or term.
- **Regular communication about changes to CGSS procedures:** Alongside the regular communication points, updated or tweaked resources like referral or MOSOC forms will ensure that the CGSS will evolve to best meet the school's needs.

The following recommendations are to strengthen the support offered by the CGSS, again drawing upon existing CGSS Strategic Lead plans:

- **Support for the Administration Lead during peak times:** As the Programme Administration Lead is so important to the success and stability of the CGSS it is essential that this individual is supported during 'peak' times so that the process is never weakened and that no pupils are at risk of 'falling through the gap'.
- **Review and adapt existing materials and resources:** Strategic interviewees describe the potential of other resources that could complement the existing Skills Workshop tool kits. These include group session work (such as conflict resolution or relaxation) as well as new Workshops such as a session around basic manners. However interviewees did question who could lead the group sessions given the LSM workload and the logistics required to organise such events.

The final set of recommendations is around ways in which Mounts Bay could collect data to help demonstrate the impact of the CGSS:

- **Collating like for like data each year:** As the CGSS have been introduced at a time of significant school wide change (including the new timings of semesters), and because there have been other school wide changes over the two years of CGSS delivery, data relating to fixed term exclusions and 'positive behaviour' analysis is difficult to compare between academic 2010/11 and 2012/13 years. However, as systems stabilise, data will have more meaning when comparing from 2012/13 and beyond.
- **Mitigating the risks of one person 'holding' the administration systems:** The school is aware of the risk of having one person (the Administration Lead) in charge of a range of data administration systems, namely in terms of the longer term sustainability of the intervention (should the staff member leave for example). Work to rationalise the systems, asking the Administration Lead to explain and document her daily processes will ensure that this work is potentially replicable by other members of staff.
- **Using the data to maximum impact:** Additionally, there is the second issue of making sure that data is being used effectively and that monitoring information is used to pull out

significant trends etc, particular in comparing pupil journeys across the CGSS against academic performance, the latter being held in a separate database.

- As such we are working with PHF to determine what stories they would like to tell through their data and find ways to build a system that captures the information and produces clear insights, in a way which is least burdensome to the Administration Lead.
- **Introduce a positive feedback loop into the system:** There is also a recommendation around gathering qualitative data, namely asking teachers for their feedback on how they feel the CGSS have had a positive impact upon individual pupils, the broader learning environment, their teaching practice and their relationships with parents. A number of interviewees described the positive postcards and other informal or anecdotal positive feedback they had picked up about individual pupil progress through the CGSS. Whilst some of this data is recorded as part of the school's House system, it would be helpful to formally include this data into the CGSS process as part of a positive feedback loop. This will help build up a body of evidence about pupil progress, to compliment the wealth of quantitative data collected by the school, and will enable the Strategic Lead and the Stage Lead to disseminate positive messages both throughout the school and into the broader community, for example during Year 7 open days. The following quote shows how powerful this feedback is, both for teaching staff, pupils and parents:

'We had feedback from a teacher who said a pupil was more approachable, pleasant to talk to and that her recent tests were excellent. She said to keep on doing what we're doing! I said to send a postcard home – we're getting better with these postcards. It's important to be greeted with praise and to keep the praise all linked up.' (LSM)

5. SWIFT, Family Groups

5.1 Summary of key findings

The project

The project is a highly targeted intervention working with children and parents in school-based multi-family therapy groups, referred to as 'Family Groups'. A therapist and a school-based partner run the weekly groups in schools, each attended by up to 8 families. The aim is to reduce the risk of exclusion, increase attendance and support attainment, by working with the whole family. Typically families have complex needs and groups include some extremely vulnerable families.

In a group session, families identify problems that they are dealing with and devise 'targets' to address them. Parents and children work together on an activity designed to develop their reflective skills and promote positive parent-child interaction. Families support each other to work on problems. Children return to class and there is time for parents to discuss, reflect and share advice, ideas and strategies to achieve positive outcomes.

Impacts

Families have very individual circumstances and needs, and therefore impacts vary for each, hence the case study approach of the evaluation. However, there are strong common themes across all. Parent-child relationships are improved because parents feel more confident and empowered in their parental role. Children feel more supported and secure, often leading to improved attendance, behaviour and attainment at school. Schools report improved relationships with parents and children, and fewer disruptions in class. Over time schools have started to absorb Family Group's ethos into their daily dealings with children and parents.

Facilitators to success

Factors which have contributed to the success of Family Groups include the effective engagement of parents, who can be reluctant to get involved with an intervention at all, and the setting of a clear expectation from the outset that parents must be willing to take responsibility for supporting their child and playing a key role in effecting positive change. The skills and approach of the therapist and school-based partner are key; their genuine care and empathy as well as their ability to challenge are highly valued by group members.

The group format enables parents to support each other too, providing an opportunity to build trust between the group members so that they can share their problems and mutually develop strategies to tackle them. Strong backing of the group by the school is also vital, to ensure that the progress made in the group sessions is supported by the wider school.

Recommendations

The Family Group model has worked as intended throughout the evaluation, and has demonstrated positive impacts for some of the most vulnerable children and families and the schools they attend. The underlying approach has proved to be effective and powerful and does not require change. However, recommendations to increase and spread impacts further are: tweak and tailor sessions as necessary to meet the needs of individuals and schools; encourage the attendance of fathers, so that they become part of the change instead of a block to it; integrate Family Group into schools by including staff involvement in contracts;

continue to develop links with outside agencies particularly around recurring issues such as domestic violence; and finally embed monitoring of impact into future Family Groups.

5.2 Project overview

SWIFT - in collaboration with its partner The School and Family Works (SFW) – aims to work therapeutically and systemically with families at risk, children at risk of exclusion and local schools through its programme of Multi-Family Therapy Groups²³. SWIFT was first established as an extended schools cluster in Hounslow in London, and is managed by a multi-agency board with a reputation for engaging hard to reach families. SWIFT provided the dedicated time of an Extended Services Coordinator to support the Family Groups project; following the end of Extended Services with the change of government in 2010 the Coordinator continued to be employed by the Heads of the schools involved.

The Marlborough model of multi-family therapy groups has received national attention, having been endorsed by the former Department of Children, Schools and Families, and has been proven to deliver positive impact on behaviour, exclusion, mental health, academic achievement and parental functioning²⁴.

The pilot - which consisted of 4 Family Groups - was shown to be successful in engaging 'families at risk' (i.e. families that experience multiple and complex problems which restrict their life chances, such as poor mental and/or physical health, low income, poor housing, alcohol and drug misuse, domestic abuse, etc²⁵). The pilots provided some evidence of having reduced exclusions, as well as a number of other positive outcomes for the families involved. Consequently there was a strong appetite among local partners to apply for PHF funding to support the continuation of the model in 2010.

The programme is delivered in two primary schools, through a Reception, Year 1 and 2 group (infants), and a Year 4 and 5 group (juniors), and for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 at Feltham Community College. Key elements include:

- Three multi-family therapy groups, bringing up to 8 families (at least one parent or other primary carer and one 'focus child') together.
- A school-based partner (usually Deputy Head, SENCO or Pastoral Lead) co-facilitates the group with the specialist mental health partner (therapist) from The School and Family Works.
- In initial sessions long-term goals or 'external targets' for the child are agreed. Progress towards these targets is monitored weekly by parent and teacher on a target card, and brought to each Family Group session for discussion. Additionally, 'internal targets' are set in each group session for each child, arising from any difficulties at home or school in the previous week.
- Groups run weekly, in school time, over three hours. In sessions, families identify current problems and devise targets relevant to alleviating these problems. Families then engage in an activity. The facilitating partners use the targets to support families to develop

²³ See <http://theschoolandfamilyworks.co.uk/our-services/marlborough-multi-family-gr/>

²⁴ Asen E, Dawson N, McHugh B: Multiple Family Therapy – the Marlborough Model and its Wider Applications (Karnac, 2001)

²⁵ See definition of 'families at risk' in Reaching Out: Think Family; Analysis and themes from the Families At Risk Review, Cabinet Office, 2007 <http://www.devon.gov.uk/reachingoutthinkfamily.pdf>

reflective and analytical skills while engaged in the activity. Families support and challenge each other to work on immediate and long-term problems.

- Children return to class and there is 'parent reflection time'. Family Group members offer and are offered strategies on how to manage situations to achieve more positive outcomes and competence. Over time, as trust develops, underlying issues in the childhood experiences of the parents themselves are explored and resolved.
- After each session, the therapist remains at school for the rest of the day and uses the lunchtime and afternoon breaks to meet with class teachers and discuss any important information about the families. The therapist is also available after school to catch up with any parent who could not attend the session that day, or with those who did and who want some extra support.
- When the child is consistently scoring highly on all long-term targets and all parties – child, parent and school - agree, the child and parent 'graduate' from the group. This change process may take a year or more.
- The therapist continues to meet with the child as and when necessary to support them during the transition phase, and parents can attend a 'graduate group' where they continue receiving peer support.

Intended outcomes for the children and young people include greater emotional wellbeing, reduced exclusions, improved school attendance and increase educational attainment.

In addition the aim is to support vulnerable families, reduce their sense of isolation, improve relationships between family members, relationships between families, with schools and other services.

Longer-term, it is hoped the programme will impact positively on wider issues such as early entry to the criminal justice system, teenage pregnancy/sex and reduce referrals to CAMHS and social care.

Identifying families

Schools identify families they think will most benefit from this intervention. They discuss the family with the SFW therapist and then the school or therapist approaches the family to suggest that they take part. In many cases the school and the therapist will work to engage a family over a long period of time before they agree to come to Family Group.

Numbers of families supported this year

Each of the three Family Groups can have up to 8 families at one time. Families may remain in the group for as long as the support is needed, before they 'graduate' from the group (as long as they remain at the school).

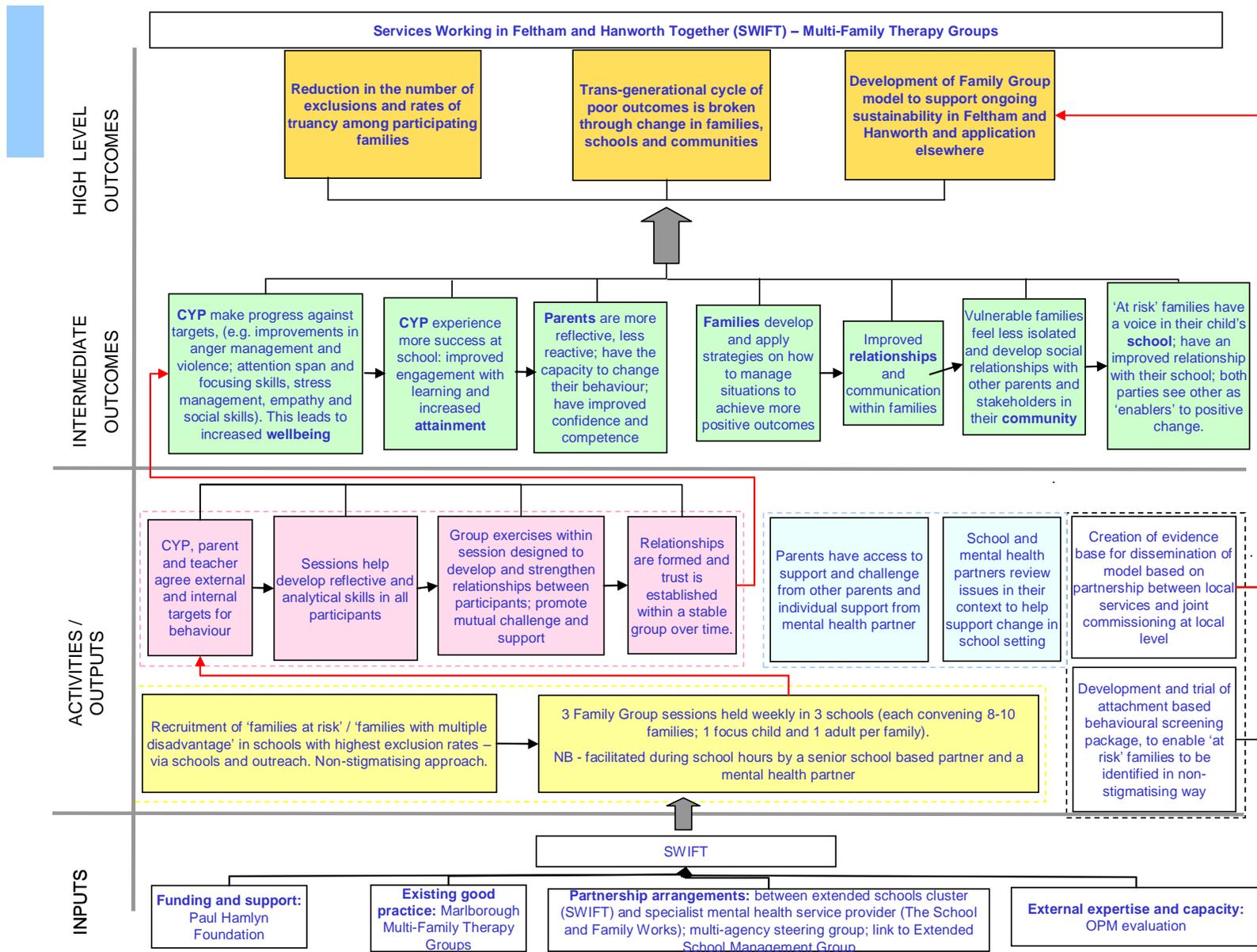
- In the school year 2011-12, eight families joined the secondary school group, five joined the juniors group and five joined the infants group (other places in these groups were occupied by children who joined in the previous year, 2010-11)
- In the school year 2012-13, three families joined the secondary school group, one joined the juniors group and three joined the infants group.

5.3 Project evolution

The project has been implemented as anticipated, and has stayed true to its original vision and intended processes. Therefore the pathway to outcomes model on the following page

remains almost unchanged from its original version, which was drawn up at the start of the evaluation.

Therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusion and truancy: evaluation of three contemporaneous projects



The model is based on the following theories and assumptions:

- The nature of a child's relationship with her/his family or primary carer is one of the most important determinants of educational outcomes.
- Development of neuronal pathways is 'use dependent'²⁶. The development of new neuronal pathways is facilitated when everyone around the child works together to support new thinking habits.
- Many 'families at risk' are likely to experience problematic relationships – both internally within families, and externally with schools, other services and the wider community.
- Patterns of poor relationships and behaviours are likely to be intergenerational and will repeat themselves unless specialist support services can help break these cycles.
- Schools often have a limited capacity to deal adequately with pupils from 'at risk' families who are challenging or disengaging from school.
- All parties should view each other as equals who have the power to affect positive change. The Family Group model is underlined by a theory of 'co-production' and aims to
 - break down patterns of mutual distrust and blame
 - focus on commonalities, for example, that everyone wants what is best for the child
 - empower children, young people, parents and professionals who may feel disempowered by negative cycles of behaviours and outcomes
 - develop positive relationships between children, parents, schools and wider support networks in the community, while also enhancing 'reflective capacity' within families and services – so they are empowered to understand problems, and use this insight to effect change.

Project adjustments in Year 2 of the evaluation

Adjustments to 'target card' process

There have been some small adjustments in Year 2 of the evaluation around the target card system in the secondary school. As identified in the Year 1 evaluation report, it was logistically difficult to get each teacher to sign the card after every lesson. Therefore targets are now agreed at the Group and communicated to all of the child's teachers; but teachers no longer have to grade the cards. They can feed in comments on the child's performance against targets through the school-based partner, if they wish. The child's parent keeps the card at home and grades it. This is working well because it avoids the card becoming lost or not completed.

From time to time, parents are set internal targets (targets to work on during the group session) as well as children; as for children, being accountable to the group is motivating to parents.

The infants school has moved to a group internal target system in the session. This saves time because only one target needs to be set for all, instead of one for each child (they still have individual external targets to work on throughout the week).

²⁶ Childhood Trauma, the Neurobiology of Adaptation & Use-dependent Development of the Brain: How States become Traits by Bruce D. Perry

Establishment of a crèche to care for younger siblings during sessions

Because several families in the junior and infants schools have pre-school age children, a crèche has been introduced to look after them so that parents are free to focus on the Family Group child during sessions. The attention and bonding between parent and child are key to Family Group and the crèche is helping to facilitate this important time together. One school is funding the crèche out of its own school budget, while the other is paid for out of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation grant. The possibility of the crèche being run by a 'graduate' parent (i.e. one who has finished attending Family Group) is currently being considered.

Supporting parents after graduation: Graduate Group

In order to provide continuing support to parents once the family has graduated, a 'Graduate Group' started running in Year 2. The concept is that a parent is trained, supervised and paid to 'host' the weekly 2-hour meeting, which is attended by other parents. Each meeting includes an activity selected by the participants from a programme offered in conjunction with tutors, local professionals and volunteers. The aim is to continue to provide mutual support to families who have graduated in order to help them sustain the positive impacts of the intervention, and support them to continue to practice and model positive ways of thinking, behaving and interacting.

Graduate Groups are currently funded by Sport Relief – Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund. The first Graduate Group has been running over the past year (2012-13) and a second group is planned to start in the near future, so that parents can attend a group near to their home i.e. without travelling too far.

There are currently 5 members of Graduate Group. Average attendance at Graduate Group was 3.2 for both the autumn term and the spring term 2012-13 (between 1 and 4 parents attending weekly). For the summer term this number is likely to increase, because there will be 9 parents invited to attend.

Supporting children after graduation

Children continue to be supported after graduation by meeting with the therapist as and when needed. This option is discussed with teachers at graduation. It helps children over the transition phase and also supports the child's teachers at this time.

Accreditation by Project Oracle

The Family Groups project has attained Level 2 status from Project Oracle²⁷ (an evaluation and evidence hub for youth programmes and interventions), demonstrating its commitment to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of impact. In summer 2013 the project also won one of five awards in Project Oracle's Prospective Evidence Competition, for organisations who are London or Greater London based providers presenting an evaluation plan of a project that is currently being implemented or planned to be implemented.

5.4 Impact

This section presents the evaluation findings in relation to impact. It presents:

²⁷ See <http://www.project-oracle.com/>

- a summary of the project's impact over two years on children and young people, parents, families, schools, wider stakeholders and communities
- six detailed case studies (two from each of the three Family Groups) conducted in the second year of the evaluation
- truancy and exclusion data from the second year of the evaluation.

Case studies and quantitative data from the first year of the evaluation are available in the Year 1 evaluation report.

Case study approach

A case study approach was decided on due to the small number of families involved in the intervention and the very different nature of their needs. The case studies aim to illustrate the range of experiences and issues that families bring to Family Group. The families face very different and often complex challenges; what they have in common is that they are supported to address these by Family Group, and uniformly report very positive experiences and impacts of Family Group. Each case study also aims to demonstrate the interrelated nature of a child's success at school with the stability and competence of the parenting they receive.

Case study families were selected in order to showcase a range in terms of the age of children, the nature of the family situation and the nature of the child's issues at school. Choosing from a relatively small sample of families, the selection was also necessarily informed by families' willingness to participate, and their availability on the day of the first fieldwork visit. It is positive to note that many families were willing to take part in the research, which may be seen to reflect the widespread positive attitude towards Family Group amongst those who belong to it.

Summary of the project's wider impacts

For those directly involved in Family Group (**children and parents**), the kinds of impacts reported at the end of Year 2 of the evaluation were very much consistent with those noted in the Year 1 report. This is unsurprising, since the design and delivery of the intervention remained consistent and therefore continued to produce the same positive results. These impacts are outlined below, with the addition of some further detail based on Year 2 fieldwork.

At **school** level, however, by the end of Year 2 there was evidence that Family Groups have started to impact on whole schools more widely than could be seen in Year 1 – again, this is unsurprising because the effects of a targeted intervention like Family Group naturally take time to influence the wider school ethos. These effects are also outlined further below.

Towards the end of Year 2 it is also becoming possible to discern, anecdotally, impacts on **communities**, i.e. impacts permeating beyond the target families to the wider community.

Children and young people

Over the two years of the evaluation Family Group children experienced impacts relating to emotional wellbeing, relationships, behaviour and learning. These areas of impact interrelate and flow from each other. For example, increases in emotional wellbeing (such as feeling more secure) often underpin improvements in behaviour (such as less attention-seeking behaviour, which means fewer disruptions in class and conflicts at home), which is a pre-requisite for increased capacity for learning (such as being able to concentrate on classroom tasks and homework). Improvements in behaviour also help to improve family relationships,

as a source of conflict is reduced. Many families found that impacts occurred in all of these areas, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Family Group approach to the 'whole' child and family.

Emotional wellbeing

Family Group helps to increase self esteem and confidence of children and young people by listening to them and seeking solutions to their problems. Attending Family Group helps children and young people to:

- recognise their feelings, fears and anxieties
- have the language to articulate these feelings
- feel that they are heard and understood
- feel supported
- feel safe.

For example, a child who had a lot of anxiety around her mother's mental health has been able to talk about this, and now feels safer and more secure in the knowledge that her mother is being supported by Family Group. Children tended to say that they feel 'happier' as a result of Family Group.

MyOutcomes wellbeing measure

SFW recognises the importance of monitoring the impacts of Family Group on the wellbeing of both children and parents. This is done using the MyOutcomes tool²⁸ for measuring therapy outcomes, which is recommended by the Marlborough Family Service for use in Family Groups. Children and parents 'score' themselves on a scale to indicate their feelings in relation to personal wellbeing, close relationships, social relationships and general wellbeing. On a separate scale they rate the strength of their 'alliance' with the therapist (for example, the extent to which they felt heard and understood). Family Group members have individual target scores, and the most recent results indicate that at all three Family Groups, between two thirds and three quarters of members have achieved their target (this is higher than the average rate suggested by MyOutcomes guidance as 'desirable').

However, the validity of MyOutcomes data collected this year is limited due to a methodological challenge relating to the timing of the baseline scores. The initial or 'baseline' scores were taken at the first Family Group session, rather than prior to the family joining the group, which meant that their scores may have been artificially high due to their initial relief or optimism having joined the group and viewing this as a positive step forward.

MyOutcomes will continue to be used and its usage refined to ensure accurate and useful results, by: taking the first scores before families join to give an accurate baseline; looking at aggregated data from past and current families to give a larger sample size; and collecting data using electronic tablets rather than paper forms, to streamline data collection and processing.

Relationships

Children and young people attending Family Group uniformly experienced improvements in their relationships with others, including:

²⁸ See <http://www.myoutcomes.com/>

- with parents, through feeling more secure and becoming able to communicate and interact more positively, and through improved behaviour
- with peers, through using techniques to manage conflict and more perceptiveness to others' feelings
- with school staff, because improved behaviour removed a source of conflict and disruption in class and around school.

Many children and parents talked about improved relationships, and in many cases parents' sense of relief and indeed joy at having developed a more harmonious and loving relationship with their child was palpable.

Behaviour

Many of the children have built up a negative 'reputation' at school, and feel frustrated and 'wronged' by their school's response to them. Being able to explain their feelings means they do not have to act them out in the form of bad behaviour, which improves their relationships with teachers and other staff in pastoral or behaviour-related roles (Heads of Year, Deputy Head and Head) and improves their ability to focus on learning.

In addition, children and young people have learned techniques for managing their feelings and behaviours, which can prevent situations from escalating into incidents. For example: counting to 5 before reacting; walking away from conflict; seeking a staff member's help when feeling stressed, angry or upset. Many children reported using these techniques effectively.

- During a visit to one school in Year 2 of the evaluation an incident was observed by the researcher which demonstrated the use of self-management techniques: two children came to the Deputy Head's office and said that they were about to have a fight. They wanted his help to calm down and sort out the issue.
- Another example of improved behaviour from Year 2 concerns a 12 year old who has assaulted family members, absconded from home several times and been involved in dangerous and antisocial behaviour. At Family Group, targets were set to address these behaviours, including: 'ask for help', 'remove yourself from danger' and 'resist provocation'. These targets were agreed with the child, emphasizing that with his co-operation, the targets could be used to keep him safe.

'It's working. Since the targets were set there have been no incidents. I almost can't believe the power of the targets – it's like a contract with him.' (SFW therapist)

A local police representative interviewed during Year 2 of the evaluation was involved with Family Group in relation to a specific family, and explained that she saw Family Group intervening before a child's behaviour, or family dysfunction, escalates into crime:

'I usually I come into contact with children at age 10+ at the 'enforcement end', rather than prevention. So it is fantastic to have this way of working with children who are at risk of committing a crime and/or who are vulnerable generally.' (Police)

Learning

Greater security and less conflict with their parents and school means that children are more free to focus on learning and attainment.

Some children's attendance was improved which enabled them to keep up with their lessons better and not fall behind.

Some children's ability to follow instructions and concentrate on tasks was improved which enabled them to learn, whereas before they were distracted and disengaged.

Attainment Monitor

Building on qualitative evidence around children's improved ability to learn, independent analysis for SFW produced by So What? Research in 2012 and 2013²⁹ measured the attainment progress of Family Group children.

As already discussed, the use of quantitative data, including attainment, as a measure of the impact of an intervention is not straightforward. With small numbers of participants and variability in the completeness of data on grades from different schools, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions from the data at this point in time.

However, the So What? analysis suggested that Family Group children advanced their Average Point Score (APS) at a faster rate during their participation in the Family Group programme, compared to before³⁰.

This is encouraging and corroborates feedback from staff, parents and children that children are better able to concentrate in classes as a result of attending Family Group, and therefore better able to learn.

SoWhat also found that the rate of attainment for each individual was quite variable from term to term. This tallies with the qualitative reports that children's progress tends not to be straightforwardly linear, because they can be affected by setbacks stemming from their complex family situations and by changes at school, such as moving from one year group to another.

Parents

Parents experienced many of the impacts described above in relation to children and young people: they are better able to identify and talk about their feelings and concerns, and also benefit from being listened to and responded to positively rather than critically.

Parental role

A key impact of Family Group on parents is to make them feel empowered to play their parental role. This involves recognising their responsibility as a parent to provide safety and security to their child, in order to help the child tolerate anxiety, and modelling positive attitudes and behaviours to their child.

Family Group has identified a common issue for young parents, which is that they are dealing with the responsibilities of parenthood while still feeling that they need to be parented themselves. Several young mums at the primary school Family Group experience this and Family Group helps them to come to terms with it, and receive support from the therapist and other parents as a kind of surrogate for their own parental support and role-modelling.

- The therapist described an example from Year 2 of the evaluation as follows:

'This mum was frustratingly passive, she was stuck in passivity and in a relationship where there had been violence – so she was not present as a resource to her child. He is now about to graduate and doing really well. What changed her was partly the modelling

²⁹ Marlborough Multi Family Therapy Groups Preliminary Attainment Results, 27 January 2012; Attainment Data for Students in the MMFG, August 2013 update, So What? Research Ltd

³⁰ Based on 2013 data

by staff – acting in a way that made her child feel safe. It was initially disempowering, because it made her feel bad. But she had to see it was her fault, not her child's – then she could start to change it.' (SFW therapist)

Access to wider services

Parents are also empowered to deal with other services in order to access the support that they or their child (whether the focus child in Family Group, or their sibling) may need. This empowerment comes from having both increased knowledge of what services and resources they are entitled to access, and increased confidence to do so because of the support of the therapist and other parents in the group.

- For example, in Year 1 of the evaluation, one of the parents was able to get her son (the sibling of the focus child in Family Group) into a special school that can provide the SEN support he needs. With the child in an appropriate school environment, his anxiety is reduced, his dependence on his mother is reduced, and she is freed up to spend more time with her daughter (the focus child in Family Group).

By Year 2 of the evaluation, Family Group staff have become aware that a sibling with additional needs, placing pressure on the family, is a common theme at Family Group. Building up this knowledge of the kind of issues that commonly affect members helps staff to respond to them more swiftly and effectively.

The involvement of other agencies beyond education is also needed to fully support families, such as police and housing. In Year 2, project staff have become increasingly aware of the types of services that are commonly needed and have worked to develop links with them.

- For example, a family was dealing with the imminent release of the mother's former partner from prison. He was considered a risk to the family and so the therapist brought in the support of a police contact to help get information and bring together a team including housing to re-locate and protect the family.
- For example, a father who attended Family Group was identified as being violent towards his partner, and staff referred him to a local voluntary organization who could offer counselling around domestic violence. Through sensitive handling by staff, he was able to recognise that this was a vehicle for change and that the effects on his partner and on their child would be significant.

As described above in relation to disabled siblings, over the two years of the evaluation domestic violence has emerged as a running theme for families in Family Group. In response to this need, one parent has attended a training course around domestic violence (the Freedom Programme³¹). She will deliver a session, with an SFW practitioner, in September. It will take place outside Family Group and be open to both members and other parents who are known to the therapist or the school to be affected by or at risk of domestic violence.

'Topics like disability, death, bereavement, abuse – once the subject is opened, we keep it on the agenda so people can bring it up again. It becomes more accessible as a topic, so people can 'reveal' sooner when these things are troubling them and we can start to address it.' (SFW therapist)

³¹ See <http://www.freedomprogramme.co.uk/>

Confidence in other areas of life

Across both years of the evaluation parents reported that Family Group helped to increase their confidence not only in relation to parenting, but more generally. For example:

- Many felt they had benefited from the opportunity to meet other parents and form friendships, some of which extended to socialising outside of Family Group. Several parents reported that this had helped reduce their isolation and increase their confidence about meeting new people. In Year 2 it was reported that some Family Group parents had withdrawn from socialising with certain people on their estate who are perceived to be a negative influence, showing that they are making more discerning and positive choices in terms of their social circles.
- In Year 2 it was reported that a number of Family Group parents have found jobs since joining Family Group, having previously been unemployed. They credit this partly to the reduced level of stress they have in coping with their child but principally to the confidence they gain from Family Group, where their opinions and advice to others are valued and their strengths are highlighted. The encouragement and support of other parents is also key – for example, in Year 2 some mums looked for a job together, which gave them a motivation and confidence they would not have otherwise had.

'They are seeing that they have skills to offer. There is a sequence which goes: getting involved in Family Group – getting involved in school and doing volunteering – getting skills for their CVs – getting a job.' (Head)

- In Year 2, parents are increasingly perceiving themselves as having something to give, as well as receiving support from Family Group. One group had the idea of helping each other to have a clear-out at home:

'As the intervention grows there is a sense of belonging around Family Group, I'm experiencing parents being more upfront in wanting to commit their energy to extending the intervention in one way or another. For example, conversations about practical changes in their lives – like helping each other have a clear-out! It's showing that people want to help each other.' (SFW therapist)

Graduate Group

As stated earlier Graduate Group has had 5 parent members during most of Year 2 of the evaluation (children do not attend). In the summer term this will rise to 9; a taster session was held recently to give newly graduated parents a chance to see what it involves and to encourage them to become members.

Activities have ranged from creative (decoupage, cake decoration, crafts) to practical (meetings with NSPCC, JobCentre Plus, housing and Adult Mental Health teams). The group meets every week, including during the school holidays - recognising the need for stability at this time.

A report to the funders of Graduate Group (Sport Relief) in December 2012 included some extremely positive feedback from participating parents, for example:

'Sessions have been really good. Things that keep your mind in one place are a good thing.'

'The activities are calming, relaxing. And afterwards I feel proud. I feel like I've achieved something.'

'It's the only time I can be quiet and not think in my head about all the other stuff that's going on in my life.'

Families

A family approach can be particularly impactful in families with complex needs and in which there have been generations of dysfunctional parenting. For parents who have not had good parenting modelled to them by their own parents, Family Group works to give them the techniques and confidence to avoid repeating those failures. A Head explained:

'I think it is making a real difference with those families and it will make a difference even with the next generation. It's hard to see because it's not always immediate. But when these children become parents themselves they will have this experience to have learned from and to know how to have a positive relationship. And that's what's needed. It's breaking the cycle of generational failure.' (Head)

Working with a parent and target child also has benefits for the wider family. Often conflict between siblings, or the target child having a negative influence on their younger siblings, are issues that families want to address. Family Group has impacted on this area because the learning that members take home from Family Group impacts on siblings too. The parent and child can model positive behaviours to others in the family and influence the way that all family members interact.

Schools

By the end of Year 1 of the evaluation, those running Family Groups had established excellent relationships with the three schools in which the Family Groups are run; the project manager felt that the groups were well-embedded in the schools by this point, and attributed this to the fact that Family Group fills a gap which schools cannot address themselves or through other agencies. By the end of Year 2 of the evaluation, impacts were starting to spread more widely throughout the schools, in particular in the infants and junior schools. Family Groups are gaining a reputation as a positive intervention, and the ethos of Family Group is being reflected in these schools' approaches to managing behaviour and to engaging with parents.

Approach to managing behaviour

How schools understand and interpret children's behaviour has been affected, which has implications for the way in which they respond to it:

'There is a greater understanding in schools that behaviour has a meaning...that behaviour that seems incomprehensible can be understood, and from there it can be addressed.' (SFW therapist)

Unsurprisingly, in Year 1 those school staff who were more closely involved with the programme - Heads, school-based partners, staff who have direct contact with the individual child concerned – had the strongest awareness and buy-in to it. In addition, in the two primary schools in particular, this became more widespread amongst staff, and was brought about by whole school training delivered by SFW on INSET days, by the role of the school-based partner who communicates the activities and purpose of Family Group around the school, by the target cards which teachers have to sign and by the visibility of the group and the presence of the therapist in a small school:

'I have tried to be part of the school and chat with the staff about the children so they feel involved.' (SFW therapist)

In the secondary school, awareness is less consistent throughout the school, by dint of the size of the school and number of staff. In Year 2, this pattern persists but all three schools have made progress, as discussed further below.

Relationships with parents

Schools report improved relationships with parents in the Family Group (although it should be noted that these relationships are not always problematic beforehand); and with the parent body more widely. This is because parents recognise that the school is willing and wants to engage with families and children who present 'difficulties', and that they can hold confidentiality, removing parents' fear of being open about their issues.

Where parents have conflict with school staff, the Family Group therapist can mediate these relationships. In addition, as parents become more articulate through discussions at Family Group, they become more able to have constructive dialogue with staff. This has an impact on staff's understanding of their situation and so they can respond more appropriately.

Family Group is continuing to gain a positive reputation, as the children and parents who attend talk about it to others, which makes it easier for schools to engage new parents in the group (as compared to initially when there was often reluctance and trepidation amongst those parents approached by the school about joining). There were several examples in Year 2 of the evaluation where parents had approached the schools themselves to ask about Family Group, having heard about it from their friends and seen the difference in their friends' children.

'Parents are recommending it to other parents – they can broker it in a non-threatening way, it's a really good way to sell it. Family Group parents are the best spokespeople for Family Group!' (Head)

As well as helping with recruitment, Family Group parents are acting as ambassadors for the school in a more general way, having a knock-on effect on other parents' views of the school:

'I feel school staff are treated with more respect, maybe because the Family Group parents have said to other parents, 'they're OK you know!' The interactions are more reasonable. It's a calmer environment now for staff. It's the power of these parents in the community – their views have rubbed off.' (Head)

As above, there were differences between the schools in terms the extent of this impact – this is discussed next.

Difference between schools

By the end of Year 2 of the evaluation, the different schools were at the following stages in terms of spreading the Family Group ethos across the whole school, with the consequent varying degrees of impact on staff attitudes to behaviour and relationships with parents.

- Infants: Year 2 has seen the school introduce the PATHS ('Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies') behaviour programme, which is based on principles similar to those of Family Group, such as emotional literacy and social skills.
 - The crossover between the initiatives is helping to integrate Family Group ethos into the school, and staff feel that Family Group is now a vital part of an overall approach

and a door into a fuller engagement with the school for children and parents who would not otherwise engage

- For example, the school-based partner invites Family Group members to get involved with learning-focused activities such as Reading Group for children and Family Literacy for families
- The therapist has worked with the school to align the targets which the children work on in Family Group with the school's learning targets, to help teachers engage and understand how Family Group supports learning.
- Junior: the arrival of a new Head at the beginning of Year 2 of the evaluation has helped to drive a real shift in the school's whole culture and ethos, which is strongly based on Family Group principles.
 - The therapist is being seen as a general 'behaviour and wellbeing consultant' in the school, so he is able to share insights widely in conversations with teaching and management staff
 - In Year 2, three training sessions are being delivered to staff on positioning behaviour differently and understand it in terms of communication, emotional responses and brain function
 - The Family Group therapist has been involved in developing a new behaviour policy for the school, with this understanding at its heart. There has been consultation with staff and parents on the new policy and it is acting as a systemic driver of change
 - Visible signs of this culture change in the school include: parents being allowed into the staff room; having an open door on parents' evening instead of having to sign in; the removal of the gate separating the school from the pick-up area where parents collect their children. Generally the school is more accessible and open to parents, promoting a collaborative approach between parents and school
 - Plans are underway to position Family Group as part of a new and broader package of support in the school, with Family Group as the highest level of support for those children with the most insecure attachment, other support - such as after school clubs - for those needing moderate support and then whole school inclusive policies and ethos affecting everyone.
 - As part of this, from September 2013, teachers will be coming out of class every three weeks to have a consultation with the therapist about Family Group children in their class, and how to best support and manage them.
- Secondary: challenges remain in terms of spreading the Family Group ethos throughout the school. Reasons for this include:
 - A larger school with more staff means fewer opportunities for the therapist to be visible to and build relationships with individual staff members
 - More staff turnover in a secondary school makes it harder to embed the ethos
 - It is harder to get larger numbers of staff together for training, and therefore bad practice persists from some staff. Without training, staff have less awareness of the underpinning concepts of Family Group, such as attachment theory and systemic thinking
 - The school-based partner is not a member of the senior management team, so she does not have the same direct influence as is the case in the other schools where the school-based partners are both Deputy Heads. That said, the Head is extremely

supportive of Family Group and therefore highly values the school-based partner's input and views.

Despite the cultural and structural barriers, the therapist feels that he is becoming a more 'familiar face' in the secondary school, and while the process is slower, it is nonetheless underway. In Year 2 of the evaluation, updates on Family Group children have been circulated to all staff as part of the school's weekly staff bulletin, as a more practical alternative to face to face discussions between therapist or school-based partner and school staff.

Other organisations

The Family Groups project manager reports that professionals from other services have become strong advocates for Family Group, including those from the Early Intervention Service. Family Group is seen by them as addressing the gap above Tier 2 provision and reducing the level of need which families experience. In Year 1 of the evaluation, a number of Family Group members reported an improved relationship with social services and CAMHS, because they are able to interact with these services in a more empowered way: they know what to ask for and have the confidence to do so.

In Year 2, Family Group is increasingly triggering Common Assessment Frameworks (CAF) which lead to a Team Around the Child (TAC) and additional family support, providing a practical and supported route into external support.

Also in Year 2, the Family Groups project team has also made links with the Virginia Youth Inclusion Programme, a voluntary organisation supporting children with challenging behaviour. The Family Groups project team sits on their steering group and is working to influence their practice as an organisation so that the two interventions complement each other; again trying to align approaches so that children experience consistency from those they interact with.

Communities

While it is difficult to assess the extent to which the Family Group intervention impacts on wider communities, many of those involved feel that it is having a positive influence. As already mentioned, parents talk to others outside the group and take their new learning to their friends and neighbours; impacts flow from families to other families, particularly in small, close-knit but deprived communities such as those in the area:

'There are lots of families in the borough who have multiple problems and who come into contact with services again and again – I suppose you could say 'troubled families'. If you can identify children within these families and get to them in the early stages, when the children are young, this is when they are forming the 'norms' that they will go on to live their lives by. So if you can intervene and break the cycle, set new and more positive norms, that's extremely valuable. Particularly for the young parents, who need the support in modelling healthy norms.' (Police)

As discussed above, parents are giving their time and energy to each other outside Family Group in both informal and formal ways. One mum has signed up as a Homestart volunteer:

'She is now out there and sharing that learning, going to people's houses and supporting them. It's like a virus but a good one, spreading! If other mums do Homestart too that would be amazing! It's building a supportive mesh under our community and working with people who are marginalised.' (Extended Services Coordinator)

Year 2 case studies

The following case studies are of individual families who have participated in Family Groups during Year 2 of the evaluation (although many joined the group earlier than this). The case studies describe the family and the issues that led to their joining Family Group, their experiences of Family Group and the outcomes of their participation. All names have been changed.

Case studies 1-6, from Year 1 of the evaluation, can be found in the Year 1 evaluation report, which is available on the website of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation³².

Case study 7: Lauren and Carole

Lauren and Carole: summary

The family is under a great deal of strain stemming from the multiple health problems of Lauren's parents, brother and another close family member. Lauren's attendance was extremely poor due to her severe anxiety around her mother's wellbeing and conflicts with her peers at school.

The support of Family Group has transformed Lauren's and Carole's ability to cope with pressure. Lauren is feeling more secure and positive towards school, family and friends.

Lauren is 14; she and mum Carole joined Family Group in October 2011. They are likely to be graduating in the coming months. They live with Lauren's dad and her older brother who has additional needs.

Before Family Group

There was a lot of stress in the family, which Carole identified as stemming from coping with her son, who has Downs Syndrome. His behaviour and health are a big source of concern and stress, for example, he often has to be rushed to hospital, or his school have to call Carole to come and take him home because his behaviour is causing problems. Carole's own health is poor – she has suffered a number of TIAs [mini stroke], as well as dealing with mental health issues. Lauren's dad also has mental health needs, involving episodes in which his anger is difficult to manage and he requires residential treatment. Lauren witnessed many of these very alarming health crises in the family from a young age and her practical support was also required by the family, for example, accompanying Carole to hospital appointments. The school felt that this was having a very negative effect on Lauren's wellbeing.

Lauren's attendance was poor – she would miss one or two days every week and while the school was very concerned about this, they did not think that her parents really saw it as an issue. Carole did not go to school herself and the school wondered whether she really saw the value and benefits of school, and whether this could be one of the causes of her apparent lack of support for Lauren's attendance.

Lauren would often say she felt ill so that she could stay at home, because she had extreme anxiety about leaving Carole alone because of her poor physical and mental health. In particular, there was an occasion when Carole was very stressed and left home in an angry state. No-one knew where she was and Lauren was afraid she would harm herself. When

³² See <http://phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=766> (accessed 14.05.13)

Lauren did attend school, she would text and phone Carole up to 15 times a day, because of this anxiety.

There were other reasons for Lauren's poor attendance too: she lacked confidence and was insecure, so felt that she was targeted by other students with name-calling, for example, about her weight. She hated PE lessons and would avoid coming to school especially on those days. She spent a lot of time in the Pastoral Mentor's office, avoiding PE and other students, and at Family Group she would hide her face behind her hands because she didn't like the feeling of people looking at her. She would only talk through Carole and was very reliant on both her mum and the Pastoral Mentor for her year group.

When Lauren came home from school upset because someone had been 'taking the mickey' out of her, Carole would react instinctively and protectively, and immediately contact the school in a confrontational manner. Often Lauren would not go to school the next day, which made it difficult for the school to try and sort out the problem. Because of her irregular attendance her friendships suffered, which added to her insecurity and reluctance to go to school.

Lauren also had a difficult relationship with her father – they used to have arguments and Lauren would '*wind him up to see how angry he got*' – to see how far she could push him. Carole used to conceal Lauren's absence from school from her father, knowing he would be angry, meaning that the dynamics in the family were not as they should have been – the parents did not present a united front in terms of Lauren's attendance, which meant that she did not see it as being important.

Hopes for Family Group

They first heard about Family Group when the therapist approached Lauren about it - they had met before, when Lauren was at junior school. He told Lauren about Family Group and said he would get in touch with Carole, who he then phoned and visited at home to talk about it.

Lauren thought that it sounded '*fun*', and like a chance to meet new people. Carole thought it would be a chance for the two of them to spend time together, and to try and deal with some of the stress in their family life. Outside Family Group, they wanted to do more things together as a family. They hoped to improve Lauren's attendance and for her to become more confident and to express her feelings more.

Carole hoped that by being better able to cope with stress, she would be able to be calmer, listen to Lauren more carefully and give advice – rather than reacting hastily and 'jumping in' – for example, getting angry with the school.

The school felt that they were '*going in circles*' with the family, and hoped that Family Group would make a breakthrough by getting the parents to commit to improving Lauren's attendance. They hoped that by giving Lauren and Carole a space and support to work on their relationship, Lauren would start to feel more secure and that this would form the basis for improvements in her school life.

At Family Group

Lauren likes having the opportunity to **talk to others** about her problems – she says it stops her from worrying about them so much. She finds that the other group members, both parents and children, help her by talking things through and by suggesting ideas to address her problems:

'They might have had a similar situation to you, so they can tell you what they did and it might work for you.' (Lauren)

For example, another family in the group also have a son with special needs, like Lauren's brother, so Carole and Lauren could share experiences and information with them (for example, about organisations offering support). Carole likes the group setting too, for the same reasons as Lauren, and likes giving her views to help others. In addition to this, being in the group has made Carole realise that, *'you're not the only one with problems – other people have it even worse!'*

Lauren likes the **activity sessions** in Family Group (for example dancing, drawing and word games) because, *'you get to talk to different people, and use your brain!'* Carole agrees that the exercises are worthwhile, especially those which help the children to articulate their feelings. Working with different parents is another way to enable this, as it gives children the opportunity to open up about something they might feel wary of raising with their own parent. The exercises are a way for Carole to find out how Lauren is feeling.

Targets are set for each child in the group, which have helped Lauren to focus on her issues and take steps to work on them. Her targets have included 'speak up more', 'attend school', 'don't miss PE', 'reduce texting'. The target-setting process is good for Lauren too, because she likes giving her input into others' targets. The group started to set targets for parents as well, which helped Carole to achieve her goal of becoming calmer and a better listener. She acknowledged, *'I can learn as well!'*

Members of the Family Group sign up to a set of **ground rules** which Lauren and Carole think are essential to creating an environment in which Family Group works. The rules include one that says members won't talk about each other's personal matters outside the group. This helps them to trust each other – which is vital if they are to discuss their issues openly. Another rule is making sure everyone gets a chance to speak – if Lauren didn't speak up, she would keep her feelings inside, which she knows won't make her feel good.

Before and after the Family Group meeting each week, participants fill in a **ratings form** to show how they are feeling. Lauren likes doing this because it gives her a sense of progress to see her own ratings move along the scale from sad, where it was when she first joined Family Group, to happy, where it is closer to now. Carole thinks it's useful too, because even though she doesn't score as highly as she would like to in all areas, the exercise helps to identify where the problems remain and what to work on.

The support of the **SFW therapist** is key to the progress that Lauren and Carole have made at Family Group. Qualities and skills that they identify as important in the therapist are: has a calm manner (*'he doesn't raise his voice, even if someone's being rude'*); explains things in a way that everyone can understand; listens without interrupting and is patient while people think about what they want to say; is not directive (*'he doesn't say, 'you should do this''*); manages the group well; and helps to turn issues into targets. In addition Lauren and Carole say that the therapist has given them time outside the group too, signposting them to other sources of help and support, and arranging a CAF for Lauren.

Running the group alongside the therapist is the **school-based partner**, who is also a Pastoral Mentor. Lauren has received a lot of support from her both in and outside Family Group, and for a period, Lauren's reliance on her mum (the constant texting) did to some extent transfer onto the school-based partner. But with careful management and her increasing confidence, Lauren has overcome her need for constant reassurance and broken the pattern of staying at home from school or ringing mum at every opportunity.

The Educational Welfare Officer explained to Lauren that her parents could be fined if she continued to be absent; in conjunction with this immediate impetus, Family Group provided the support that Lauren needed to change her attending behaviour. With the encouragement of the school-based partner, Lauren has even started to attend her PE lessons, which means she no longer misses whole days of school in order to avoid PE.

Although Lauren's dad does not attend Family Group, the staff recognised that his involvement was crucial to Lauren's progress. They arranged a meeting with him which helped both parents to re-shift the dynamics in the family so that mum and dad are a team supporting Lauren, rather than Lauren and mum colluding together to lie about Lauren's school absences to dad.

Outcomes for the child

- Attendance: Lauren's attendance has improved. Before Family Group, Lauren was out of school for 1 or 2 days a week, because of avoiding PE lessons, problems with other students, and anxiety about being apart from Carole; now, she is a more regular attender.

'I used to dread coming to school. But now I'm happy about it!' (Lauren)

Lauren's attendance of PE lessons, including all the different types of sports, is good for her physical health as well as her confidence and self esteem. She is working towards performing in a dance class – recognising that this is something she would never have done before, and which she has worked towards by taking it step by step.

- Expressing herself: Lauren used to find it 'scary' to express her feelings, but now she doesn't mind it. The group has helped Lauren to open up: *'it's brought me out of myself.'* Now, Lauren talks a lot more than she used to, instead of looking to her mum to talk for her. During the interviews for this evaluation, Lauren repeatedly said that she could hardly believe how much she was talking, and kept apologising to Carole for jumping in first to answer the interviewer's questions for both of them.
- More confidence in class: Lauren now sits near the front of the class and feels more confident about answering the teacher's questions without worrying about what her classmates think.
- Improved relationships with peers: Lauren used to feel that other students were unkind to her, but now, because she is more confident and less insecure, she doesn't feel this so much. If someone is being unkind, she is better able to manage her reactions:

'Now I just ignore them instead of getting upset and bursting into tears.' (Lauren)

Through Family Group she has been able to resolve a conflict with one of her friends, who also attends the group, by turning their disagreement into a target which they could both work on.

- Considerate of others: Lauren is more able to resolve disagreements with peers herself not only because she feels more confident, but because she realises that involving staff takes up their time. She showed a thoughtfulness and maturity when explaining that she no longer goes running to the Pastoral Mentor with issues in the friendship group, because she understands that the Pastoral Mentor has a lot of other responsibilities to deal with.

Finally everyone notices that Lauren is happier. She comes across as a lively and confident girl who is proud of the progress she has made, kind and considerate towards her mum, and extremely appreciative of the support that Family Group has given her.

Outcomes for the parent

- Listening and responding: Carole has got better at listening, so that when Lauren is upset by something that has happened at school, Carole responds calmly and thinks it through - rather than immediately jumping to defend Lauren and thereby inflaming the situation. This has not been a straightforward change; when Carole is stressed by other circumstances she can revert to her former reactive habit, but overall she is progressing in the right direction. As Lauren says, *'It makes me happy when mum listens.'*
- A stronger parenting partnership: Carole no longer colludes with Lauren to conceal her school absences from her dad; instead the parents are on the same side in terms of the importance given to Lauren's attendance at school.
- Better relationships in the family: the family are spending more time together doing positive activities, such as going to the cinema and going to see the Christmas lights. They are having more conversations and getting to know each other better, for example, dad telling Lauren about where he used to work and what it was like.
- Quality time with Lauren: as well as doing more as a family, her parents are focusing their attention on Lauren as an individual too, for example by playing games or cards with her. They recognise that while their son makes more obvious demands on their time, Lauren needs them too and they make separate time for her:

'We weren't really listening to her before. Now we know to give her time, and to prioritise it - Lauren's time is important.' (Carole)

The future

Lauren and Carole have experienced very challenging circumstances during recent months. Carole's uncle, to whom the family are extremely close, has been very seriously ill. At the same time Lauren's brother had a difficult period at school and was showing signs of distress which were very worrying for the family, since he is unable to communicate what is the matter. These situations have of course affected Lauren and Carole: tensions in the whole family have risen and there has been a lot of stress and worry. During this period Lauren's attendance has not been as good as it was, and she is struggling to engage with some of her classes because she is distracted by worries about home. Carole has found it hard while under such stress to put into practice what she has learnt at Family Group around reflective thinking, establishing the clear parenting partnership, supporting Lauren's attendance and prioritising time for Lauren. Some of the stress on the family is still being shared with Lauren, instead of being contained by her parents.

However, no-one doubts that without Family Group, Lauren and Carole would be faring considerably less well than they are under the circumstances. Lauren's confidence continues to shine through and Carole feels supported and bolstered by the staff and other adults at Family Group. Family Group is providing a vital space for them at the moment, in which to spend time together and process their feelings about what they are going through. Compared to previous similar crisis points, they are weathering the storm much better, and Lauren will graduate in the summer term - slightly later than she may have done were it not for the recent turbulence. The school-based partner described the new Lauren she has seen emerge through Family Group, more ready to take on her future:

'She has more inner confidence. She's more outgoing, more outspoken, and not afraid to confront things. I've never seen that resilience in her before.' (School-based partner)

Case study 8: Tom and Caroline

Tom and Caroline: summary

Tom's increasingly challenging behaviour was leading to multiple detentions and short term exclusions. He could be introverted or aggressive; his 'up and down' behaviour was causing a lot of disruption at school, and stress for mum Caroline as she was frequently called into school.

Through Family Group it was identified that Tom's issues stem from childhood trauma and subsequent attachment disorder. He is now learning to cope with being away from Caroline and to manage his anxiety around this. They are both benefitting from understanding what attachment disorder is and how it affects their behaviour, as a basis for starting to change it.

Tom and Caroline started attending Family Group in late 2012 when Tom was at the end of Year 7. Caroline is a single parent. They moved to the area a couple of years ago.

Before Family Group

Caroline was approached to join Family Group based on Tom's increasingly challenging behaviour in the first year of secondary school. He was on a reduced timetable and had received a lot of detentions because of his 'attitude'. He also came across as a complex character: articulate and introverted at one moment, then reactionary or aggressive the next. These 'extremes' of behaviour led the Pastoral Mentor to comment:

'He can come across as quiet and shy sometimes but then in corridors or in class he can act as the class clown, or he can be rude and argumentative – and if he thinks he's right he won't let it go. His behaviour is very up and down.' (Year 8 Pastoral Mentor)

The multiple detentions and short term exclusions meant that the school frequently contacted Caroline with reports of this bad behaviour. Caroline is described as 'very hands on' and would equally be happy to contact the school if she had a problem to discuss. However, the constant negative feedback was making Caroline frustrated with the school and their systems which she believed were exacerbating Tom's behaviour.

In a discussion between the therapist and the Achievement Coordinator, the Pastoral Mentor suggested that Caroline and Tom could benefit from Family Group. They approached Caroline, explaining that it would be a chance to speak to others in Year 8 and 9, to talk, get help or share ideas:

'I said, 'just give it a try, you might even enjoy it!'' (Year 8 Pastoral Mentor)

The Pastoral Mentor hoped that Family Group would be an opportunity for Tom to 'open up' and share his feelings with the group, so that he could see how other teenagers respond to the challenges typical to that age group. She also hoped that they could identify the causes of his behavioural problems before he reached the point of permanent exclusion. For Caroline, it was hoped that Family Group would be opportunity to understand that she wasn't alone in facing these issues:

'I hope that being part of Family Group will help Tom to open up a bit. For him to listen to others in the group and understand that he's not on his own, that others are feeling the pressure too. And to get Mum involved with something with Tom in a parent/student situation so that she can also see that there are parents going through the same things.' (Year 8 Pastoral Mentor)

Caroline's main aim before Family Group was to find ways to help her son feel happy and supported in school and to address the causes of his challenging behaviour. Although he wasn't sure what to expect, Tom accepted that he had emotional, behavioural and anxiety problems and that Family Group would be an opportunity to explore them.

At Family Group

Caroline and Tom first dropped in to Family Group as a trial, to get a feel for the sessions and to meet the therapist. Caroline felt 'petrified' during her first visit, not knowing what to expect. However, she remembered that the therapist was warm and friendly, and he encouraged her to stay for the whole session.

An early diagnosis that emerged for Caroline and Tom through Family Group was that Tom was experiencing a form of attachment disorder. During 'parent time', Caroline revealed that Tom's father had left when Tom was a baby, following domestic violence. When Tom was two, Caroline had another partner, whom she left upon finding out he had been abusive to Tom. This left Caroline and Tom with a great deal of damage, both traumatised by the experience and Caroline full of guilt, which explains her compensatory behaviour and Tom's attachment to her.

The attachment disorder manifested itself in that Tom didn't like to be apart from Caroline. He rarely left the home to go out with friends and he wouldn't want to go on any trips or visit family without his mum. As Caroline sought to protect her son from the outside world, she would defend his choices and behaviour rather than challenge him as a mother or authority figure. As the therapist noted:

'The primary presentation is Caroline in collusion with Tom against the world.' (Therapist)

Family Group has focussed upon Tom's attachment disorder by asking him to work with other parents. He found this difficult at first but, with the support of the therapist and the safe group environment he learnt to trust others and to participate in games or exercises without Caroline. Tom particularly benefitted from the therapist breaking down his emotional reactions from a psychologist's 'scientific' point of view and explaining how they fitted in with his disorder. The therapist also explained strategies to help manage his responses in future. As Tom explains after one difficult session:

'To help me with the attachment, we've been moving around different parents to see if I work well with others. It didn't work at first but it's started to get better. At first I got really upset, I almost went home but [the therapist] asked me to stay for the afternoon and he helped me to understand it more. I was really upset and he got me to play this game on his phone and it helped me to get from this emotional state to be more thinking – using my brain. And after that we started to talk when everyone had gone home... the next time I still felt a bit weird but it's getting better.' (Tom)

Caroline noted that this activity has helped Tom to become more independent, both in Family Group and outside school. In Family Group, Tom is now getting up straight away to swap parents for games and activities, rather than being the last. While he still isn't keen on leaving his home, he recently went to stay with his brothers and step-mum who live several hours away. He has had trips away from Caroline before, but this time he no longer insisted on regular and long phone calls home. As Caroline commented:

'Before, even if he was just visiting my sister he'd still ring me every day and he'd be on the phone for two hours, and at the end he'd 'say don't go, don't go!' To now where I don't hear from him – from 2 hour phone calls to none! He's done really well, he's done fantastic with that.' (Caroline)

In terms of his attitude, Family Group members have co-produced a number of strategies and targets to help him tackle his challenging behaviour in school. In particular, Tom has been asked to 'think before he speaks', to reduce rude and argumentative interactions. His targets have included 'being 100% respectful to adults and teachers', intended to help tackle his issue with authority. As Tom is considering a potential career in the army, the need to learn to take orders and show respect is crucial for his future success. Other targets include 'count to 5,' 'speak for yourself' and, during positive sessions, 'stay the same'.

Tom is learning to manage his emotions and behaviour. He learns from Family Group, listens to the strategies on offer and takes time to analyse and consider his own behaviour. It works particularly well when he is able to take time to think through his reactions logically, and to adjust his response. As he explains:

'Before I came to Family Group my attitude was horrendous. People would say something or the littlest thing could go wrong and I would be really aggressive or rude to the person, but it's getting better. The 5 second rule, to think before I speak, or think to use a different tone [has helped]'. (Tom)

The process of co-producing targets with the broader Family Group has also been a useful exercise for Caroline, who can see the ways in which other parents analyse Tom's behaviour. Whereas Caroline might excuse Tom's ways, other parents will challenge them or be more critical. This type of frank criticism would usually be difficult for Caroline and Tom to accept, but these discussions are always solution-driven, designed so that parents also suggest ways to tackle them in a non-threatening way based on their own experience. As Caroline commented:

'Family Group is very important. It makes Tom stop and think that he can't carry on the way he's going and I think it helps to talk to not just [the therapist] but other families going through it or with similar problems, at home or at school or at both, and they all sit there and discuss it and they all come up with ways to try to make themselves better. And they say, 'I did that' and 'I did this' and 'this is what worked for me, maybe you could try this solution'. (Caroline)

Whilst Tom is focussing on strategies to manage his attachment disorder and behaviour, Caroline is still demonstrating behaviours which show her compensatory behaviour towards him. This is largely illustrated through their continued collusion, most notably around the school. Whilst there are some examples of improvement in Tom's behaviour, these are not consistent and he has continued to receive detentions and a fixed-term exclusion. Yet rather than hold Tom accountable, Caroline blames the school for this situation:

'I don't know, they've got a lot of pupils here, they can't focus on one. I don't know what else to suggest to them, I work with them really well but sometimes they don't do what they say they will do, which can cause some people to have exclusions... (Caroline)

In this quote, Caroline is implying that Tom's latest exclusion came about because she did not get a letter informing her that he had an after school detention, and that as she didn't know, she couldn't ensure he attended. He got excluded as a result of not turning up.

The overall message is that the experience with Family Group so far has been positive, particularly in breaking down Tom's attachment disorder and as Caroline has been able to see that the school has been making allowances for Tom, which has helped smooth the relationship between them. However, Tom's situation in school is still precarious and his behaviour unpredictable:

'Family Group is helping. Because he comes here, the school takes a step back and thinks well, he does go to Family Group, he's seeing a psychologist, everyone's working

together so I think he's got a bit more leeway than he had a year ago... On the whole, this school year is still better than Year 7 but it's still scraping by, bumping along.'
(Caroline)

To some extent the patchy impact on Tom's behaviour and Caroline's continued collusion reflects the journey still to be made through Family Group. It is still very early in terms of their therapy and, as Caroline admitted, the focus so far has been on Tom's attachment disorder rather than anything specific to Caroline. However, the situation is complicated by their plans to leave the area and the school before the end of the school year, discussed in the final section of this case study.

Outcomes for the child

- Tom has been able to articulate and understand his attachment disorder. The diagnosis in itself has given him a sense of relief as he has been able to make tangible a lot of his anxieties, and feel that it is something he can work through.
- Tom has been able to build up trusting relationships with new adults at Family Group and is more able to spend time away from Caroline.
- He has enjoyed breaking down emotional issues intellectually. He is able to understand his reactions to issues and think of ways to react more rationally.
- There are definite improvements in behaviour when Tom actually uses the strategies he has learnt through Family Group, particularly when he takes time to digest a situation.
- Nonetheless, Tom's behaviour is patchy and he continues to be challenging in school, defying authority and drawing attention to himself. He can still be seen as irritating and attention seeking by others.

Outcomes for the parent

- Caroline has learnt more about attachment disorder and strategies to help Tom build up resilience without her.
- She has learnt how to accept constructive criticism from other experienced and knowledgeable members of the group and understands that she needs to build up a mother-son relationship, with her as the authority figure over Tom.
- However, there is a sense that Caroline enjoys the collusion she has with her son, which might undermine any progress to build independence from each other. This is illustrated by the way Caroline continues to defend Tom's behaviour and blame the school for his sanctions.

The future

Caroline and Tom have plans to leave the area and move back to where they are originally from. This is both to return to a familiar area where relatives and friends are, but is also driven by Caroline's conviction that a new school will be better for Tom than the current one. This move is imminent:

'We will move as soon as we get a house exchange. I have picked three schools and I would really like Tom there by September.' (Caroline)

This anticipation of leaving might have undermined any serious attempts by Caroline of building bridges and Tom's commitment to improving relations with the school. It certainly means that the therapist has limited opportunity to tackle Caroline's attitude towards the

school in Family Group, despite other parents noticing the way she absolves Tom from any guilt and instead blames the school. Caroline has separated Family Group in her mind from the school: she is full of praise for the former, but distrustful of the latter. Indeed, when asked if they would miss anything about the school, their only response was 'Family Group', as the following exchange shows:

Tom: That's the only thing – I don't want to leave Family Group -

Caroline: No, you don't want to leave Family Group. I did actually ask Mark if it was out of the London boroughs and he said no... Where we want to go back home to, I think that if they had it down there a lot of families would be a lot better off.

Nonetheless, Caroline hopes that there is transferable learning that Tom can use in future, to help him settle into his new school:

'There are things that he can take away to the next school, that he has learnt at Family Group'. (Caroline)

Case study 9: Max and Danni

Max and Danni: summary

Max's behaviour at school was increasingly disruptive and problematic; his attainment was suffering as he would not do homework; the school was worried about his transition to secondary school. The family were going through some stressful times; Max's little brother was being diagnosed with additional needs, and Danni was in the process of adopting her sister's child as she could no longer take care of him.

At Family Group they learned ways to nurture their relationship through these stresses and strains. They got to spend time together; Danni learned to express affection and praise for Max; in response, Max has 'mellowed' and learned to understand and manage his outbursts.

Max and Danni started attending Family Group in summer 2011 when Max was in Year 5. They live with dad and Max's little brother Oscar, aged 5. The family are in the process of adopting Danni's nephew.

Before Family Group

Max was increasingly getting into trouble at school. His teachers were concerned about his behaviour, which was characterised by rudeness, defiance, irresponsibility and a lack of respect. He could be 'infuriating', seeming to get under people's skin and rile them. In class Max was described as:

'Always clowning around, trying to be funny, always wanting to be the centre of attention, and to outsmart others by having the last word.' (Deputy Head)

This behaviour could act as a catalyst for other disruption, which took up a lot of teacher time to resolve. As well as attitudinal issues, Max had started to get into fights at school and on the way home.

'I used to not listen to the teacher and answering back and name calling...and was getting into fights.' (Max)

Max is a bright boy but was underachieving academically. He didn't take any homework home and his classroom behaviour was affecting his performance. As a Year 6 pupil, the school felt with a sense of urgency that Max needed to address his issues and behaviour before he joined secondary school the following year. Not only would secondary school take

a more hard-line approach to his behaviour, but Max typically struggles with change and in building relationships with new teachers.

Danni was embarrassed by having to frequently be in school to meet with teachers and discuss Max's bad behaviour. She approached the school to ask if she and Max could join Family Group – at the same time as the school was about to approach her to join. Danni is friends with another Family Group mum, and having seen the change in her friend's son she wanted to try it with Max. She was impressed with how it had worked for her friend's family in bringing them closer together and wanted to experience this with her own family.

At Family Group

Despite asking to join Family Group, Danni struggled at first to open up to the group, as she was afraid that she would look like she had 'failed' as a mother, or be stigmatised as a 'dysfunctional' family. Before their first session, she told Max he was not allowed to 'show her up' – which meant that he was quiet and withdrawn from the group. The therapist noticed that Danni's high expectations meant that she was very critical of Max, often putting him down. She struggled to express her affection for him and the therapist felt her emotions and reactions seemed to be 'rehearsed' rather than natural. Like many parents with challenging children, Danni tended to 'switch off' from trying to engage with Max. As such, she remained slightly peripheral in terms of how much she participated, tending to stay on the edges of the group and not involve herself fully.

'When I first came I didn't really like to talk... it's hard, you do have to build up to everything in the group and it did take me a bit of time to come out of myself and start expressing things about the home or me when I was younger.' (Danni)

The therapist approached Danni early on to explain to her why it was important for her to open up to the group and allow Max to be himself. This insight was crucial to Danni and Max's progress within Family Group: Danni started to allow their issues to become public within the group and to accept other members' advice as constructive, rather than as critical. She started to understand that it was OK to need and accept support. As Max explained, Family Group creates a safe, trusting environment:

'The therapist and the parents, they always say that whatever comes around in this room stays in this room.' (Max)

As time went on it became clear that Danni was dealing with several major challenges which were adding to her stress around – and possibly contributing to - Max's behaviour. One of Danni's problems was that her younger son Oscar was demonstrating increasingly challenging behaviour. She asked the therapist to come and see him, which led to a diagnosis of developmental delay. Oscar's additional needs contribute to Max's poor behaviour, because Max feels that Oscar is his mum's favourite, and he is frustrated when Oscar doesn't respond to him as he wants him to. The situation is worsened when the boys fight and Danni tells off Max because he is the elder.

The therapist worked with Max to help him to understand that Oscar has additional needs, and to discuss ways to help him deal with this. He also worked with Danni to help her understand that Max is jealous of the time she spends with Oscar. This explains why Max particularly enjoys Family Group activities that allow him to spend quality time with his mum:

'I like playing games between me and my mum. Because my brother he had to see a specialist because he's not good behaved, and he swears a lot and he's only 5 and he might have ADHD, so my mum has to spend a lot of time with him [at home] to help him as he's worse than me. So I like it when I can play games or stuff one-to-one with my

mum, like massaging, as I get time to spend with my mum and ask her stuff and talk to her.' (Max)

There were discussions at Family Group about domestic violence, and while initially Danni distanced herself from this topic, it began to emerge that she had been affected by violence. She had a strict upbringing in which she and her siblings feared physical punishment. Both Danni's siblings have been in prison and she is currently seeking permission to look after her sister's child. It is likely that Oscar has witnessed domestic violence at Danni's brother's home. Discussions at Family Group revealed that a climate of aggression and hostility is what many of the families know as 'normal'. The parents saw violence as a natural way to defend themselves or their children. Danni could come across as very powerful and unapproachable; 'don't cross me', her attitude could seem to say.

Knowing this context is helping the therapist to understand the sources of Danni and Max's issues, and to help Danni to see the connections between these circumstances and Max's behaviour. Danni was encouraged to think about her own childhood and to reflect on how it influences the way she engages with Max. She realised that she was punishing Max for not being as eager to please her as she had been of her own parents, and that her lack of warmth was replicating her own experience. Her challenge was therefore to spend quality time with Max and to find ways to praise good behaviour, rather than focus on the bad. She also tries to find time to sit with him on the couch, to offer him a cuddle and show more physical affection.

'With the cuddles, [the therapist] worked out it was more to do with me when I was younger, I've never been a cuddly person, I always said to my dad and mum, 'I love you' but I never needed the hands on approach of having to sit there and cuddle my mum and dad... So when Max was 10, I didn't understand why he wanted to sit next to me on the sofa and cuddle me all the time, but [the therapist] told me to try it. And I did, and Max would say, 'I like sitting here with you, mum'. And I said to the therapist, 'you were right!' But if he hadn't have told me that, I wouldn't have thought I wasn't giving him the attention he wanted'. (Danni)

Another mechanism of Family Group that has helped Danni to open up and become more self-aware is the banter between members of the group – banter allows them to tell each other the truth, by doing so in a 'funny', teasing way. This can help bring issues out into the open, where they can be discussed and worked on as a group in a trusting, safe environment. It also happened as a result of realising that other outwardly 'dysfunctional' families are actually full of 'normal' people and that outwardly 'perfect' families actually have their own issues. This relative perspective has helped Danni open up and realise that hers is still a normal family, but with a certain set of specific issues.

'I know [the therapist] is trying to help. He's not telling me things in a negative way to put me down or tell me that I'm bad or doing something wrong.' (Danni)

'It's nice to know a few of the kids in the school as well, that it's not just your child that's being picked out. So I'm not really failing as there's other children that are like it. It's not the big hand pointing at me going 'you are bad'. Unless you come to places like groups like this, you don't understand that others are going through similar issues.' (Danni)

Max particularly enjoys Family Group as an opportunity to be with Danni and to have her attention to himself, away from his brother. His targets have helped him to concentrate on aspects of his behaviour, including counting to 10 to think about what he's going to say.

'My targets have been to follow instructions, don't answer back, don't put others down, don't say hurtful things and do your homework.' (Max)

This has helped him manage his behaviour in class, as all his teachers are aware of these targets and support him to achieve them.

Outcomes for the child

- Max's behaviour began to change quickly once the family joined the group. His class teacher was delighted. He started to become more thoughtful and reflective, offering insights into other children's behaviour, as well as being prepared to talk about his own. Rather than always being the class clown, he is reported to have 'mellowed'.
- While he can still cause problems in class, he understands his behaviour better and recognises the triggers that cause outbursts. He is answering back less, both at school and home:

'Max has improved a lot in his behaviour, it's just the little thing of opening the mouth up when it should be shut – but it's not so many times now, he's started to get to the point where he knows not to do it.' (Danni)

- He is learning that when they are at home, Danni's time has to be shared by him and Oscar, and that Oscar's needs mean that he requires a lot of attention. He is working to understand that he shouldn't take this as personal affront and, while he can still feel left out, he understands that he needs to support his mum through it.
- Working with other parents in Family Group is helping Max to deal with change and build new relationships with people other than Danni. This should prove helpful when Max starts at secondary school and gets to know his new teachers.
- Max has started to bring his homework home, to do with his mum as part of their quality time together:

'He comes to me now with his homework – before, he was like I ain't got no homework! Now it's a time where we can sit down and do it together and it's something we can both work on.' (Danni)

- Having his teacher know his targets mean Max can approach her for help. She understands that there are reasons when he turns up to school in a particular mood or is having a bad day, so she can offer additional support.
- Having fewer incidents at school, for example getting into trouble or fighting, has meant that Max is happier about going to school.

Outcomes for the parent

- Danni is opening up about her childhood and engaging more in the group, interacting with the other parents. She feels that she has learnt through sharing problems and being open and honest in the group, rather than being too proud or afraid to contribute. The opportunity to meet with other parents and learn about their backgrounds and issues has helped put her own situation in context and learn that she should not be ashamed of her problems.
- She is more aware of the impact that she has on Max's emotional wellbeing and therefore on his behaviour. She is no longer putting him down or telling him to be quiet, but instead letting him think and speak for himself. She has started to be more open to seeing the good in Max, and to telling him that she is proud of him.

- As well as improving their verbal interactions, Danni now shows more physical affection to Max, noticing when he wants a cuddle or putting her arm around him when they watch TV together.
- Getting to know the Deputy Head in his role as school-based partner at Family Group has helped Danni to establish more positive links with the school and feel more comfortable about approaching staff. She knows that the school is trying to help her and Max.

'I've got more of an understanding of the school now as well. Before, the Deputy Head would come out at the end of school and tell me all these bad things about my child and I'd be like, 'hang on, he ain't that bad at home, why's he telling me this?' But when you're involved with Family Group you find out more about the school and it's not just a letter home saying 'your child's done this' all the time. Since we've been at the group I haven't had any letters home'. (Danni)

Danni reflected on her initial expectations of Family Group, compared with what has actually been achieved:

'I thought 'we'll go there and we'll sort Max out'. I didn't think I'd be going away thinking about me, and what I was doing when I was younger!' (Danni)

Outcomes for the school

For Max's Form Tutor, the knowledge of what the family is going through is helpful in understanding the background to his behaviour during the school day. Knowing what is happening in Family Group gives an insight into the family and means the teacher can respond sensitively and appropriately. This has been particularly helpful for Max, who has previously mistrusted teachers and yet benefits from stable, secure relationships.

'It's good that the children know that you know what they're going through. Because if you don't understand, you might tell them off for something, but actually something really dramatic has happened in the family and you don't know about it.' (Form Tutor)

As a Form Tutor with two pupils who have benefited from Family Group, she noted that the positive changes in their behaviour has allowed her to spend more classroom time on teaching and less on managing behaviour. Her experience of Family Group has given her strategies to deal with challenging pupils in the future and she finds the therapist open and available for conversations if she has anything to discuss.

The future

Everyone feels that they have seen a great deal progress in Max and had hoped that he and Danni would graduate from Family Group before he reached the end of Year 6. However, there is a great deal of flux at home: Oscar has received a diagnosis of learning disability and may also be on the autistic spectrum, and the family are undertaking the adoption of Danni's nephew. The adoption is likely to divert some of Danni's attention away from Max and change the family dynamic once again. Furthermore, Danni suffers from severe back pain and can often be observed to be suffering during group sessions: Danni and Max's progress had a setback when they missed five sessions in a row due to illness and the Christmas holidays, and this cycle of improvement and re-lapse has persisted since. This means that there are a number of external influences affecting the short and medium term stability of family life.

The therapist notes that Danni and Max are still struggling to break down the pattern in their relationship in which Danni responds to negative behaviour and Max enacts this behaviour

because he knows she will respond to it. They have made progress, in that Danni recognises the pattern and knows what she should do to break it, but she is often very tired given all the different things that she is facing at home. As such, there is a sense that Danni and Max may stay with Family Group in the medium term, to ensure that Danni is supported to manage these pressures and maintain progress with Max.

Case study 10: Jessica and Vicky

Jessica and Vicky: summary

Jessica's behaviour at school and at home was causing a great deal of stress, disruption and conflict. Her tantrums and attention-seeking were having a negative effect on family relationships as well as Jessica's ability to maintain friendships and to achieve in terms of learning.

Family Group has given Jessica much-needed one-to-one time with Vicky and she has learned to express her feelings rather than get angry or sulk. She is also able to recognise others' feelings and has become more considerate and reflective.

The family

Jessica is 9 and attends junior school. She and mum Vicky have been coming to Family Group since early in the autumn term of 2012. They live with Jessica's two little brothers, who are aged three and two. Their dad doesn't live with the family but he sees the children regularly.

Before Family Group

Jessica's behaviour was 'difficult', both at school and at home – she was disobedient, disrespectful, would answer back, throw tantrums, refuse to accept the blame when she did something wrong, and be devious when it came to getting her own way. At home, she did not interact well with her siblings (hitting them, a particular issue because they are very young) and could be manipulative of her parents. Jessica liked to be the centre of attention, for example when her dad visited, she would complain that he was not paying her enough attention. She found it difficult to adjust to having two siblings competing for her parents' attention, after seven years as an only child. It was hard for Vicky to find time to spend with each child, especially with two so young.

At school, there were similar issues. For example, she might pretend her homework had been screwed up by her brother: '*it was always someone else's fault!*' She did not tend to get on well with other children, frequently getting into conflicts, so she was quite isolated. Her learning was affected because she was fidgety in class, and prone to long periods of sulking after a tantrum. The Head (at that time) and the Deputy Head both felt that Jessica was at risk of exclusion.

Often Jessica would come home and tell Vicky about something that had happened at school, rather than tell a teacher – Vicky was frustrated by this, because she felt that the school was better placed to sort out the problem than she was.

Vicky knew about Family Group through one of her friends who already attended it. The school thought that Jessica might benefit and so the therapist met first with Vicky, then with Jessica and Vicky together, to encourage them to take up a place. Having observed the experiences of her friend, Vicky was aware from the start that it was not all about Jessica

and that she herself had to be prepared to change. Therefore the therapist felt she would be receptive to Family Group and it was likely to work well for the family.

Another reason for asking Vicky and Jessica to join the group was around the needs of the group. At that time, there were a number of families attending who had quite similar problems and without having a mix within the group, they could tend to get 'stuck' and be unable to help each other. Because Jessica's needs were less extreme, the therapist wanted Vicky in the group to help bring some perspective and positivity into the dynamics. Vicky had more 'head space' than some of the other mums, so she could see their situations more objectively and offer the advice and support which is crucial to how Family Group works.

Vicky wanted Family Group to help Jessica to change her attitude and take responsibility for her actions. She hoped that Jessica would start talking about her feelings more, instead of just shrugging and not explaining what was the matter - in the group, Jessica was very shy and inarticulate at first, and relied a lot on her mum to talk for her, rather than express herself.

Jessica saw it as a chance to spend 'quality time' with Vicky. Vicky recognised that this need was there because of the competition for attention at home. Vicky was a strong parent in the sense that she could set and enforce boundaries for Jessica, and be strict in disciplining her, and she wanted to understand why this wasn't working. She was open to changing the way that she related to Jessica, if this would help address her behaviour.

Vicky was especially keen to work on Jessica's behaviour because she was worried that her two younger children might start to copy it as they got older.

At Family Group

Jessica has responded well and rapidly to Family Group. Jessica likes spending time with Vicky, enjoying her attention and not having to share this with her brothers. They both like doing the activity together and having chats, hugs and biscuits together afterwards; as Vicky says, *'she comes and gives me a cuddle.'*

Jessica also likes talking and giving her opinion on other children's situations and making suggestions for their targets. She knows that she isn't the only one with problems, nor the 'worst' problems, and that helps her to feel better about herself as well as teaching her to empathise with others.

Vicky identifies the ways in which Family Group staff help her and Jessica. The school-based partner gives Jessica a feeling of security and support in school. Vicky particularly likes feeling that the therapist relates to the group members on a personal, not just a professional level:

'He gets to the bottom of it, he asks lots of questions, why, why. And Jessica just finds him really nice – it's the way he talks to kids, he's very experienced. He uses things about his own family as examples and it just encourages you because you know, he's genuine.'
(Vicky)

Jessica misses maths to come to Family Group, but Vicky helps her at home afterwards to make up for it, which is a good way for them to spend more time together:

'I've always helped with her homework but now I use it as an opportunity to discuss behaviour as well. I've seen how much she needs the one-to-one with me.' (Vicky)

Vicky is a helpful presence at the group because she listens to others and is direct in her responses. As mentioned above, because Vicky does not tend to have so many difficult emotions to process in relation to her child as some of the other parents do, she can use her

reflective capacity to offer insights to them. This helps others to move forward, rather than stay stuck in unhelpful patterns of behaviour and responses.

In the course of a few months Jessica went from scoring 1 or 2 on her targets to getting 3 or 4. Initially Vicky thought the targets were motivating Jessica well, because Jessica would often ask her, *'am I doing well on my targets today?'* - but she also wondered whether Jessica's improved behaviour could be due to Christmas coming up – Jessica knew that she had to behave if she wanted her Christmas presents. The question of what really motivates Jessica to change her behaviour is one that Family Group is still working on.

Outcomes for the child

- Jessica is expressing her feelings, instead of shouting and getting upset, or simply shrugging. She is also able to process her feelings and react more positively to them. Vicky says:

'She manages her issues better, instead of sulking. If she doesn't get her own way, she's not sulky – she can bring herself up.' (Vicky)

This helps Vicky to help Jessica, because she knows what the problem is. For example, Jessica will say, *'I'm feeling sad because Archie's [her brother] watching TV'* and Vicky understands that this means she is feeling left out and wants to be involved.

- Also in relation to her younger brothers, Jessica is less prone to become antagonised and violent. She will tell Vicky when there is a problem, rather than *'play the little mum'* by telling them off herself.
- Being able to articulate her feelings is enabling Jessica to resolve conflict with her peers:
'It helps me to talk about my feelings. If people are being horrible to me I can talk about it with them and I can co-operate.' (Jessica)
- Jessica is less reliant on Vicky to talk for her. At the group it is noticeable that Jessica is speaking for herself more. Vicky has observed her gaining in confidence, for example befriending a new pupil at school.
- Jessica is developing her reflective capacity. She is able to see how other children are feeling and identify appropriate targets for them. This compares very positively to her initial attitude in Family Group, when she found it hard to give her attention to others and focus on their problems.
- At home, Jessica is more considerate. Vicky reports that Jessica is *'asking, rather than demanding'* when she wants something, and that her request can be discussed calmly without getting heated. Jessica illustrates her changed attitude towards with this example:
'When my mum's on the phone, I'm quiet and my mum's pleased with me!' (Jessica)
- Jessica is doing well on her targets. For example, 'take responsibility': in the mornings she will get up when she is supposed to, instead of holding everyone up. Another example was that when she lost a library book, she spent time looking for it and when it couldn't be found, suggested that the cost was taken out of her birthday money. When she achieves her target 'to earn approval', this makes her feel proud of herself:
'I earned a lot of approval today! Then I feel happy and I enjoy myself.' (Jessica)
- There have been fewer incidents at school and Jessica is completing her work in class. She has recently gone up by a sub-level in maths, which is especially positive given that this is the lesson she misses in order to attend Family Group.

Outcomes for the parent

- Vicky is less stressed because Jessica is taking more responsibility for herself, for example getting up and dressed in the morning: *'It used to be such an effort!'* (Vicky)
- They are communicating better, with Jessica more perceptive to how her actions are making Vicky feel, for example asking, *'Are you getting cross with me?'* Then they can talk about why it's happening, rather than Jessica withdrawing and hiding away, or arguing back at Vicky.
'It means I don't have to send her to her room... which I don't like doing because then I don't get to see her!' (Vicky)
- Vicky has learned how effective it is to praise Jessica and thank her when she is good or helpful. She is more emotionally available to Jessica. Vicky has become more reflective and self-aware and this is providing a model for Jessica to copy.
- Vicky knows more about what's gone on at school for Jessica, because she can see if there is a low score on the target card and ask Jessica to tell her what happened. It helps to get to the bottom of it straightaway, rather than Jessica being upset and not saying why.
- Jessica's improved behaviour is setting a positive example to her younger brothers; Vicky says, *'it's good because Archie copies her.'* Jessica also models positive behaviour further afield, when visiting members of the wider family.

The future

After their first term at Family Group, both Vicky and Family Group staff felt that Jessica might graduate from the group within the school year. However, by the end of the second term a more nuanced understanding of their situation had begun to emerge. It had been observed by the therapist that the improvements in Jessica's behaviour may have been due to some extent to Vicky's 'tight ship' – Vicky wanted Jessica to do well, not to make mistakes, say the 'wrong' thing or embarrass Vicky in front of the group. Some of her success in controlling Jessica's behaviour was therefore down to 'carrot and stick' tactics, rather than reflecting an understanding of the causes of Jessica's behaviour and working from this to change it.

The next step for Vicky is to let Jessica express herself, encourage her to learn to cue into others' feelings and work out her own responses. Vicky needs to understand what this means and how it will better equip Jessica to develop her emotional intelligence – and to be able to tolerate the risk of allowing Jessica the space for this to happen. The clearer picture of Jessica and Vicky's needs that has emerged over time highlights Family Group's effectiveness in really getting to the heart of the issues affecting families and working to generate genuine shifts in their understanding and emotional intelligence – which will underpin their long-term resilience to challenges.

Case study 11: Elliot and Helen

Elliot and Helen: summary

When Elliot started school he was completely unable to follow instructions or focus on learning; at home his mum Helen found him similarly hard to control. Elliot did not have a good sleep routine so Helen was very tired, rundown, and finding it difficult to engage positively with Elliot or with others in general.

Since joining Family Group things have turned around. Helen is managing Elliot's behaviour and they are enjoying a closer and more loving relationship. Helen's stress levels are down and Elliot can concentrate on tasks at school. Elliot is now 'a *different boy*' and Helen is seen as 'a *wise owl*' in Family Group, offering valued advice and friendship to others.

Elliot is 6. He and mum Helen have been attending Family Group since he was 4, having joined shortly after Elliot started school. They live with Elliot's dad. Helen is expecting a baby in the summer.

Before Family Group

Elliot's behaviour was very poor. At home, he did not listen to instructions or do as he was asked, and would have tantrums and storm off if he did not get his way. He was the same at school – not conforming to the rules, unable to focus on tasks and frequently wetting himself - which meant he was not settling in well and starting to learn. School staff found that Elliot was immature and very 'young for his age' (even given that he had only just turned 4 on starting school). When the family first joined Family Group, Elliot was hard to handle in sessions – he did not pay attention, and would climb on chairs, shout out and generally cause disruption.

Because Elliot would not go to bed when he was supposed to, Helen wasn't getting enough sleep – she was exhausted, irritable, run down and frequently ill, and generally feeling very low. She felt helpless to manage Elliot and this showed in her lack of engagement with the school – they did not feel that she acknowledged that she had a role in trying to improve his behaviour. In Family Group sessions her interactions with Elliot were observed to reflect this – she tended to ignore him, or be frustrated with him, rather than attempt to engage with him constructively.

Others too initially found Helen to be distant and hard to connect with – for example, she would often keep her coat on during the session, or leave early. The therapist thought that Helen lacked trust in others and therefore she came across as being very wary of, and closed to, emotional interactions. Helen acknowledged that since she didn't work at the time when they joined Family Group, she had become unused to talking to new people, so it was difficult at first for her to relax and open up. Helen has a partner but no other family nearby; and she had had a falling out with another mum. The school was concerned that she was isolated and lacking in supportive relationships.

Helen heard about Family Group soon after Elliot had started his first term at school, and she asked to join because she was finding it difficult to cope with Elliot's behaviour. She hoped that Family Group would help them to get to a point where Elliot would do what he was told without having to be asked over and over again, without shouting, sulking and stress. In particular she wanted to be able to get Elliot to bed at a proper time, feeling that if she could get enough sleep herself, she would be better able to cope with all the rest. The school wanted to see Helen engaging with Elliot more positively and playing a role in improving his behaviour and learning.

At Family Group

Helen thinks that the most valuable part of the Family Group session for helping to improve Elliot's behaviour is the **targets**. These have included 'no means no' and 'be polite to adults'. Elliot wants to score well on his targets, because he doesn't like being told that he hasn't done well. Helen thinks it's important that when a child has done badly on their scores, they have it explained to them why and what they should have done instead. It's helpful to Helen

that the **school-based partner** attends the group, because he sees the children at school and can talk to their teachers to get feedback on how they have done on their targets in the classroom.

Another motivator for Elliot to do well on his targets is the fact that, as one of the older children in the group, he is encouraged to be a role model for the younger ones. Staff encourage Elliot to try and make Helen proud of him too:

'When he's got all 4s on his targets, we say to him, 'Elliot, look at Mum!' because he wants to see her looking pleased.' (School-based partner)

Helen feels that the targets help the children to focus on their behaviour, and to remember that Family Group isn't just about having fun. She knows that the children enjoy the **games and activities** at Family Group, but doesn't always think that the point of them is clear.

One of Elliot's issues was his immaturity, and the group worked on this first by acknowledging that they should try not to 'baby' Elliot, as people tended to do because he is a very sweet and appealing little boy. They recognised that this was not encouraging him to behave in a more grown up way, and it was taken on as a collective responsibility by the group, so that there were lots of adults, not just the therapist and the school-based partner, setting an expectation of Elliot to 'act his age'.

To try and improve the relationship between Helen and Elliot, the therapist and the school-based partner encouraged Helen to have more positive interactions with Elliot, for example by suggesting that she pick him up, or hug him. They found that Elliot was calmed by having his head stroked or his hand held, and that this made him more focused and controllable, so they modelled this kind of contact for Helen to copy. The therapist built in group activities involving physical contact too, such as an exercise in which they stroked each other's faces with make-up brushes. Physical contact promotes bonding and attachment and they wanted to enhance this important aspect of Helen and Elliot's relationship.

Helen likes the **parent time** part of the session, where she has a chance to interact with other mums and get to know new people. This was not always the case – as explained earlier, she found it hard at first to trust others and it was not easy for the group to warm to her. Her initial attendance was so poor that the school suggested that she actually give up her place at Family Group, to allow someone else to take it, but this prompted her to improve her attendance. The therapist also persisted in keeping Helen engaged, for example by phoning to check on her if she didn't come to a session, and by making sure Helen knew that she was welcomed, valued and cared about by the group.

Helen has gradually become more comfortable in the group, and her true personality has emerged from under the initial defensive front – group members now know Helen as a friendly, kind, honest and supportive person. She banters with the staff and other members, showing that she is relaxed and can be herself in the group – which means that she feels able to discuss her problems and seek the advice and support which she needs to help her to be the parent that Elliot needs. For example, advice from the group helped Helen with getting Elliot to sleep.

'It's just good to know that others are in the same boat; no-one's perfect!' (Helen)

Through attending Family Group, Helen found out about the option of accessing a **Family Support Worker**, who came to their home to help work on Elliot's behaviour. Had Helen heard about this option from the school rather than from another mum, she might not have been willing to try it – but the group acts as a forum for mums to provide recommendations to each other as trusted peers. Once the parent has bought into the idea of the external support, then the school can organise access to it.

Helen has recently got a job, and feels that Family Group has helped her in terms building up the confidence to do this. One way in which this has come about is by Helen taking on a kind of 'big sister' role in the group, with others turning to her for advice as one of the longest-standing members. The therapist and school-based partner have encouraged this, for example by asking Helen to decide each week how big a round of applause each child should get after the review of their targets. She likes giving her opinion and having it valued by others. The therapist also spotted that Helen has great organisational skills, and has taken care to highlight and praise this, in order to help boost Helen's self esteem.

Outcomes for the child

- Behaviour: while he has his ups and downs, Elliot is now doing well – his behaviour is better and he is more accepting of being told what to do. He has responded to the group treating him as more grown up by becoming more mature. However, Helen recognises that changes - such as her starting a new job - can affect Elliot's behaviour, and that he needs extra care to keep him on track at such times.
- Learning: Elliot's learning has improved because he is able to concentrate more in class. In addition, he and Helen have attended the school's Family Numeracy class, and Helen is helping with his reading, spelling and maths homework. Without the changes in his behaviour Elliot wouldn't have been able to sit still and focus on this. The school is delighted that Helen is taking an active role in Elliot's learning so that school and home are working together on this goal.
- Confidence: Elliot is more outspoken and confident – he used to be a bit shy and reluctant to join in with things, but since joining Family Group he has spoken in assembly, which is very positive. Helen thinks that having all the group members behind him and rooting for him to do well has been good for him.

Comments on Elliot from school and Family Group staff include: *'He is a really nice boy!'*, and *'Elliot has really grown up.'*

Outcomes for the parent

Helen has stayed with the group and is now a committed attender, which is a major achievement considering where she started from.

- More well: because she is no longer sleep-deprived, Helen has more energy and is less prone to illness.
- Better atmosphere at home: there is a much better atmosphere at home, it is more relaxed because Helen is not so tired and does not have to argue with Elliot to make him behave. She now has techniques to manage Elliot's behaviour, such as only letting him play in the garden if he is good.
- Improved relationship with Elliot: Helen is closer to Elliot, more engaged with his learning and proud of his achievements. For example, she came to see him in assembly and was really proud to see him speaking. She is more physically affectionate with him too, which helps to make him feel more calm and secure. She recognises the value of her time and attention to Elliot, noting that he also benefits from his dad's time (which is limited due to his working hours).
- Opening up: from being a very quiet and withdrawn member of the group, Helen has blossomed into one of the most well-liked and valued members. Other mums view her as a very kind and loyal friend, and look to her for advice – in the therapist's words:

'People are very fond of Helen in the group. She is such a kind person, and loyal, and friendly. Elliot is [kind] too – it's always them who'll get the tissues when someone is upset. And I think it was a shame because not many people got to see that side of her before.' (Therapist)

It gives Helen confidence in herself to know that she can help others and make friends with new people.

Outcomes for the school

- The school benefits from Elliot's improved behaviour, because he is easier to manage and to teach. He is conforming to the rules more and the problem of wetting himself has stopped.
- Although in terms of learning Elliot is still at a low level for his age, the school is pleased to see it improving. Elliot is now able to focus and work independently in the classroom, which helps the whole class to learn. The school feel that Elliot having been placed on the special needs register has helped Helen to recognise that he needs her extra help and support.
- Elliot's attendance and punctuality is better. He used to arrive at the last minute and be unwilling to be at school. Now, he is happier to be there and if they are late for school, Helen will apologise - which was not the case in the past.
- Family Group has acted as a bridge between Helen and the school. School staff are delighted that Helen is attending the Family Numeracy class and engaging in Elliot's education. She has also been on school trips as a parent helper. The school now have a positive relationship with Helen:

'She used to be scared of me, but now when I see her, it's not like that - she's smilier.' (Head)

The future

The family is facing a difficult time ahead as Helen's baby will require serious medical care when she is born, meaning that Helen will have to stay in hospital for some time. It will be a challenge for Elliot to cope with her absence, and with the pressure that having a sick baby may place on the family. However, Elliot's dad has recently attended Family Group for the first time and he enjoyed the session and the opportunity to spend time with Elliot. With dad having experienced Family Group for himself, it is hoped that he will be in a stronger position to look after Elliot while Helen is away.

Elliot will graduate from Family Group in the summer term. Because he has tended to have setbacks in his behaviour during the school holidays, this will happen after half term, so that the school and the therapist can keep an eye on him during the second half of the term and also provide some continuity and support when the baby arrives.

Case study 12: Jake and Marie

Jake and Marie: summary

Jake struggled to settle in at school and conform to routines and instructions. His mum Marie found it hard to implement rules and boundaries for Jake; she spoiled him as a way of expressing her love and thought that ADHD may be the explanation for his poor behaviour.

Family Group has helped Marie to change her parenting of Jake quite radically. She now understands that setting rules and saying 'no' are good for Jake, and he has responded by becoming much calmer, better able to focus on tasks and follow rules, and in his mum's words, '*an angel!*'

The family

Jake is 5 and his mum Marie is 22, the youngest mum in the group. They joined Family Group in late 2011. Jake has a one year old sister and Marie and her partner are expecting another baby soon. Jake's father does not have regular contact with him.

Before Family Group

Before Family Group, the school found Jake very difficult to deal with because he is very impulsive, has a short attention span and finds it hard to sit still and follow instructions. In school he would tell lies, such as saying that another child had hurt him, or do something naughty, such as steal, and then deny it. In addition his learning was at a very low level and his attendance was patchy.

'We felt Jake was a child who you could pick out as being likely to have problems in the future.' (Head)

Marie did not tend to engage with the school – staff didn't see much of her and she didn't attend parents' evenings. They were concerned about this, because while Marie was not a 'difficult' parent, she was remote from the school. School felt that Jake needed to be carefully managed and directed, but Marie was not providing this because she also struggled with rules. She was not good at saying 'no' to Jake, or maintaining structure and routine at home (such as a consistent bedtime). She would set rules or boundaries for Jake, but then fail to follow through and stick to them. The therapist sees this as being extremely important:

'He needs her to do this so he knows where he stands. At the moment the rules are being changed constantly.' (Therapist)

Marie didn't always stick to the rules because she was afraid of not giving Jake what he wants – there was no doubt that Jake is loved and well-cared for, but he was also spoiled. She was always buying him things, because she wanted him to have everything he wants - not like it was in her own childhood. She was afraid of pushing him away by saying no. Marie was aware of this, and yet she had trouble acting on it.

Before they started coming to Family Group, Marie wondered whether Jake might have ADHD, and this was another reason that she was reluctant to discipline him when he misbehaved:

'I didn't want to tell him off if, you know, it wasn't his fault because he couldn't help it.' (Marie)

From the outset the therapist was wary of this diagnosis because it risks labelling a child and providing an 'excuse' for their behaviour; as an alternative, Family Group would offer a space in which to see whether Jake's behaviour could be addressed through changes in Marie's parenting.

The therapist felt that at the beginning of Family Group, Jake was '*desperate*' for Marie's attention. It was hard on them both having a new baby at home, who cried a lot. Marie's friends have older children, so she was the only one with a baby at that time. Marie found it hard to say no to her friends too - she is a very young parent, and could find it hard to accept

that she can't always have as much fun as she would like to. As a single parent with no family support, it was not easy for Marie – she had a lot to deal with on her own.

The school hoped that Family Group would help to engage Marie with the school and in Jake's learning. Marie herself felt she was struggling to cope with Jake and wanted some help and support.

At Family Group

Jake loves going to Family Group, but Marie took a while to become a consistent attender – and the child can only attend when their parent does too. There were occasions where Jake got very upset because Marie didn't come to group, but the school wrote to Marie about it and she got better at attending. Now if she can't make it, she lets the therapist know rather than just not turn up.

One of Marie's **targets** has been to 'say no to Jake', and then to stick to it. This is helping her to realise that she can have control over him, which is a very positive step. In relation to spoiling Jake, Marie has realised that given Jake everything he wants isn't necessarily good for him. This came about in a discussion during the parent reflection time, in which Marie herself identified the issue:

'Something seemed to click with her – she started to realise he needed some structure and that she wasn't doing him a favour.' (School-based partner)

Jake's targets have been to sit still, not fidget, put his hand up to speak, and stay in his bed at night. Like most of the children, Jake is motivated by his targets because he wants to get a big round of applause from the group each week when he has achieved them. This means Marie can use the targets at home as a way of influencing Jake's behaviour.

In addition, Marie has learned many other **techniques and tools** from Family Group including: getting Jake to imagine a parrot sitting on his shoulder reminding him to put his hand up when he wants to speak in the group; giving him a countdown over 5 minutes when he is supposed to come into to the house after playing outside so that he starts to understand what '5 more minutes' means; and using actions to demonstrate her resolve – such as putting Jake back into bed every time he gets up in the night, instead of arguing with him. Marie has valued the advice and ideas of the staff and other parents at Family Group, as well as the opportunity to talk over problems and feelings in a safe and confidential environment during **parent time**:

'It's a chance to help each other, talk about solutions to problems at home – because it's confidential, you can talk and it helps you feel OK about things.' (Marie)

The therapist sees Marie as a real asset to Family Group because:

'She is quite incisive – she has this ability to hone in on the exact problem with others.' (Therapist)

Through Family Group Marie has accessed the help of the **Family Support Worker**. Because this was suggested by one of the other parents, Marie was willing to try it. Having an outside person visit the family at home has helped her to try different approaches with Jake, instead of being stuck in a rut.

Outcomes for the child

- Calmer and more focused: Jake's concentration is better; at Family Group and in class he can now sit still on a chair instead of always getting up, and stay quiet instead of calling out.
- Accepting authority: Jake can now accept being told 'no' by Marie, rather than fighting it. He is more aware of consequences to his behaviour, because Marie enforces penalties and gives praise as appropriate.
- Less demanding: Jake he gets to have Marie's time to himself at Family Group and feels more secure with the boundaries that have been put in place, so he isn't quite so desperate for attention any more. This means he can focus on tasks and accept being told 'no'.
- Improved attitude to learning: Jake is still behind in terms of his level of reading but he is now trying to apply himself, which he did not do before.

Outcomes for the parent

- Taking responsibility: Now that it has been agreed that Jake does not have ADHD, Marie has been able to focus on her parenting as the solution to his behaviour problems. This means they are able to move forward constructively, instead of being held back by the possibility of ADHD being the cause of their issues.
- Taking charge: Jake is getting the structure and boundaries that he needs from Marie. She can say 'no' to him, knowing that this is OK - she doesn't have to feel guilty or conflicted about doing so:

'I can say to him now, "I love you, and that's why I'm not letting you have sweets, because they are bad for you."' (Marie)

Marie has also learnt that she can say no to others, for example, not always agreeing to look after her sister's children.

- Less stressed: it's a relief for Marie not to have to shout and argue with Jake so much any more, because she has better ways to cope with him and because he is more likely to do what he is told.
- Better relationship: with the conflict and tension taken out of their relationship, Marie can enjoy time with Jake more:

'It's so much easier now. Me and Jake are more bonded, we're just more happy. Compared to before he's an angel!' (Marie)

Outcomes for the school

- There is an improved channel of communication between Marie and the school. Marie enjoys having the regular opportunity to discuss how Jake is doing each week, and is happy to take any issues to the school-based partner in between sessions.
- Jake's improved behaviour in class means that less time is lost to disruptions. He no longer requires one-to-one support to help him focus.

The future

Everyone is pleased with Jake's progress, but aware that Marie will have to work hard to maintain the new approach. With another baby soon to arrive, Jake's need for attention and

Marie's ability to enforce boundaries may be challenged. However, while ups and downs are inevitable in response to life events and daily stresses and strains, Marie now has the tools to cope in the best way possible and to bring a different perspective to the early years of her younger children.

Truancy and exclusion data

This section gives data on levels of exclusion and attendance for the Family Group children in Year 2 of the evaluation (2012/13). Data from Year 1 (2011/12) can be found in the Year 1 evaluation report.

Please note the following important information when reading this section:

- Because Family Group is a highly targeted intervention, involving only a small number of children in the school, we would not expect to see any notable impact on levels of truancy and exclusion at the whole school level and therefore this data is not provided.
- At individual child level, it is important to note that each child has a particular set of circumstances affecting their attendance and exclusion figures and they should be interpreted in this context.

It is necessary to bear in mind that negative outcomes, i.e. decreases in attendance or increases in exclusions, are not unexpected in the context of these families' changing circumstances and needs. Upheavals such as changes in housing situation, parental relationship status, parental mental health, a parental prison sentence or release can cause serious setbacks for children, which can affect their ability to attend school and their capacity to avoid the kind of situations that can lead to exclusion. It is likely that were they not receiving support via Family Group, the figures may reflect a poorer-still picture for these children.

- Family Group runs in three schools: infants, junior and secondary. As noted in the policy section of this report, therapeutic interventions have been evidenced to be less effective in secondary settings because of the generally higher level of need. Therefore we would not expect Family Group to show comparable effects at both primary and secondary levels.

Note on the figures presented:

- All data for the school year 2012/13 is for the start of the year in September 2012 up until early/mid May 2013
- Some data is missing; where this is the case it is because the pupil has left the school or had not yet started at the school, and therefore the school was not able to provide the data. In one instance data was not provided for one pupil who had graduated from the group; we recommend in future that data continues to be monitored after graduation to show whether improvements are being sustained
- Data was supplied in the same formats by each of the schools in accordance with a pre-provided framework.

Secondary school

Secondary: summary

- Three out of the nine children involved in Family Group experienced fixed term exclusions. Only one of these young people had been excluded in 2011/12.

- Levels of attendance remained relatively stable. Unauthorised absences either fell or remained broadly consistent with the previous year, with a number of individual young people showing marked improvements.

Amongst Family Group children,

- In 2012/13
 - Nine children took part in Family Group, only one of whom had received an exclusion in 2011/12
 - Six out of nine children received no exclusions
 - One child was excluded for a total of five days in the Autumn term and left the Family Group programme shortly after in a ‘managed move’ from the school. In this case, the parent had not attended Family Group for some time before the managed move took place. It has been speculated that her disengagement from the intervention may have contributed to the circumstances leading to the managed move.
 - One child received three short exclusions, totalling six days. This particular young person has severe speech and language needs which are believed to be the source of much of his problematic behaviour. The child is currently in the course of moving to another school which it is hoped will be better able to cater to the additional needs which were not able to be met in a mainstream school environment.
 - One child had one exclusion, totalling one day. It was noted that this young person has been experiencing an extremely unsettled period while his parent considers a move out of the area.

Attendance

The table below shows level of attendance and the number of half days of **unauthorised absence** for each child, in 2011/12 (baseline) as well as attendance levels and the number of unauthorised absences in the Autumn term 2012 and Spring term 2013.

	Date joined Family Group	Date exited Family Group (if exited)	Baseline (2011-2012 data)		Autumn Term 2012		Spring Term 2013	
			attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)	attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)	attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)
Family Group child 1	Sep-11		65	23	61	8	67	16
Family Group child 2	Nov-11	Jan-13	87	2	95	0.5	Managed Move	Managed move
Family Group child 3	Nov-11	Nov-12	90	0.5	100	0	100	0
Family Group child 4	Nov-11		83	19	82	8	80	4

Family Group Child 5	May-12		70	46.5	75	18	80	4
Family Group Child 6	Nov-12		83	6	74	2.5	79	5
Family Group Child 7³³	May-12	Apr-13	98	1	91	1	99	0.5
Family Group Child 8	Nov-12		permanent exclusion	permanent exclusion	85	1	80	10
Family Group Child 9	Nov-12		98	0.5	95	0	99	0

Five out of the nine children involved in Family Group showed a reduction in unauthorised absences³⁴. Of particular note is Child 5, who had 24.5 fewer unauthorised absences than the previous year. One of the young people in the group has experience of permanent exclusion which means that it is not possible to compare their unauthorised absences with last year. The remaining three students saw very minor rises in their levels of unauthorised absence.

Junior school

Juniors: summary

- Overall levels of attendance improved for the majority of the Family Group children.
- There was a significant improvement in levels of unauthorised absence.

Exclusions

Amongst Family Group children,

- In 2012/13:

³³ Joined school in November rather than September 2011. Data from this date.

³⁴ It should be noted that data was not provided for the Spring term for one young person who had graduated from the programme.

Therapeutic early interventions to prevent school exclusion and truancy: evaluation of three contemporaneous projects

- None of the eight children involved in Family Group experienced any exclusions. None were excluded in the year prior to joining Family Group.

Attendance

The table below shows the number of half days of **unauthorised absence** for each child, in 2011/12 (baseline) as well as the number of unauthorised absences in the Autumn term 2012 and Spring term 2013.

	Date joined Family Group	Date exited Family Group (if exited)	Baseline 2011-2012 data		Autumn Term 2012		Spring Term 2013	
			attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)	attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)	attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)
Family Group Child 1	Jun-11		96	1	95	0	92	0
Family Group Child 2	Jul-11		85	26	97	0	97	1
Family Group Child 3	Sep-11	Jan-13	?	?	80	0	96	0
Family Group Child 4	Sep-11		93	19	82	4.5	90	2
Family Group Child 5	Jun-11		98	1.5	99	0.5	98	0
Family Group Child 6	Sept-12		100	5	100	0	98	0
Family Group Child 7	Apr-12		97	6	100	0	98	1
Family Group Child 8	Feb-13		?	?	100	0	100	0

The number of unauthorised absences for all of the young people for whom data is available fell, and for some young people the improvement was dramatic. Particular attention should

be paid to Child 2, who has had 25 fewer unauthorised absences so far this year than was the case 2011-12.

Infants School

Infants: summary

- The number of unauthorised absences fell or remained constant for the majority of the children and for some the improvement was very pronounced.

Exclusions

Amongst Family Group children,

- In 2012/13:
 - None of the ten children involved in Family Group experienced any exclusions. None were excluded in the year prior to joining Family Group.

Attendance

The table below shows the number of half days of **unauthorised absence** for each child, in 2011/12 (baseline) as well as the number of unauthorised absences in the Autumn term 2012 and Spring term 2013.

	Date joined Family Group	Date exited Family Group (if exited)	Baseline 2011-2012 data		Autumn Term 2012		Spring Term 2013	
			attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)	attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)	attendance (%)	unauthorised absences (half days)
Family Group child 1	Nov-12		94	1	96	0	98	0
Family Group child 2	Mar-12		87	14	89	2.5	94	3
Family Group child 3	Nov-10		99	0	99	0.5	100	0
Family Group child 4	May-12		97	1	96	1	95	2.5
Family Group Child 5	Jan-13		90	2	94	0	88	0
Family Group Child 6	Nov-11		90	9	89	6	91	3.5
Family Group Child 7	Jul-12		94	5	94	2.5	94	2.5
Family Group Child 8	Jan-13		82	14.5	86	2.5	90	4

Family Group Child 9	Sep-11	Jan-13	94	1.5	97	0	98	0.5
Family Group Child 10	Nov-11	Oct-12	80	26	94	0.5	93	4

- Overall, levels of attendance rose or remained broadly consistent with the previous year for all of the children in Family Group.
- Levels of unauthorised attendance fell or remained the same for five out of the eight children for whom data was available. The remaining three children saw their levels of unauthorised attendance rise, but by a very small amount (0.5 of a day each).

5.5 Factors which have facilitated and hindered success

Facilitators of success

Persistence in engaging parents

Over the two years of the evaluation, there has been no challenge in recruiting to Family Groups, in the sense that there is no shortage of families identified by schools as being in need of a place in Family Group. However, there are parents who are reluctant to get involved when they are initially approached. The approach to engaging these parents is to try and maintain contact with those who have turned down the invitation to join ('refusers') or whose attendance is one-off or inconsistent ('triers'). This persistence has led to a number of families joining and staying in the group, following initial reluctance:

'Lots of these parents haven't had someone care about them before. They're suspicious of it. They need time to get used to the idea that we are going to care about them.'
(Family Groups project manager)

Persistence with children is important too: schools need to convince the children that they are not going to give up on them.

By the time of the Year 2 fieldwork, schools were finding it easier to engage parents, because the work of Family Group was becoming more widely known amongst the parent body. Participating parents talking to others about the benefits they experienced acted as a powerful influence in this. As well as this informal mechanism, one school proactively encouraged Family Group parents to approach potential recruits on the school's behalf, which was an effective way of getting them to engage.

Keeping parents engaged is an ongoing challenge with some families; it can be frustrating when a child responds well to Family Group but their parent is not committed. Constantly listening to parents and pointing out the differences in their child are ways to try and maintain engagement:

'It's difficult for some parents because they find it hard to reflect, it can be painful. But they feel listened to, and they love that – you can tell because they are frustrated if they don't get their turn to speak. What keeps them going is seeing some success with their children and working with other children in the activities so they get to realise that they aren't alone in struggling with their children.' (Extended Services Coordinator)

Setting clear expectations of parents

From early on in the project, the therapists have been aware that setting clear expectations of parents at the outset is key. They do this by being transparent from the outset about the ethos and principles of Family Group, helping to ensure that parents embark on it with the right mindset. It is made clear to parents that Family Group is about parent *and* child: it is not about 'fixing a problem with the child'. Parents need to acknowledge their own role and influence on their child, and accept that they are key to the change process. This is part of moving away from a 'deficit' model towards getting parents to see that they have strengths, resilience and skills that can be tapped into in order to make a difference to their family. The next facilitator of success is key to this.

Skills and approach of the therapist and school-based partner

By Year 2 of the evaluation those involved with Family Group were able to identify specifically the kinds of skills and attitudes that enable both the therapists and the school-based partners to foster positive relationships with and outcomes for group members, as follows.

- Accessible: many of the parents with whom Family Group seeks to work are distrustful of professionals, based on previous experiences. For this reason, those running Family Groups try to avoid an 'us-and-them' type hierarchy or unequal power dynamic:

'It's 'our' group – it's never 'my' group.' (Therapist)

This means being accessible and approachable, even outside the group (for example, parents can phone or text the therapists during the week). This helps parents to trust the therapist, and allow themselves to be emotionally 'contained' by them; which helps the parent to emotionally contain their own child. School-based partners too are very much available to parents and children during the week, not only during sessions – this is key to getting more benefit from the intervention.

- Genuine: both staff and parents highlighted the importance of staff empathizing with group members in a way that feels genuine; which does not patronize or judge but which conveys a 'real', emotionally felt concern for their wellbeing. Parents and children frequently mentioned that they liked it when staff referred to their own family lives during Family Group discussions.

'People know if you're genuinely interested in them and you want to help. Of course, you need to remain professional – but I do have a lot of empathy and I will share my own experiences and be on the same level as them.' (School-based partner)

- Positive: as mentioned above in relation to setting expectations of parents from the outset, maintaining a positive attitude towards parents and children is key. This means being alert to their strengths and skills, and positively reinforcing these through by praise and creating opportunities to demonstrate them.

'It's important to see people's strengths – I don't see [parents] as 'needy', in a patronising way. Even though they are in difficult circumstances, they do have strengths and skills and it is important to highlight these.' (Therapist)

- Challenging: Family Group staff use the strong relationships built through a nurturing and caring approach as a basis from which to challenge parents and children. Having established trust and respect, they are in a good position to challenge behaviour and attitudes in a constructive way. One school-based partner described gaining confidence

in doing this over the past year, and becoming better able to judge when to be more directive:

'If I think there is something a parent needs to address, I might bring it up instead of necessarily waiting for them to - it accelerates things. With children, I will raise my expectations of them and show disappointment when they don't meet them – it helps focus the children on taking responsibility for their behaviour.' (School-based partner)

- Practical: Family Group sessions are highly structured, but several staff observed that within this structure the ability to be organized, flexible and creative is helpful. This is discussed below.

An external view of the Family Group staff's approach describes several of their strengths; this is the police representative who worked on a Family Group case during Years 1-2:

'[The therapist] is incredibly important to the families because he provides both logistical and emotional support. He went above and beyond to bring together the partnership group around the mum and drive it forward; and he works with parents in a way that is supportive and empowering. The way he worked with this mum was to bring her around to realise for herself what the right answers were – he is not pushy but influences in a positive way.' (Police)

Design of Family Group sessions

The way Family Group sessions are structured is key to their effectiveness: each part of the session – target setting, activity, parent time – plays an important part. In addition to the formal structure of sessions, informal practice is also key, such as making tea and coffee at the beginning and staying to chat afterwards. One group has a list of members' birthdays, and of how they take their tea or coffee; this makes parents feel valued and helps to create a caring, personal atmosphere and a sense of belonging. Evidence that this is working well is that some parents are spending their own time and money to make cakes to bring to the group, and getting there early to help set up the chairs.

'To me this says that people are giving back to the group, they are taking responsibility for nurturing the group themselves... instead of it just being about them getting something from it.' (Therapist)

Therapists found it useful to keep notes on each family and to plan activities that may be tailored to the needs of a specific family, but which others will also benefit from. In response to wider school activities, some flexibility was also seen found to be helpful – such as moving parent time to the beginning of the session one week to accommodate the pupils' exam timetable.

Mutual/peer support and trust

As well as trust between parents and the therapist, trust between the parents in each group is key to its success. They feel accepted, rather than judged. Because of the trust between parents, they will dip into their own (often painful and difficult) experiences to empathise and offer help and advice to each other, creating a strong community of mutual support with a large pool of experience to share. Trust is also crucial because of the highly sensitive and personal nature of the discussions that take place at Family Group sessions; members need to feel sure that each other will maintain confidentiality outside the group, otherwise they would not be able to speak openly about their issues.

An incident during Year 1 at one of the Family Groups illustrates the value that parents place on the intervention. A breach of confidentiality occurred, which meant that one of the members of the group must have disclosed information that was shared confidentially within the group. The therapists considered that this had the potential to be extremely divisive; however, parents were determined that the incident should not be allowed to threaten the dynamics of Family Group. This response to the incident turned it into an affirming rather than a destructive event and, with carefully-managed discussion, reinforced the commitment of members to the Family Group's underpinning principle of confidentiality.

One Head observed:

'I think they get an enormous strength from having shared problems and shared problem solving. Realising that their problems are not unique, that there are solutions to them, and that they can talk them through together.' (Head)

Strong relationship with schools

Time of school-based partner

The commitment of the host school is essential to the success of Family Group, because it requires the support of the school to take children out of their lessons for Family Group itself, commit the time of the school-based partner, and of teachers to complete the target cards and feed in information about the children. The role of the school-based partner is key, as explained by one of the school heads:

'The fact that the school puts resources into the group in the form of [the school-based partner], it sends a positive message to the group because she is there as a school person but in a non-confrontational, understanding role. It helps to break down the 'us and them' feeling that some parents have towards school. She is a conduit which helps communication, information both ways, but also having her engage parents as school person is important for sustainability, because she can continue the relationship with parents beyond Family Group.' (Head)

Without the school-based partner there, the discussions would be one-sided, because there would be only the children and parents' views, with no perspective from the school:

'Without me there, some families would just totally slate the school.' (School-based partner)

It's also important for children that parents and school are seen to be on the same side, so school-based partners can encourage this and try to persuade parents to present a united front with the school.

Time and commitment of wider school staff

It is also important that schools buy in to the approach of Family Group and reflect the ethos in their own dealings with the child and parent: build trust and show genuine care and commitment to helping the family. In Year 2 this was happening to a greater extent, particularly in the infants and junior schools as described earlier. There are plans to systematise the way in which a whole school ethos is fostered by future Family Groups (see later section in this chapter).

It is important that all school staff adopt a positive attitude towards parents because many parents have had a bad experience of school during their own childhood, which informs their attitude to schools in general. These parents are often mistrustful of their child's school and

see school as not 'on their side'. In this way, basing Family Group in school is important, because it helps parents to get used to coming into school and become comfortable with it.

Stability of leadership is key because Family Group is a long term intervention, with exit being carefully planned to ensure that families only leave the group when they are ready. Ensuring that Heads have clear expectations of Family Group is as important as ensuring that parents do:

'Head needs to understand that progress [of each child] won't go in a straight line – it's not a solve-all. Heads want to know is it worth it, is it value for money, because they have the governors to convince. You have to take children out of class – but that is a benefit to other children's learning because the disruptive one is removed. Heads might be looking down the line too and thinking, this child has three younger siblings who are going to be coming to my school so if we can help this mum now – the benefits trickle down to the future.' (Extended Services Coordinator)

Close fit with and links into other support

Family Group staff work closely with schools to ensure that Family Group fits into the school's overall approach to pastoral support. This began in Year 1 by communicating regularly with Pastoral Support teams to exchange information about individual families and discuss what other support they may need, for example, in secondary school, being signposted to sexual health services or encouraged to take up a positive activity such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. In Year 2 this was happening to a much greater extent, as described earlier in the infants and junior schools, and it is planned that future Family Groups will be positioned more explicitly as part of a whole school approach.

The Family Groups project team also maintains close contact with other agencies including Educational Psychology, Behaviour Support and the Early Intervention Service. Being linked in with the wider infrastructure helps ensure that Family Group fits well with provision by other services. In Hounslow, building these links has been hampered by issues with poor attendance of some agencies on the Family Groups steering group, attributed to wider changes and turnover in staff in these agencies. However, it is fair to say that this is a factor that facilitates success, where it works well.

As mentioned earlier, Year 2 has seen Family Group providing a link into external agencies that have helped individual families in ways that Family Group alone could not do. For example, the contact from the Police service who got involved in specific case was then able to help several other families to navigate the system, including advising a parent on getting an injunction against a former partner, and advising parents on the implications of a previous conviction in a job application.

Also in Year 2, progress has been made in relation to the need identified in Year 1 for Family Group to develop specific support around families experiencing domestic violence; as described earlier, a parent has attended domestic violence training and will co-facilitate a session around this in the autumn term, with a Family Groups staff member.

In Year 1 concerns emerged about parents who have mental health needs and about how Family Group could best support these parents, both during their time in the Group and after graduating. In Year 2, the Family Group project team have continued to work on links with local adult mental health services. The Extended Services Coordinator has relationships with both managers and practitioners in Hounslow and can use this link for Family Group; for example, the parent who runs graduate group has planned to meet with adult mental health workers about running a session.

Parents on the Family Groups steering group

Parents from the Family Groups attend the steering group for the Family Group project in Feltham and Hanworth, and give reports on their experiences of Family Group to the various professionals. They help to influence direction and inform decisions – for example, during Year 2 the parents approved the use of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) questionnaire with Family Group parents:

'It can be so useful. For example, we were worried about the ACE questionnaire and whether it was appropriate but the parents just said, 'it's fine!' We can be hyper-vigilant about not offending, but they tell you straight and we need to listen to that.' (Extended Services Coordinator)

As well as this immediate practical benefit, the presence of parents has helped in several ways over the course of the project:

- It demonstrates the importance and value of parents in effecting change for their children
- It models to other services that involving service users in a steering group or similar forum is a strong way to check whether services are staying relevant and positive to those they target
- It is empowering for parents, helping to build their skills and confidence. Informal feedback from professional members of the steering group to Family Group leads suggests that they value the insight of parents and feel that they contribute significantly to the group.
- Parents have helped to promote Family Groups to other schools and potential funders – which again shows their willingness to give their time and support to the project, and also reflects an impressive level of confidence.

Ways to ensure that it works well include being aware of language, avoiding jargon and being clear, and making sure everyone feels they can talk freely and is willing to be challenged. It can feel uncomfortable for professionals to share the forum with parents, but it has proved powerful when well-managed.

Barriers to success

Type of school

It has remained the case across the two years of the evaluation that spreading the benefits of Family Group throughout the school has been harder in the secondary setting. The reasons for this and efforts to mitigate it were set out earlier in this section; it is recommended that Family Group project team continues to be aware of the challenges and alert to possible solutions.

Stability of local authority services

The Family Group steering groups have the potential to engage wider agencies and to promote Family Groups more widely. In Year 2 of the evaluation, this was working well in other boroughs (Richmond and Hammersmith and Fulham) but less well for the Hounslow group, where there have been issues with staff turnover in local services which make it challenging to build relationships; a limiting factor to the spread and integration of Family Groups into local services. It is possible that this challenge will continue over coming years in the context of local authority cuts.

The future

This snapshot of future plans is correct at the time of writing, July 2013.

Family Groups included in the evaluation

At the end of Year 2, the three schools with Family Groups funded by the PHF grant had decided to continue to run their groups next year, and will pay for the groups themselves out of their school budget. The willingness of these schools to sustain Family Groups beyond the period of external funding clearly demonstrates a strong endorsement of the intervention by all three.

Other existing Family Groups, outside the evaluation

Two other Family Groups, not funded by PHF, will continue to run in other areas of south west London, with a funding mix which includes other charitable foundations and a school.

Additional and new Family Groups

There are a number of new Family Groups in development. In new schools, Family Group is now being positioned as 'Family Group Plus' – in Year 1 a group is set up, and in Year 2, once it is established and schools are seeing the value, the group can be used as a driver for wider and systemic change in the school (as described in the junior school earlier in this report).

Changing Perceptions

Five new schools will run Family Groups as part of a wider project called Changing Perceptions. As well as the Family Group, the project aims to extend impact across the school and wider local agencies through the following mechanisms:

- Establishing a 'triage service' in each school to assess children's support needs and allocate resources. This service (which will be led and managed by school staff and supported by a therapist) will come to either replace or underpin existing multi-agency meetings held in school
- Providing training to all school staff in the theory and values underpinning Family Group so that staff including Teaching Assistants, Lunchtime Supervisors and Learning Mentors adopt the same thinking, in order that children's difficulties are met with consistency and understanding. Family Group parents will support the delivery of specific training modules
- A multi-agency steering group will support, challenge and promote the project
- Work with stakeholders to catalyse change in local authority practice regarding families with multiple disadvantages.

Family Groups in the Changing Perceptions project will be part-funded by the schools and part-funded by PHF.

Separately from the Changing Perceptions project, two further London primary schools will commence Family Groups in September 2013 (funded by charities). There will be one in Surrey from September 2014 (wholly funded by the school).

5.6 Recommendations

In this chapter the many strengths of the Family Group intervention in supporting some of the most complex and vulnerable families have been described. Its strengths-based approach and the design of sessions have proved effective and popular with both children and parents. The schools involved strongly endorse the Family Group approach and recognise that it provides support which schools alone cannot, and that the work of Family Group has positive effects for the school.

In Year 2 of the evaluation, the intervention has made additional progress in relation to embedding and integrating Family Groups into schools, as well as developing a plan for expanding the intervention to new schools over the next two academic years.

Therefore at the end of Year 2 of the evaluation, as at the end of Year 1, there are no recommendations for any substantive change to the underlying model of the intervention.

However there are several areas in which we offer some suggestions; some of these endorse actions that are already in development, and some are new.

- **Family Group sessions**

- Continue flexible practice to tailor support to the needs of each group and individual, and to accommodate other school commitments (for example, flex timing around exams)
- Encourage dads and perhaps other key family members to attend sessions. While Family Group is open to any primary carer, mums more commonly attend Family Groups than dads. Since there have been a number of examples in which a dad's involvement has helped the family to move forward with their issues, the value of their attendance should be emphasized.

- **Integration into schools**

- Facilitate further integration of Family Group into the school so that it is seen as a part of, and aligned with, wider school objectives – not as a separate and bounded intervention for only a few children. The next stage of the evolution of the Family Group model, 'Changing Perceptions', aims to do this
- Contracts with new schools for new Family Groups should include training for all school staff and build in time for teachers to meet with Group staff to discuss the children taking part.

- **Links with outside agencies**

- Continue to develop links to outside agencies, especially on common issues like domestic violence, mental health, and siblings with disabilities and special educational needs. Continue to look for further common themes that could warrant the development of a specific form of support
- Future Family Group projects should build in sufficient management capacity, including individuals with close links to local agencies (such as have been provided by the Extended Services Coordinator role)
- Use the steering group to maximum effect in terms of involving local agencies. There may be learning from the more effective steering groups (Richmond and Hammersmith & Fulham) in doing so.

- **Monitoring of impact**

- Continue to collect impact data and identify resource to collate and analyse this
- Consider which existing or new types of quantitative data provide the most meaningful data and are feasible to collect (for example, attendance and exclusions data; MyOutcomes data; attainment data)
- Use qualitative sources – such as the evaluation case studies, video interviews with parents, children and school staff, and evidence from Heads to inform other Heads
- Pursue further accreditation from Project Oracle Youth Evidence Hub, in order to present a convincing case to other schools and funders.

6. Teignmouth Community School, Learning 2 Learn

6.1 Summary of key findings

The project

The Learning 2 Learn (L2L) project delivers creative therapeutic support in primary schools to children who have been or may be excluded. L2L is underpinned by the THRIVE approach which recognises the links between emotions, behaviours and learning. The aim is to enable children to develop their self-awareness, empathy and reflective capacity, express their feelings and take responsibility for their behaviour. Children receive support from Intervention Workers, in groups or one-to-one. The project also aims to improve relationships between parents and schools by involving parents in the intervention and joining up with other support around the family including CAF meetings. The project works with children with multiple vulnerabilities and complex family lives, as well as children with lower levels of need.

The project has one main base, the Nest, where it delivers much of its support, and also delivers some outreach work. In Year 2 of the evaluation, the project has started to embed the THRIVE approach across the schools within the Learning Community. In practice this means: two members of staff in each school have been THRIVE trained; two of the primary schools have dedicated space within their buildings where they can deliver L2L support; and the project has employed an extra member of staff to support children in the transition from primary to secondary school.

Impacts

Children's behaviour has improved and this is credited to their improved emotional expression and use of coping strategies and techniques. Children are more engaged in learning and spend more time in the classroom. Many of the children reported increased levels of confidence and emotional wellbeing, and some have made more friends through the activities. Parents reported improved relationships with school because they are no longer receiving so many 'complaints' about their child. Parents feel they have extra support to look after their children, they are better able to understand their children's behaviour and they experience a 'calmer' family life. For the schools, the project has led to fewer disruptions in class and more tools for staff to deal with challenging behaviour in a supportive way. Through embedding the THRIVE approach across the Learning Community, school staff feel that they are using a common language and approach to behaviour management across all schools, which strengthens the impact of the approach as it means that children receive consistent messages from all the staff they come into contact with.

Facilitators to success

One of the facilitators to success was the pre-existence of a 'Learning Community': the 7 schools have a history of collaborative working. Another facilitator is having support and direction from the highest levels in the lead school. The project has worked hard to engage with teaching and non-teaching staff and build good relationships across the schools. The skills, experience and accessibility of the Intervention Workers were also key to success.

A further important factor is the nature of the project as complementary to, but not part of, the schools; the external workers and the off-site location helped to make parents and children

feel comfortable. Finally the project has sought to ensure the sustainability of its impact, primarily through the delivery of THRIVE training to school staff.

Recommendations

The project continues to adapt in response to feedback from stakeholders. For example, a formalised exit strategy for children receiving interventions has been established, tapering support rather than a sudden cut-off. Fully embedding THRIVE principles and practice is an ongoing process: we recommend that L2L supports this, particularly in those schools which are currently less connected to the project. In addition, the project should continue building schools' capacity, through opportunities for staff to observe and co-deliver sessions with, and receive mentoring from, the Intervention Workers.

6.2 Project overview

Teignmouth Community School's Learning 2 Learn (L2L) project delivers creative therapeutic support to children with a history of, or at risk of exclusion. L2L is delivered across the Teignmouth Local Learning Community, which comprises Teignmouth Community School (TCS) as the lead school, and 6 local primary schools. The project began in September 2010 and is delivered by two specialist Intervention Workers – qualified counsellors - who work with primary and secondary school pupils, their parents and their teachers.

The project is underpinned by the THRIVE approach³⁵, which draws on current thinking in neuroscience, attachment theory, child development, and research into the role of creativity and play in developing emotional resilience. In brief, THRIVE requires attention to be paid to the role of emotions in learning, and to the link between emotions and behaviours that in turn can either promote or inhibit learning. When children's thought processes develop normally, they learn to recognise and regulate the emotion that lies behind action, and will be more able to control their actions or behaviours. When children have not developed this cognitive function, they need to be taught to recognise and name emotions, to extend their emotional vocabulary, to learn to think about emotions, and to think while experiencing emotions, if lasting behaviour change is to be achieved.

Drawing on THRIVE, L2L aims to help children to become more self-aware and to express their feelings, recognise their own strengths and weaknesses, take responsibility for their behaviour and be mindful and reflective, as well as develop empathy. The type of support the children receive is 'needs led', depending on which aspect of a child's development has been interrupted and needs repairing for there to be normal cognitive development. The project is lead by TCS and is mainly targeted at the six primary schools within the Learning Community and at vulnerable children making the transition from primary to secondary.

As well as providing therapeutic support directly to children, in groups or one-to-one, the project aims to foster better relationships between parents and schools. The project recognises that some parents in their area are characterised by longstanding negative experiences of school and 'authority figures'. This is exacerbated by a relationship with their child's school that is influenced by frequent complaints about their child's behaviour. The project aims to tackle this by being very accessible to parents, inviting them to observe the Intervention Workers in action with their child, providing them with advice if needed, and inviting them to participate in sessions with their child, as appropriate. Intervention Workers also attend Common Assessment Framework (CAF) meetings, at which they share feedback

³⁵ For more information, see: <http://www.thriveftc.com/index.cfm>

with parents and other professionals, and work closely with the Learning Community's Parent Support Worker to ensure joined up support.

L2L also aims to develop a common understanding, language and practice across the Learning Community in terms of identifying and supporting children at risk of exclusion or truancy. The project held a joint inset day at the beginning of the academic year to encourage collaborative learning between schools, and during Year 2 of the evaluation, each school had two members of staff participating in THRIVE training. By delivering THRIVE training to staff from all the schools, it was hoped that the project would be embedded and sustained once the PHF funding ends.

Finally, the project places an emphasis on ensuring pupils and families have access to support where and when they need it – conscious of the often long waiting lists to access such support. The team feels that widening access to support is important, and they do this by supporting children who do not meet the threshold for more 'high level' intervention from other services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Identifying pupils

SENCOs, Form Tutors and/or other teaching staff from the six primary schools complete a referral form for pupils they feel would benefit from the project's support. The referral form states that pupils being referred should meet the following criteria:

- they have been excluded at least once in the last term
- they have consistently had 5 behaviour incidents every week for the past half term
- they have patterns of poor attendance
- they have persistently failed to modify their behaviour.

On receipt of the referral form, the project determines whether the referral is appropriate, and if so, works with the child's SENCO and class teacher to determine the most appropriate form of support (one-to-one or group based). If a referral is not appropriate, TCS is able to signpost the school to other appropriate services.

Whilst initially focussed on pupils in Years 5 and 6, the project has broadened out the age range of pupils it works with to better meet the needs of the primary schools. The project believes that the earlier the intervention the better, and has worked with pupils who are in Year 1 and upwards. Being onsite at TCS also means that the project can continue to offer support (where needed) to pupils who have made the transition to TCS to help them settle into their new environment.

Children supported by the project

A review of a sample of the project's monitoring forms illustrates that the project is often working with children with multiple vulnerabilities and complex family lives. The following quotations are taken directly from referral forms completed by school staff:

Quotations from referral forms

'Very low self esteem – won't attempt to take part in some tasks as he believes he will fail. Talks about harming himself. Has sat behind the door hoping someone will harm him or took a pencil and dug it into his hand.' (School-based staff)

'Late nights, getting up late, [Child] quite often mentions that he doesn't have breakfast.'

(School-based staff)

'Through his writing he has shown inappropriate use of sexual language and an obsession with death. We could see that he was very sad... [Child]'s mum has been diagnosed with cancer and is having treatment, often away from home and is being looked after by grandparents.' (School-based staff)

Whilst these quotations and others used throughout this chapter illustrate the complexity of some children's problems, the project is also working with groups of children with lower level needs, focussing on specific topics such as low self esteem and low confidence through themed one-day workshops.

Resources and materials to support the project

The project is keen to monitor its activities on an ongoing basis and has developed a range of forms to capture feedback from school-based staff and parents. These include:

- A comprehensive referral form setting out the referral criteria and capturing data on: the child's behaviour and attendance issues; any other professionals involved with the child; support strategies already in place; reason for referral; and risk assessment
- An initial parental feedback form to capture: concerns about their child at home and at school; what they feel will help their child at home and at school; an invitation to attend a session with one of the Intervention Workers; and their permission to be contacted again after 6 weeks
- A parental feedback form completed after 6 weeks, to explore whether they feel there has been a difference in their child and the reasons why
- An initial teacher feedback form to capture: their concerns about the child's behaviour; their views on what might work in supporting the child, examples of things that the child currently does well (to be used in praising the child); and their permission to be contacted again at a later date
- A teacher feedback form completed after 6 weeks to capture ongoing progress from the teacher's perspective.

6.3 Project evolution

There have been several changes to the project since it began. These have evolved in response to 'on the ground' realities which have impacted on delivery.

In Year 1 of the evaluation, two main factors drove changes to the project. Firstly, a lack of guaranteed confidential space in some primary schools meant that the project found itself, in some cases, providing one-to-one support to children in the playground between breaks, as well as having to hire space at the local Town Hall or other building to run group sessions. These settings were far from ideal. Secondly, the volume of referrals was greater than the project expected. Schools were asking for help with younger children and those with lower level but still significant needs.

These two factors led to two inter-linked developments, the most significant of which was the creation of the Nest, a static base for the project at Teignmouth Community School. This was an existing hut at the school which became available for this purpose. Much of L2L's support is now provided there, although the project does continue to offer some outreach support.

The Intervention Workers have created a homely and welcoming environment within the Nest and evidence from the evaluation indicates that having a static base at TCS offers a wide range of advantages, including:

- A consistent, confidential space to deliver support to children from whom a set routine is important
- The opportunity to bring children from different schools together for group support
- Greater opportunities to engage with parents as they drop off and collect their children
- A clearer 'identity' for the project, as children, parents and school-based staff associate the building with the project
- Opportunities for school-based staff across the Learning Community to observe and shadow the Intervention Workers.

The Nest has also enabled the project to better support pupils in Year 6 in their transition to secondary school through the development of a 'mentoring' programme, which brings together pupils at TCS with Year 6 pupils receiving support at the Nest.

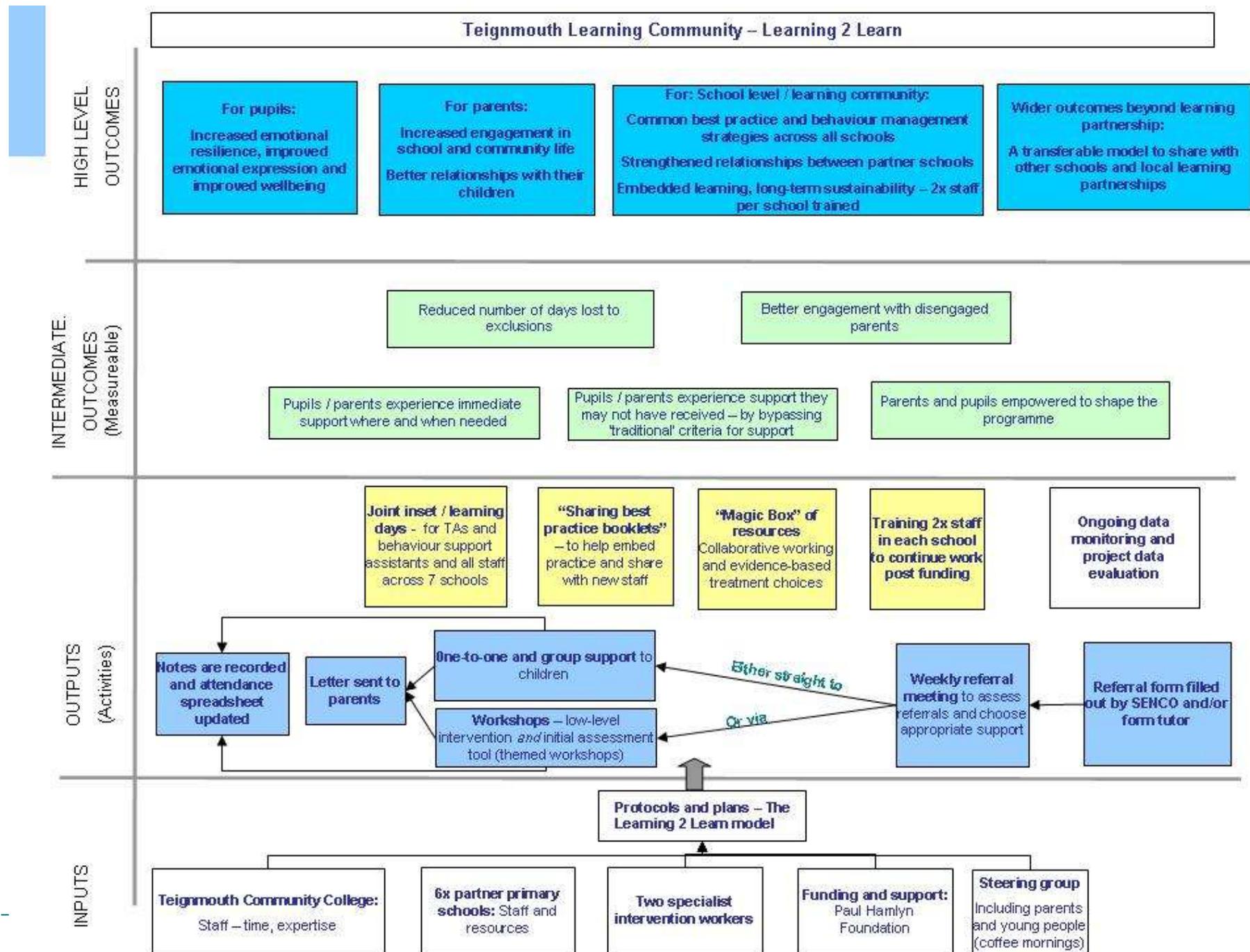
Another development in Year 1 of the evaluation was the scaling up of one-day workshops and other group based support, which enables the project to support a larger number of children around specific issues such as friendship, self confidence and bullying. These group activities also act as a tool for assessment, enabling the Intervention Workers to identify hidden support needs not yet picked up by the schools, which can be addressed through further group or one-to-one support.

Year 2 of the evaluation has seen fewer changes to delivery than Year 1. The project was initially only funded up until the end of the summer term in 2012 and successfully applied for more funding for the period of the 2012-13 academic year. This funding has enabled two important changes.

Firstly, the project has been able to further embed the THRIVE approach within the primary schools in the Learning Community. Two primary schools have established their own spaces, similar to the Nest, and the other primary schools have continued to adopt and embed the THRIVE approach in their schools. That the THRIVE approach has been further embedded in the practice of the primary schools means the project can be more responsive and has a greater range of support to offer children depending on their level of need. For example, some children will start off with an in-school intervention, which could be time out of class within school or receiving one-to-one / group support, and they may go to the Nest if their challenging behaviour escalates.

Secondly, the project has employed another full time staff member to the project. The extra resource meant the project could provide greater support to vulnerable children experiencing the transition from primary school to secondary school, whilst existing project staff members continued to support younger groups of children. As well as being a known face for the children in the new environment of the secondary school, the project did a number of transition activities, including workshops about 'moving on', team building sports activities and arts and crafts which were then displayed in the secondary school.

Aside from these adjustments, the project has continued to provide support in the way it originally intended, as illustrated in the project logic model on the following page.



The theories and assumptions underpinning L2L are set out in detail in the Scoping Report and summarised below:

- There is value in developing shared practice amongst all partner schools so that pupils arriving at TCS have experienced consistent behaviour management and support strategies
- Holding group and 1 to 1 support sessions 'off-site' – namely within the grounds of TCS - serves to help the young people feel comfortable and willing to engage in the support that they need
- Employing external experts in the form of the two trained counsellors allows the staff to engage with pupils and families on a level that is different from the teacher-pupil / teacher-parent dynamic
- Holistic, multi-stakeholder engagement is central to success. This includes engaging with parents and families as well as all staff across all partner schools
- Partnership working and strong strategic leadership are central to driving forward the project.

Two main areas of learning emerged from the fieldwork in Year 1 of the evaluation. Firstly, the project had at times taken on too many referrals, which led to Intervention Workers feeling over-stretched. In response, the project has capped the number of children who can attend a morning or afternoon session and created a waiting list. Secondly, the complexity of some children's needs meant that they required longer-term support than initially envisaged.

6.4 Impact

This section presents the evaluation findings in relation to impact. It presents a summary of the project's impact over two years on children and young people, parents, schools and the wider Learning Community.

Impacts on children and young people

Improvements in classroom behaviour

Our interviews with school staff, parents and children generated qualitative insights into the work of the project and how it is improving children's classroom behaviour, which in turn can reduce their risk of being excluded. One parent, whose child had been excluded from school three times in three months, said:

'Her behaviour was extremely disruptive at school...I used to have phone calls from the school every day about [Child]. I've not had a call in months...her behaviour has changed dramatically.' (Parent)

This sentiment was mirrored by two other parents, who noted:

'[Child]'s behaviour has improved loads. She was lashing out at teachers and she hasn't done that for months. It has made a big difference.' (Parent)

'He couldn't sit still, he had difficulty focusing and poor communication, he got bored easily and would disrupt the class, we used to dread the phone ringing and it being the school. Since coming here, he has had a remarkable transition, he's come on in leaps and bounds, he's settled and is learning things.' (Parent)

Parents gave many examples of the positive impact of the project on their child's behaviour at school, which they attributed to their child's improved emotional expression and use of

coping strategies and techniques, taught by the project. They described the importance of the project taking the time to understand their child, making their child feel valued, giving them one-to-one attention and helping them develop a sense of responsibility for their own and other children's behaviour. This is summed up by comments from the following three parents:

'We were at the point where he was getting taken out of the classroom... [the Intervention Workers] looked at him holistically, him as person, his needs, where there are behaviour issues, look at the causes, they are a lot more in tune with the struggles he faces compared to the school. He really valued the one-to-one support they gave him.' (Parent)

'She is lots more settled at school, she used to lash out at a teacher or child or hide under tables, she was so frustrated, now she can articulate how she's feeling - we know that she's upset and we sort that out. School is easier and she enjoys it.' (Parent)

'Before he was seen as naughty and disruptive, it was about hard love and sticks. Coming here he had people listen to him and he learned tools to regulate his behaviour. It has given different insights into the same problem. The school took an authoritarian approach but that wasn't appropriate for him.' (Parent)

The importance of the approach of the project in understanding behaviour and giving one-to-one attention was described by one child as:

'If something has happened you can speak to someone, and someone can look after you more than they can in school. You don't get bossed around and taught. It's different. It's not ruled by lesson cycles, it's a helping session.' (Child)

By improving children's classroom behaviour, the project has also improved some parents' perception of, and relationship with, their child's school, as they receive fewer complaints about their child. One parent said:

'I'm always dreading picking them up [from school]. I stand furthest away from the door so they [teaching staff] don't waggle their finger and tell me to 'come in please'. It's nicer now. I get a good response. She comes running out like other kids, and I don't feel like I'm going to be told off.' (Parent)

Children also talked about the positive impact of the project on their classroom behaviour, illustrated in their own words below.

Children's comments on the impact of the project on their behaviour

'It's helped me with my anger. Before, when I first came here I used to always walk out of class and shout.' (Paul)

'I got excluded for hitting people...I can wind people up, I lose the point where I just have to walk out [of the classroom] and kick anything I see or push anything I see. I don't do that as much as more. I do still walk out a little bit if I go too far but I just go and sit in the corner really.' (John)

'I've learnt how to behave. And I've learn to speak to someone if you're feeling down.' (Tom)

Children were keen to talk about activities they have undertaken at L2L which helped them better understand and express their emotions, including writing down their negative feelings on a piece of paper, putting it in a balloon and jumping on it; creating a 'memory box' to help them cope with a specific event in their life; punching bean bags against a foam wall and throwing paint on blank walls.

They also identified a number of coping strategies and tools they can use at school to help them control their emotions and behaviour. These include a 'calm down box' containing materials such as Lego or buttons that they play with when they start feeling negative emotions; a password, which they agree with the class teacher and use when they feel themselves getting angry or upset; 'calm down movements' which help them focus on something else when they get angry; and a 'praise book' in which school-based staff and parents write positive comments when the child has done something good.

School-based staff agreed that the project has led to improved behaviour in the classroom, and provided several examples of children whose behaviour had been substantially improved. In one example, a boy who was supported by the project would refuse to stay in class and would spend whole days running around the school, with school staff chasing him. He spent time in the Nest and received one-to-one sessions with project staff members. He has been taught to sit on a special chair, made for him by the project staff. He now sits on this chair when he starts feeling upset and as though he wants to not be in class. This has meant he now has a strategy to regulate his behaviour, so he can spend more time in class and his risk of exclusion is reduced.

Vignette – Andrew

Andrew had a difficult home life. He had a difficult relationship with his father, who had left the family home, and he had experienced family bereavement. He was very disruptive at school, and found it difficult to concentrate in lessons. This would lead him to get into trouble.

The family heard about L2L through the CAF meetings. At first, Andrew received one-to-one support from one of the project workers. They did activities such as drawing around Andrew to create a 'mini me', on which they wrote aspects of his life, for example, his hobbies, the things he liked and the things that made him feel scared and anxious. They also did activities such as throwing paint around a room covered with paper. Andrew says:

'These activities really helped with my anger. The cut-out of me really helped...when you see yourself the feelings start coming out, it really helped me to understand myself.'

Now Andrew is in Year 6 and attends the Nest twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. He likes doing physical activities at the Nest, particularly football, and he likes the conversations he has with the project workers during the activities. When asked what the best thing about attending the Nest was, he said:

'I like the fact there are rules but no rules, I like the fact we do physical activities and that there are people to talk to help with feeling angry.'

On Mondays, Andrew attends the Nest with a group of older pupils, who are in Years 7-9 at secondary school. In this way, the project is helping to prepare him for the transition to secondary school, as when he starts there, he will already know some of other pupils. Andrew really likes the opportunity to be around the older children:

'I like the group who are between Years 7 and 9 because they are nice and mature, when I come here and there are people in my age group, I can act more mature, I like being seen as one of the mature ones.'

Andrew says that coming to the Nest helps to get him through the week and gives him something to work towards – and this has a positive impact on his behaviour:

'On Mondays I would get excited about the weekend and telling my friends about it and it would get out of hand, and then Thursday was also difficult because I would be getting tired and would feel like I had had enough. Coming here gives me something to work towards, if I have a bad week or a bad Friday. I have blips but I have less bad days now, I need less reminders from the teacher.'

Andrew is more able to control his anger now, and he puts this down to strategies such as the memory box, where he could store memories about his family, and a password to use with the teacher when he felt he was becoming angry and needed a break. These strategies make it easier to be at school:

'I don't snap so easily now. Before, if a child looked at me, I would go and hurt them and do something physical but I don't do that now. Coming here stops me from getting angry.'

His stepfather echoed the positive impacts of the project on Andrew and told us that coming to the project has had a positive impact on all of the family, as the pressure and anxiety of Andrew getting into trouble at school has eased:

'Not having to think 'what's going to happen'... exclusions and other issues and then needing to take time off work, which in turn impacts on finances, the impacts are like a pyramid, now that's been smoothed out, it's such help, things are calmer and easier. We don't expect the worse anymore – before, we were always dreading the phone ringing, what's going to happen, is the phone going to ring...'

Learning

Interviews with parents, children and school-based staff suggest that as a result of support received from the project, many of the children are able to spend more time in the classroom and are more engaged in their learning as a result. Parents and children described how learning a number of coping strategies helped the children to regulate their emotions and behaviour and meant they found school easier and more enjoyable, which in turn helped them to learn. The comments below support these points:

'She didn't like going to school previously, she felt she had escaped from school when she first went to the Nest but now she loves coming to the Nest and she loves going to school, and as a result her reading issues have improved.' (Parent)

'From the children's perspective, they are in class more of the time and are engaged in their work, they have strategies to keep them in class and they are better equipped to deal with the difficult situations in their lives.' (School-based staff)

Vignette – Tom

Tom is in Year 6 and has a chaotic family life. His mother and father have a turbulent relationship and have substance misuse issues, and Tom is in and out of care. He would often refuse to be in class, and while this was a reason for him to be excluded, the school was reluctant to exclude him because of the situation at home.

As a result of the support he has received through the project he is now spending more time in class and is actively engaged in learning. School staff predict he will reach a reading level 4 by the time he leaves primary school, which would not have happened without the support of L2L.

Making friends

The project encourages children to interact with each other through group activities, for example, playing sports, making mosaics, playing board games or cards and painting furniture. The children we spoke to in Years 1 and 2 of the evaluation felt that coming to the project helped them to widen their circle of friends, including making friends with children from other schools and with children of different ages. One said:

'I've found a best friend, which is amazing.' (Child)

Not all the children found it easy to interact with others or made friends with all the other children at the project, but nonetheless felt that it increased their skills around social interactions in general - for example:

'Everyone here is friendly, apart from one moody boy. I have not made friends as such but I know them and get on with them. But I do have more friends at school now.' (Child)

Increased wellbeing

Children and parents reported increased levels of self confidence, self esteem and overall wellbeing as a result of the child's attendance at the project. Amongst the reasons given for increases in wellbeing was the time spent building relationships and trust with the Intervention Workers. Parents felt the project was a 'safe' environment for their children, where they were free to be themselves and were supported:

'It is very supportive here, [the project workers] are very helpful, it gives him self esteem, he feels he belongs whereas at school he is looked upon as an outsider. It's good for his self confidence. Because of the sense of belonging and self esteem, he is more at ease with peers than he was. It's remarkably beneficial.' (Parent)

'It's a safe place to be, for children to develop at their own pace. She is 'younger' than other people her age, but that is OK here.' (Parent)

Another parent talked of **improved self confidence** in her two adopted daughters who were both supported by the project. Of one of her daughters, she said:

'It gives her a lot of confidence. She's given responsibility in a secure environment and she feels that she can actually be trusted to do something.' (Parent)

Some parents talked about their children showing **improved emotional wellbeing**, for example:

'It's definitely helped with his emotional wellbeing. He gets to feel it's positive, he gets to understand that when he has had a negative behaviour, to take responsibility and to learn from it and to go on to develop in how he could do things better if he was in that situation again. Certainly, there have been times when he has been at a low ebb so taking part in the project has helped him deal with that, he gets such a lot from it.' (Parent)

Children used words such as 'awesome', 'fantastic' and 'brilliant' to describe the project, and some parents reported that it has given their children **something to look forward to** in the week.

'My child has been so positive coming here [the Nest], and it's the first time in a long time that I've seen him be enthusiastic and happy, you know, something that he has to do in the week. It's a big thing for him really.' (Parent)

'[Child] was always running riot, distracted. But she definitely likes coming here, and she likes me bringing her here.' (Parent)

Parents were very supportive of the project's efforts to introduce a peer mentoring programme, where Year 6 pupils are paired up with older children who are already at TCS. Parents felt that this could have benefits for both groups of children, with one saying:

'The groups are great for her, she really benefits from working in a group and helping the younger children helps her to build her confidence and self esteem. Now she has started helping out at a gymnasium, mentoring the younger ones.' (Parent)

Vignette – Annie

Annie, who is 11, is adopted. She has issues with attachment and confidence, and struggles at school. She started seeing the Intervention Workers on a one-to-one basis, before going to the Nest once a week. Going to the Nest and helping out with the younger children there has had a profound impact on Annie's self esteem and confidence, and as a result she is enjoying school a lot more:

'She loves coming to school now and a lot of that is because she enjoys helping the young ones, coming here has built her confidence to come to school.'

As a result of going to the Nest, she has started coaching younger children at gymnastics. Her mother says that these positive impacts are mainly due to the trusting relationships Annie has with the project staff:

'This is a secure place for her, she can be confident with [Intervention Worker], she really trusts them, so she has extra people to communicate with.'

For Annie's mother, who has two other children with complex needs, one of the major impacts is that she gets additional support with Annie's specific issues:

'When Annie was scratching her arms with compasses I had someone else to come to about it. The staff here can talk to her so well because they are not so close to the situation. Having the extra support for me is great, and it's great Annie has someone to speak to.'

Impacts on parents and families

Some parents reported a **better understanding of their child** and the reasons why they behave in certain ways. Others reported **improved behaviour at home** and **calmer family life**:

'She is coping much better at home. She copes with the 'no's a lot better. A year ago she would have smashed things in my house.' (Parent)

'I feel like I've got more understanding now – why he won't do this or that. They've [the Intervention Workers] taught him to express his feelings. We didn't know what was going on in his head this time last year. But he's coming out of his shell and telling us what he is thinking.' (Parent)

'His confidence is getting there, definitely, I feel more relaxed as a parent. He just wouldn't express himself before.' (Parent)

Some of the parents described feeling **less anxious** since their child was receiving support through the project, because they knew that their child was being well looked after, that there was less risk of them being excluded and that they could access extra support for their child if they needed it:

'I like that it's not just about school, you can bring home problems too. With dad not living with us, we had issues, I explained it to [the Intervention Worker] so she worked with my daughter through the new start process, not purely based on a school basis but focused on all aspects of a child's life.' (Parent)

According to parents and project staff, some parents observe the Intervention Worker in practice and then replicate similar approaches and techniques at home. This has worked well in some cases, although some parents are less receptive than others to such an opportunity.

Impacts on schools

School-based staff highlighted a range of positive impacts on the wider school in general, making reference to **fewer disrupted lessons, better understanding of effective tools and techniques** for supporting children with challenging behaviour, and **removal of other pupils' fear** of having disruptive children in the classroom.

School staff particularly value their close working relationship with the Intervention Workers which, in practice, means a) two-way information sharing to help the children get the most from the intervention, and b) embedding children's new coping techniques and tools (for example, calm boxes, praise books and rewards for good behaviour) within the school setting.

'They [the Intervention Workers] go the extra mile. They are doing more than they have to. They take the time to find out about the child, the parent, the school. They follow it up, they keep you informed. It's a shared responsibility, and no-one's pigeonholed into 'this is my job'.' (School-based staff)

According to the school-based staff we spoke to, the cohesive approach between the school and the project is key to the positive impact on children's behaviour:

'[Intervention Worker] emails teachers direct and they email back, they have a direct relationship which I think is really important. The work of the project would be ineffective if there was one strategy in the project and a different one in the classroom. The direct contact encourages ownership of the project.' (School-based staff)

The following comment from one parent underlines the importance of embedding the project's activities within the school setting:

'He had a box for calming down strategies. The school used it for 3 weeks and saw improvement with his behaviour, then they weren't consistent with this tool that [the Intervention Worker] had set up and his behaviour started up again.' (Parent)

Impacts for the Learning Community

In Year 2 of the evaluation, a significant impact of the project was the adoption of the THRIVE approach across the Learning Community - as one school-based staff member told us:

'In this third year of funding, there has been a huge shift in the Learning Community to using the THRIVE principles; the method of intervention has been adopted over the LCC and the primary schools.' (School-based staff)

Ways in which the primary schools have adopted the THRIVE approach in their school settings include:

- All schools now have two staff who have been THRIVE trained, which means they can begin to model this approach to other teaching staff

- Two of the primary schools have set up provision similar to the Nest, on their own school grounds, which are staffed by THRIVE-trained staff
- Teachers in one primary school are doing THRIVE assessments on their key stage 1 classes, supported by THRIVE trained staff
- In one school, project staff model the THRIVE approach with teaching assistants and children in the classroom, and then stand back and let the teaching assistant copy it
- One Head told us that she hears common strategies, based on the THRIVE approach, used by all the staff in her school. For example, children are given choices about what they want to do and told the consequences of their actions

At the end of Year 1 of the evaluation, the project employed extra resource to support children who were making the transition from primary school to secondary school; this has led to more consistency in approach between the primary schools and secondary school.

The school-based staff we spoke to felt that the THRIVE training and the adoption of the THRIVE approach across the Learning Community has meant there is now more consistent understanding, language and practice in terms of identifying and supporting children at risk of exclusion or truancy. This strengthens the impact of the approach, through children receiving consistent strategies wherever they go within the Learning Community, and means that staff have a common understanding when they speak with one another:

'In schools there is lots of variation as to how teachers treat young people and when they go to secondary school, it is another way they are being dealt with again. The THRIVE approach means we have a common language in terms of where they sit with their development. This means that when they move school - from primary school to primary school or to secondary school - they are getting a consistent approach. If a SENCO and SENCO talk, we all know what we are talking about.' (School-based staff)

Two of the school-based staff we spoke to said that, having seen the benefits of the project on children's behaviour across the school, ensuring that they could continue provision after the PHF funding was now a priority:

'Whatever happens now, I have to have this [on-site provision]... it is a priority. It is non negotiable, it has to be part of the school, other things have to go instead. Before I would have thought, 'this is a luxury' - now it is essential, because it helps us to deal with behaviour. We can see the benefits when the children come back to class.' (School-based staff)

Impacts for other organisations

As noted earlier in the report, the Intervention Workers contribute to CAF meetings, which are attended by parents and sometimes pupils. Two parents commented on how useful it is to have the Intervention Workers contributing to the CAF meetings, as they are able to provide some positive feedback about how a child has been with them, which often contrasts with the school's experience. The Intervention Workers also work closely with the Learning Community's Parent Support Worker and are in regular contact with the local CAMHS service. Whilst we did not interview representatives from these organisations, feedback from the project workers indicates that the two-way information-sharing that takes place plays a central role in ensuring more joined up and effective support to families.

Number of pupils supported

The table below shows a breakdown of pupils supported from each school in 2010/11, 2011/12 and September 2012 to mid-May 2013.

School	No. pupils 2010/11	No. pupils 2011/ 12	No. pupils 2012/2013
• Bishopsteignton	2 (2%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%)
• Hazeldown	46 (45%)	26 (30%)	5 (7%)
• Mill Lane	45 (44%)	53(62%)	33 (45%)
• Our Lady & St. Patrick	7 (7%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
• Shaldon	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	13 (18%)
• Stokeinteignhead	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
• Teignmouth Community School	--	--	19 (26%) ³⁶
Total	102 (100%)	86 (100%)	73 (100%)

Over all three years of project delivery, the majority of the project's referrals have come from Mill Lane primary school and Hazeldown primary school. This pattern of support is explained by the socio-economic profile of the families in the neighbouring areas of Mill Lane primary and Hazeldown primary, as well as the size of these schools, which has led to greater demand for the project. In 2012/13, more pupils from Shaldon have been supported than in previous years.

The table below shows the types of support pupils are receiving in 2012/13 – of the 73 pupils being supported in 2012, the majority are taking part in group sessions (65 pupils) and a smaller number (15 pupils) are receiving one-to-one support.

Exclusion and attendance data

We received exclusion and attendance data for 73 pupils who had been supported by L2L in 2012/13. We present data from those schools where pupils were supported in 2012/13 (two schools did not have pupils supported in this year) and where we had complete data for the school.

While the figures below are helpful to ascertain trends in exclusions and attendance, it is important to note that of these figures do not tell the whole story in terms of the personal circumstances affecting a pupil and their attendance levels. Therefore this kind of data

³⁶ In 2012/2013 L2L supported 19 young people from Teignmouth Community School. We do not have data from before 2012/13 about the number of children supported from this school.

should be read alongside the qualitative findings to gain a full picture about the impact of L2L.

In summary, across the schools involved, the data shows positive trends with fewer fixed term and permanent exclusions while pupils were being supported by L2L than previously, and fewer days lost to fixed term exclusion. Attendance levels improved for around half of pupils while being supported by L2L, and the overall number of days lost to unauthorised absences fell.

Fixed-term exclusions

The table below shows the number of exclusions in 2011/2012 received by pupils who would go on to be supported by L2L, compared to the number of exclusions they received while being supported by L2L. This data shows a very positive shift in terms of exclusions - there were 6 fewer exclusions amongst these pupils in 2012/13, while they were being supported by L2L.

	No. of exclusions in 11/12 (baseline)	No. of exclusions whilst supported by L2L (12/13)	Difference
Pupils from all schools	15	9	- 6

The table below shows the number of days lost to exclusion in 2011/12 compared to whilst pupils were being supported by L2L. Again, this data shows a positive movement in terms of four fewer days being lost to exclusion.

	No. days lost to exclusion 11/12 (baseline)	No. of days lost to exclusion whilst supported by L2L	Difference
Pupils from all schools	16	12	- 4

Permanent exclusions

The table below shows the number of experiences of permanent exclusions before joining L2L and while being supported. This table shows a decrease in the number of permanent exclusions for most of the schools, with the exception of school which had one additional permanent exclusion.

	Number of experiences of permanent exclusion before joining L2L	Number of permanent exclusions whilst supported by L2L
Teignmouth Community School	3	1

Mill Lane	4	0
Hazeldown	2	3
Shaldon	1	0
Pupils from all schools	10	4

Attendance levels

We compared % school attendance in 2011/12 (baseline) to % school attendance whilst supported by L2L during 2012/13. The statements below apply to those pupils for whom we have baseline and follow-up attendance data.

- Teignmouth Community School: we have complete data for nine pupils and attendance has improved for the majority of these (6 pupils). In the case of one pupil who started in L2L in September 2012, attendance went from 76% for the school year 2011-2012, to 99% for the school year 2012/13, an increase of 23%.
- For Mill Lane School: we have complete data for 28 pupils and there are improvements in attendance for the current year for 10 pupils. For nine of the pupils who have had decreases in their attendance, these have been minimal – changes of 2% or less.
- For Hazeldown School: we have complete data for five pupils. Two of these have improved their attendance. For the 3 pupils whose attendance has not improved, two of these have seen minimal decreases in attendance (0.1% and 0.4%) and one pupil's attendance has decreased by 11% since the previous school year.
- For Shaldon School: we have complete data for 13 pupils. For eight of these, the data shows improvements in their attendance of between 1.5% and 8%.

Unauthorised absences

The table below shows the average number of days lost due to unauthorised absences in 2011/12 compared to the following year, 2012/13 while pupils were being supported by L2L. This table shows an overall decrease in the number of unauthorised absences for pupils while being supported by L2L. For one school, Mill Lane, there was a very small increase in the number of days lost to unauthorised absences.

	Average no. days lost to unauthorised absences 11/12 (baseline)	Average no. days lost to unauthorised absences whilst supported by L2L
Teignmouth Community School	33.7	1
Mill Lane	25.4	27.2
Hazeldown	0	0

Shaldon	0.8	0
Pupils from all schools	59.9	28.2

Ongoing challenges and future plans

The main challenge identified by Year 1 of the evaluation related to the need to develop a more formal exit strategy for children. Whilst for some children, the support they receive from L2L is time limited, for others, it is less clearly bounded. One school-based staff member we spoke to, felt that the fact the benefits of the support could be demonstrated for the majority of children within a short period of time, was a key part of her school being keen to adopt this approach:

'Most of them have very short term input, it works and then they move on, there are a few who have more complex needs and need ongoing support. Generally you can see the impact. If it doesn't impact on the learning and education then there is no point in doing it, but this does.' (School-based staff)

This was apparent in discussions with parents, who were keen for their children to receive support indefinitely:

'[Child] still needs help, she finds her sessions with [Intervention Worker] helpful, I think these session needs to continue as I think she would go downhill again... if her behaviour at school deteriorated I think this would then deteriorate at home...I cannot stress enough how helpful this support is.' (Parent)

In Year 1 of the evaluation, parents recognised that the role that schools have to play in supporting their children and were keen to see greater integration between schools and the project, for example:

'I think the schools needs to start picking up on it more than what they are before they [children] stop coming here....I don't think they [school staff] are trained, because it's not a special needs school.' (Parent)

'I think our kids' teachers should come here [the Nest] and see how they [the children] are being dealt with and how different it is.' (Parent)

In Year 2 of the evaluation, the project has done more work around exit strategies of children and this has been facilitated by the primary schools doing more to embed this approach in their ways of working (as described above). The extra provision at some of the primary schools has meant that the intervention can now 'step up' and 'step down', according to need. For example, a young person may have a staged exit from the Nest to school-based provision, before going back full time into class. This staged approach means they don't feel 'abandoned' by the project:

'We have an in-school intervention and a Nest intervention. They might start off in the Nest, and after a time they are getting better, they practice the strategies, and they can access their school provision before returning full time to class. You don't want them to feel abandoned, like, six weeks and you are off. We have done a lot of work this year in terms of exiting those children so the intervention can step up and it can step down, and it is responsive to need.' (School-based staff)

As noted earlier, the primary schools are keen to continue the provision beyond the funding period. The Learning Community has put together a proposal that the schools will continue to

fund it themselves, and so the project will continue in its current form. That the schools in the Learning Community are keen for it to continue is further evidence of the extent to which the project has been embedded across the Learning Community.

6.5 Factors which have facilitated success

A history of collaborative working across the Learning Community

Stakeholders agreed that the pre-existence of a well-functioning Learning Community has played a key role in facilitating the success of L2L. The seven schools have a history of collaborative working, for example, through the joint funding of a parent support worker and the development of a common attendance policy, which helped ease the introduction of the L2L project.

A formidable achievement of the project was a joint INSET day, involving staff from all 7 schools, held in September 2011 to encourage collaborative learning. The THRIVE training served to develop a common understanding and practice around supporting children who need extra help. The following comments illustrate the community ethos being developed across the seven schools:

'It's lovely to go down to TCS. That extends our school, we're part of a wider community.'
(SENCO)

'We're starting to see the children as local Learning Community children, rather than belonging to individual schools.' (School-based staff member)

Interestingly, stakeholders identified two specific characteristics of their Learning Community that they feel have contributed to its success, and subsequently the success of L2L. Firstly, TCS is located in the centre of the community with the six primary schools dotted around it, which means that it can operate an informal hub and spoke model. Secondly, TCS is the only secondary school in the area, which means that it is not competing for pupils from the local primary schools. Given this, there is a strong impetus for TCS to intervene early with children, to help support their transition to secondary school, and ensure their needs are met once they are at TCS.

Strong leadership

As well as the existence of a well functioning Learning Community, the project's success has been enhanced by support and direction from the highest levels within TCS. The project is headed up by one of TCS's Deputy Heads, who has championed the project across the Learning Community, and ensured a focus on sustainability from the outset, as well driving the development of monitoring forms to continually gather parental and teacher feedback on the impact of the project.

The skills, expertise and dedication of the two Intervention Workers

The skills, expertise and dedication of the two Intervention Workers was mentioned time and again by interviewees as playing a crucial role in the project's success. The following two comments illustrate this point:

'I think it is the quality of the people, not the building - the flexibility of approach and their skills and they are not one size fits all. It's THRIVE, but flexible to what the child needs.'
(School-based staff)

'If you've got the right people doing it, you've got a good project.' (Parent)

Interviewees frequently talked about the Intervention Workers *'going the extra mile'* for the children they support, and several parents commented on the positive relationship that the Intervention Workers have developed with their child:

'It's really nice to see his relationship with [the Intervention Worker]. He talks about her an awful lot which is really nice. She genuinely likes to be around the children and that really shows.' (Parent)

'[My child] loves [the Intervention Worker]. He keeps saying that she's his favourite teacher.' (Parent)

In Year 1 of the evaluation, several interviewees (parents and school-based staff) felt that school-based staff could usefully learn from the Intervention Workers, recognising that they are not necessarily equipped with the knowledge and skills to deal with children with such challenging behaviour. As discussed earlier, the project has set up an arrangement with one school whereby a Teaching Assistant is able to observe, and help co-deliver, group based work at the Nest, with one of the Intervention Workers then supporting the TA back at the school to put what they have learned into practice.

Effective engagement with schools

Whilst the project met with initial reticence from some staff within primary schools, it worked hard to engage with teaching and non-teaching staff and build good relationships. This has happened through: excellent communication and information sharing with schools about the children being supported to ensure a joined up approach between L2L and the school; by helping children develop coping techniques which can be replicated and embedded in schools; and by offering staff the opportunity to observe and learn from the Intervention Workers.

Comments from school-based staff that we spoke to revealed that the project has 'proven its worth' and is now generally very highly regarded by school-based staff. As one told us:

'At first the staff were not engaged with it, it was just me, then they saw the impact, it has changed and they have taken ownership of it. They have seen a lot of pastoral care which is ineffective, but this isn't and now there is understanding that we need to make sure we are supporting children and removing their barriers to learning.' (School-based staff)

An accessible project for parents

When asked about their engagement and relationship with the project, parents were keen to stress the accessibility of the Intervention Workers and their approachability.

'They [the Intervention Workers] want you to contact them. Any problems, any queries, which is really helpful when you've had a difficult week and are thinking, where are we going wrong here?' (Parent)

'Their attitude is that they are a lot more willing to be there for you, not just in the school setting, its any time.' (Parent)

Parents welcome the regular feedback they get from the Intervention Workers and feel that they can contact them by phone or email whenever they need to.

A project that complements, but is not part of, the school

Many stakeholders highlighted the value of the Intervention Workers 'sitting outside the school establishment', which allows them to engage with pupils and families on a level that is different from the typical teacher-pupil and teacher-parent dynamic.

'It's somebody different, not from the school. Someone else saying things to a child that we've said 100 times, and it somehow gets into their heads.' (School-based staff)

'They [the Intervention Workers] can have different types of conversations. Or maybe we are all having the same conversations, but hearing it from [Intervention Workers] means something different for a child.' (School-based staff)

This was also picked up on by parents:

'[Child] feels that [the Intervention Worker] likes him and so when she explains why he shouldn't be doing things he's much more ready to listen and to accept it...He responds better because he feels happier and more valued here.' (Parent)

'She was hitting the teachers. She was chasing them and kicking them...[the Intervention Worker] helps her see why she shouldn't do things. At school she's just told 'don't do it'. It sinks in.' (Parent)

As discussed earlier, the cohesive, joined up approach between the project and school staff is seen as key to the success of the project. Project and school-based staff felt the intervention would be ineffective if a child was receiving conflicting messages from the project and within the school setting. Within this context, the work of primary schools to embed this approach in their work, which contributes to this consistency, is another key success factor for positive impact on children's behaviour:

'We're setting targets in school and emotional targets in the Nest, and a student knows and the parents know, that we are working together, he can't be difficult all week and then get a reward at the Nest. The children have to work at their targets.' (School-based staff)

'Project staff go in and works alongside the teacher, this is what works in the Nest, lets see what works here, marbles in a jar, strategies to help the child stay in the classroom, she tests these things in the Nest and then tries them in the class. She goes in and implements them in the class with the TA and then steps back and lets the TA try them.' (School-based staff)

Providing off-site support

Linked to the point above, providing off-site support can help reinforce the perception of the project as complementary to schools, but not part of them. Whilst the Nest is a relatively new development for the project, evidence from stakeholders indicates that it has enhanced the project considerably, as it offers consistency for the children, the opportunity for children from different schools to mix, a greater level of interaction with parents, opportunities for parents and school staff to observe the Intervention Workers with children, and enhanced opportunities to assist Year 6 pupils with their transition to TCS.

One parent told us:

'It started off as one-to-one [support] which was very beneficial, then changed to group setting which he didn't get so much from, as he felt that other children in the group fight for the attention which didn't really work so well. In saying that, the group setting was in the school premises with people who were from his year group and class. Now he's in a

different group at Learning 2 Learn's own premises and he is gaining hugely from that group. Now there's all different age groups and I think there is a good mix of children and I think he will gain from that.' (Parent)

A culture of reflection and improvement

Stakeholders agreed that whilst the project has delivered many positive impacts, it has not been universally successful, and the Intervention Workers themselves would agree with this. It was clear from our discussions, however, that the Intervention Workers are quick to recognise when things are not working and to adapt. The Intervention Workers themselves told us that by nature of their counselling training, they are driven by continuous reflection on their practice. One example involved a tricky session with a group of very challenging children, which led the project to re-think the number of children they include in a group as well as the mix of children involved.

A focus on sustainability from the outset

From the beginning, the project has sought to ensure the sustainability of its impact, primarily through the delivery of THRIVE training which it hopes will lead to THRIVE assessments and action planning tools being used across the Learning Community, and more recently through the opportunities it offers to school-based staff to observe the Intervention Workers at the Nest and to co-deliver sessions in order to develop their practice.

6.6 Recommendations

This chapter has described the many positive outcomes that the project has delivered for children and young people, some of whom have complex needs. Over the past two years the project has developed and begun to be embedded across the Learning Community. It is clear from the evaluation that the project continues to adapt and innovate in response to feedback from schools, parents and other stakeholders.

Exit strategy

- The project recognised the need for a more formalised exit strategy for children receiving one-to-one and ongoing group support. School-based staff state that the project has started work on how to exit children from the project, and this has been facilitated by the primary schools further embedding the approach in their work. For children who are very vulnerable, a graduated exit is more appropriate, where support is tapered off over time and a child may move from an out of school intervention to an in school intervention. The project should feel confident that children's new coping mechanisms/strategies are fully embedded in the school setting before they stop accessing support, and that this is happening consistently amongst all the schools in the Learning Community.

Embedding and sustaining the project

- Year 2 of the evaluation has provided the opportunity to fully embed THRIVE principles and practice across the Learning Community, as a couple of staff from all seven schools have all completed their training. L2L should continue to act as a conduit between schools, supporting the continued integration of THRIVE within schools, particularly in those schools which are less connected to the project currently.

- In order for the project to continue to be embedded and sustained, it is important for the project to continue its capacity building work with schools, where school-based staff are given opportunities to observe and co-deliver sessions with the Intervention Workers, and also receive ongoing mentoring support from the Intervention Workers in the school setting.
- The project can use the findings in this report to raise awareness of its impact across the Learning Community and possibly beyond. Sharing these findings will also present the opportunity for the project to celebrate its successes, highlight direct feedback from schools, and showcase examples of how the project has helped children improve their behaviour and reduce their risk of exclusion.

7. Conclusions and cross-cutting learning

This chapter sets out the conclusions of the evaluation and draws together the cross-cutting learning that has emerged from the three projects over Years 1 and 2.

The three funded projects, while ranging in terms of scope and approach, have all generated positive impacts for children and young people, schools and for some, families and even communities. One of the projects (SWIFT) has also progressed towards replicating success in more schools.

Impacts for children and young people include improvements in emotional wellbeing (including confidence and ability to express and process feelings), behaviour (including ability to use techniques and strategies to self-manage their behaviour), ability to learn (such as focusing in class), and improved relationships with others (school staff, family, peers).

Impacts for schools include a more systematised approach to meeting children's needs in relation to behaviour and wellbeing, better understanding of the causes of problematic behaviour and how to manage it, less time spent on dealing with disruptions in class, and improved relationships with parents.

Impacts on families were seen particularly in the more explicitly family-focused intervention (SWIFT), but in all of the projects parents were seen to experience knock-on benefits from the improvements described above.

Although it is difficult to measure, many stakeholders agreed that all of the above impacts also have the potential to permeate to wider **communities**, through the interactions of those involved with others.

There is much learning that can be taken from the evaluation of the three projects. **In relation to school-based therapeutic interventions**, we identified learning around:

- Parental engagement
- Appreciative models of support
- Common success factors for whole school interventions and for targeted approaches
- The importance of early intervention
- Translating individual- to school-level impacts
- Exiting from targeted support

We also identified learning around the benefits of a joint evaluation across three projects.

Learning around school-based therapeutic interventions

Parental engagement

All three projects are working with some children from families that are characterised by intergenerational patterns of poor relationships and behaviours relating to school and authority figures. This underlines the need to **engage with parents in order to**:

- break the generational cycle of poor relationships with school and learning
- develop a shared responsibility with parents for their child's progression
- help parents to provide a home environment that supports positive change.

As the projects have shown, there are many different **ways to involve parents**, including the following:

- sharing decisions about the kinds of support that their child will most benefit from
- offering them support and advice when they need it
- establishing clear channels of communication between parents and schools (such as named individuals for parents to contact)
- involving parents on the project steering group
- seeking regular feedback about what has been working well/less from their perspective.

All three projects have made concerted efforts to be **accessible to parents**, through new communication methods and/or encouraging ongoing dialogue about their own or their child's needs/concerns.

- Whilst some parents may be initially reluctant to engage, *SWIFT's* experience demonstrates that maintaining contact with these parents can lead to their involvement later down the line.
- Where projects are working with children and young people rather than families, *L2L's* experience has shown that parents can benefit from observing, or taking part in activities with their child, as they pick up on approaches and techniques which they then go on to model with their child/children within the home setting.
- *Mounts Bay* has brought forward the point at which it makes contact with parents, systematically calling parents at the first level of the 'stages' rather than later.

Over the two years of the evaluation, parental engagement has become recognised by the projects as being absolutely crucial to successful work with children. Lack of engagement is identified as one of the key barriers. A **coordinated approach by parents and school**, so that children see them as being 'on the same side' has emerged as key to providing consistency of message around acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and to the security that children need and gain from experiencing consistent authority from adults.

Appreciative models of support

In all three projects there is a move away from a 'deficit' model to one where children/families are helped to recognise that they have strengths, resilience and skills as well as areas for development and improvement. Examples from the projects include, **in relation to children**:

- *Mounts Bay's* decision to re-name Heads of Year as Directors of Progress, its move from report cards to the CGSS, and its decision to 'intervene with' rather than 'isolate' pupils, reflects a more positive approach to supporting children
- *L2L* explicitly asks teachers for feedback on what the child does well, along with the problems they have encountered in the classroom, so that Intervention Workers can praise and encourage the child appropriately
- *SWIFT's* target card system which invites teachers and parents to 'rate' their child's performance throughout the week provides an opportunity for everyone to recognise and reward success.

In these ways, a shift from the characterisation of children as 'naughty' or 'bad' towards a more constructive interpretation is evident in all three projects.

In relation to parents too, an emphasis on the positive has proved powerful. Where a parent's relationship with their child's school is characterised by frequent negative reports on

their child's behaviour, they really welcome hearing some positive feedback, which can help improve their perception of, and relationship with, the school. For example:

- *Mounts Bay* has started to send 'positive postcards' home, something which could be systematised to further shift the balance towards recognising the positive as well as the negative.

SWIFT's intervention is explicitly underpinned by a strengths-based approach to parents as well as children, and, by the nature of 'family groups', of course works much more closely with parents than the other two projects. Many parents involved in Family Groups have risen to meet the high expectations set of them, and have gained confidence in their own strengths which has helped them not only to be better at parenting, but to realise they have something to contribute to others too (such as through volunteering).

Effective whole school interventions

Establishing a whole school intervention, particularly in a large secondary school like *Mounts Bay*, is a significant undertaking, and schools should be prepared to invest a great deal of time and energy embedding the necessary systems and cultural change. *Mounts Bay*'s project demonstrated that monitoring progress, gathering feedback and being willing to make tweaks to the intervention to improve it over time have contributed to its strength and effectiveness. Other supporting factors for a whole school intervention, drawn primarily from *Mounts Bay*'s experience, include:

- Strong strategic-level support to champion the intervention, secure buy-in, be available for answering queries/questions which emerge over time, and drive forward the intervention during the period in which it is becoming embedded into school life. A senior and visible figurehead, such as *Mounts Bay*'s Vice Principal, can act as a champion and provide the momentum that the project needs in its early days.
- Consistency of messaging and practice - a communications plan and delivery of whole school awareness-raising/training can support this.
- Use of inset days, line management meetings and staff team meetings to reinforce staff roles in implementing the intervention, and to generate feedback on how it is working from different perspectives.
- Dedicated administration support to develop and manage databases and other information sharing systems that underpin a whole school intervention. In *Mounts Bay* a dedicated Administration Lead was crucial to the functioning of these systems, highlighting the importance of allocating sufficient time and resource to data management.
- Sharing early examples of success across the school can help maintain momentum and enthusiasm.

Effective targeted approaches

Some of the factors that support whole school interventions are also useful in targeted ones, particularly in terms of spreading the benefits from target children to the wider school. These are senior buy-in, all-staff training, and sharing examples of success. *SWIFT* and *L2L* both regarded these factors as very important, even though they are not explicitly whole school interventions in the same way as *Mounts Bay*. In relation to their targeted activities, the following factors have underpinned effectiveness in these two projects:

- Working holistically with the child, parent, and wider family to address all relevant issues, which may well extend beyond the child's behaviour in school. This means being linked into the wider infrastructure of support for a family to ensure that support is informed by, and fits with, other support that the family is receiving.
- Accessibility and approachability of project workers (i.e. non-school staff, such as the Family Group therapists and L2L's Intervention Workers) to establish a power dynamic that is different from the traditional teacher-parent and teacher-child relationship.
- Regular communication and information sharing between non-school project staff and schools, to ensure a close 'fit' with the school's overall approach to pastoral support, and to help make any necessary adjustments within the school to support the child's ongoing development. The role of the school-based partner in Family Groups was one effective conduit for achieving this.
- Opportunities for school-based staff to observe and, where appropriate, co-deliver sessions with project workers in order to develop their practice and increase their confidence in working with children and young people with emotional and behavioural issues. L2L has used this method as part of its approach to sustainability.
- Strong links with external agencies which may need to be brought in to address specific issues such as mental health and domestic violence. For example, having a contact person in the local police proved helpful to members of Family Groups in a variety of circumstances.

Translating individual- into school-level impacts

It has emerged from looking across all three projects that to consider whole school and targeted approaches as entirely different types of intervention is not necessarily accurate, nor have the three interventions remained static in terms of the level at which they influence.

Our evidence suggests that targeted approaches (or other sub-school level approaches) have the capacity to translate into wider school-level benefits, for example, a change in the way teachers and management staff within schools understand and interpret children's behaviour, and fewer disrupted lessons.

- Both *L2L* and *SWIFT*'s targeted interventions have achieved this, mainly through training and sharing of practice by project workers with wider school staff, i.e. a cultural change.

However, for a targeted project to deliver whole school outcomes, a more systematic or structural plan around the ways in which individual-level outcomes will translate into wider school benefits may prove beneficial.

- *SWIFT* has developed such a plan for the implementation of the intervention in future schools, which includes actions such as a contractual requirement for schools to release their staff for training.

The importance of early intervention

Whether targeted or whole school, all of the three projects have understood the benefits of early intervention. By their nature as school-based projects, all are examples of early intervention in that they work with children before permanent exclusion becomes the only option. However, over the course of the projects the value of and focus on early intervention has become clearer, with all promoting the use of strategies and techniques which help

individual children to manage their behaviour before it causes a problem and higher levels of intervention become necessary.

- This clarity and awareness around the value of early intervention is reflected, for example, in *Mounts Bay*'s increased focus on the earlier 'stages' of its intervention in Year 2; and in the infants' school *Family Group*'s decision to focus on the very youngest children.

Exiting from targeted support

Projects need to give careful consideration as to when and how children and families exit the intervention, and how this will be managed. Depending on the needs and vulnerabilities of the children and families involved, the exit may need to be different for different children/families, as the improvement trajectory cannot be assumed to be linear. Projects should consider whether ongoing support mechanisms could be established to help sustain the project's benefits.

- *SWIFT*, for example, established a 'graduate group' for families who have completed their time at Family Group. It is run by a parent who has been trained and is supervised and paid to 'host' the group, which is attended by other parents
- In *L2L*, two of the primary schools have established their own therapeutic spaces where children who have finished attending the Nest (the project's main site) can go as part of a phased step-down from the intervention. In both projects, workers 'keep an eye' on children post-intervention, to monitor their progress
- *Mounts Bay* is also managing exit from specific forms of support within their whole school intervention, such as children who have attended an external course going on to become peer mentors within the intervention – providing some ongoing support and positive activity at the same time.

Benefits of a joint evaluation across three projects

Conducting the evaluation of all three interventions jointly brought added value to the projects and the evaluation in terms of learning. All three projects, although different in their methods, have many commonalities, and welcomed the opportunity to visit each other and identified learning from the other projects to apply in their own project or school. It is hoped that this report will provide further useful information about the projects to each other, and encourage them to maintain mutually supportive relationships.

- For example, *Mounts Bay* may be able to offer learning to *SWIFT* around embedding their approach in the more challenging environment of a secondary school setting.
- *SWIFT* may be able to offer learning around engaging with parents.

For PHF, we suggest continuing to provide regular opportunities for other projects funded under the same grants programme to meet and share learning in this way.

Appendix 1: Methods

Mounts Bay, Care Guidance Support Stages

Primary data collection

Main evaluation research was conducted during a site visit and follow on telephone interviews in the spring of each year. An overview of our primary data collection is provided in the table below.

Stakeholder group	Year 1 methods	Year 2 methods
Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depth face to face interviews with four pupils across different year groups who received a mix of support from Stage 3 and above • A guided tour of the school by two Year 11 pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depth face to face interviews with four pupils across different year groups who received a mix of support across the CGSS and with some experience of the external Forest programme
Parents/carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone interviews with four parents with pupils who have been at Stage 3 and above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NA
School-based staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with two Directors of Progress, one form tutor and two learning support managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with 5 learning support managers
Senior stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short face to face interview with the Deputy Head of school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interview with the Deputy Head of school and telephone contact
Project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interview with the Stage lead, who has overall responsibility for the project, with follow up impact interview • Face-to-face interview with the Student Support Lead who has overall responsibility for pupils in the project, with a follow up impact interview • Face to face interview with the Stage Admin lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interview with the Stage lead who has overall responsibility for the project • Face to face interview with the Intervention coordinator who has overall responsibility for pupils in the project • Face to face interview with the Stage Admin lead

Secondary analysis

Our secondary analysis comprised the following:

- review of the end of year interim report submitted by the project to PHF

- analysis of the exclusion rates from academic year 2008/09 up until 2012/13 academic year
- analysis of the Member of Staff On Call (MOSOC) rates from academic years 2010/11 – 2012/13
- analysis of positive behaviour data for academic years 2010/11 – 2012/13
- review of all school data, to establish the possibility of linking up or streamlining systems.

SWIFT, Family Groups

Primary data collection

The Family Group is a targeted intervention, running in three schools with capacity for 8 children per group at a time. Due to the small number of families involved, we chose a case study design for the evaluation of this project. In each year there were six case study families, two from each school – a total of 12 case studies over the two years of the evaluation.

The family, school-based staff and project staff were interviewed to gather data around each of the case study families.

In each year, research was conducted in two main waves.

- Year 1: visits to the three schools in early February and again in early May 2012
- Year 2: visits in November/December 2012 and again in March-May 2013

An overview of our primary data collection is provided in the table below.

Stakeholder group	Year 1 methods	Year 2 methods
Children and young people Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of Family Group sessions in each of the three schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In February, the researchers observed the whole session, in May, they were present for 'parent reflection time' only • Face to face interviews with children and parent(s) (according to the families' preferences and advice of the therapist) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In February, four of the case study families were interviewed in pairs, i.e. the child and parent(s) together. For the other two case studies only the parents were interviewed, because of the children's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of 'parent reflection time' at Family Group sessions in each of the three schools • Face to face interviews with children and parent(s) (according to the families' preferences and advice of the therapist) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In Nov/Dec 2012, there was one paired interview, i.e. the child and parent together. Four parents were interviewed. The remaining parent was not able to attend so she was not interviewed in the first wave. – In March-May 2013, two paired interviews were held with parent and child, two families had parent and child interviewed separately, and

	<p>age (aged 4-7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In May, two paired, child-and-parent interviews were conducted, along with one interview with a child alone (the parent was not able to attend), and one telephone interview with a parent whose child had graduated from the group. The remaining case study family was not interviewed in the second wave as the parent had moved out of the area. 	<p>two interviewed parents only (children aged 4-6).</p>
School-based staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with the three school-based partners who co-facilitate the Family Groups with the therapist • Face to face interviews with pastoral and other staff (roles including Head, Head of Year, Mentor, class teacher) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Staff were selected for interview because of their relationship to each case study child, therefore roles varied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with the three school-based partners who co-facilitate the Family Groups with the therapist • Face to face interviews with pastoral and other staff (roles including Head, Head of Year, Mentor, class teacher) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Staff were selected for interview because of their relationship to each case study child, therefore roles varied.
Project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with the project manager of the Family Groups project who is based in the School and Family Works (SFW) (who is also the therapist for the Family Groups at two of the schools) • Face to face interviews with the SFW therapist at the other Family Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face and telephone interviews with the project manager of the Family Groups project who is based in the School and Family Works (SFW) (who is also the therapist for the Family Groups at two of the schools) • Face to face interviews with the SFW therapist at the other Family Group • Telephone interview with another member of the Family Groups project team, an Extended Services Coordinator
Wider stakeholders		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff member, Hounslow Police

Secondary analysis

Our secondary analysis comprised the following:

- review of attendance data (including unauthorized absences) from each school, in relation to each case study child
- review of exclusions data (fixed term and permanent) from each school, in relation to each case study child

Teignmouth Community School, Learning 2 Learn

Primary data collection

Main evaluation research was conducted during a site visit and follow on telephone interviews in the spring of each year. An overview of our primary data collection is provided in the table below.

Stakeholder group	Year 1 methods	Year 2 methods
Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group with four children receiving group-based support • Short face-to-face interviews with five children who received a mix of one-to-one support and group based support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group with four children receiving group-based support • Short face-to-face interviews with three children who received a mix of one-to-one support and group based support
Parents/carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group with five parents • Telephone interviews with three parents unable to attend the focus group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with four parents
School-based staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with three school-based staff at two different schools (two SENCOs and one Teaching Assistant) • Telephone interviews with one school-based staff member • Face to face interview with the Head of TCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with two school-based staff • Telephone interviews with one school-based staff member
Project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paired telephone interview with the two Intervention Workers • Face-to-face discussions with the Deputy Head of TCS, who has overall responsibility for the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with two Intervention Workers • Face-to-face discussions with the Deputy Head of TCS, who has overall responsibility for the project

Secondary analysis

Our secondary analysis comprised the following:

- review of attendance data (including unauthorized absences) from each school, in relation to each child who had received support from L2L
- review of exclusions data (fixed term and permanent) from each school, in relation to each child who had received support from L2L.