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**What are Therapeutic Storywriting Groups (TSWG)?**

The positive impact of therapeutic stories is well documented and evidenced within the literature and within practice. Research commissioned by the South-east Region SEN partnerships shows that Therapeutic Storywriting Groups (TSWG) help pupils:

* Process difficult feelings
* Develop social skills
* Improve emotional resilience
* Improve writing skills.

(Hampshire Educational Psychology Service; Batchelor, J;  Murray, J.; Warhurst, A. and Maclean, G, 2013).

TSWG have been developed as an SEN intervention which uses the medium of story writing to support children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties (SEMH). The intervention uses metaphor both within the children’s own writing and the stories written by the facilitator (i.e. the EP) in order to address concerns which may be too emotionally overwhelming for children to talk about directly. Teachers supporting pupils with SEMH can find themselves wondering whether to prioritise the pupil’s emotional well-being or to focus on their academic achievement. Research (Waters, 2001) indicates that this approach which encourages children to write from their core sense of self, can also increase children’s motivation to write and in this way supports the development of both emotional and academic literacy.

The groups are for 6 pupils aged 7-12 years, running for 10 sessions, with each session lasting for 1 hour.

**Evaluations**

The following data has been gathered through using pre and post evaluation measures with class teachers and pupils following pupil involvement in the 10 week Therapeutic Story Writing Group. The intervention was delivered by Dr Claudia Moss and Dr Emily Jackson (Educational Psychologists) across four schools in Leeds; both primary and secondary settings, during the academic year 2015 -2016.

The data indicates positive levels of change across the majority of areas assessed.

**Class Teacher Questionnaires**

**Emotional Well-Being**

For the following rating scales, an increase in the post intervention score indicates a positive change.

For the following rating scales, a decrease in the post intervention rating indicates a positive change.

**Social Well-being**

For the following rating scales, an increase in the post intervention rating indicates a positive change.

**Engagement with writing in the classroom**

**Teacher Comments:**

**Behaviour Changes**

* Seems a lot more settled.
* Great attitude and attention in class especially in writing and reading.
* More engaging and cooperative in writing and independent work.
* Still gets angry but on reflection is able to calm down and apologise.
* Her confidence has really improved the past two months.
* She has gradually become more confident throughout the year. She is more willing to integrate in group work. This is something she struggled with earlier in the year.
* He is a lively member of the class. This behaviour has improved throughout the year. He is more accepted by his peers. This attitude to writing has improved.
* She seems settled and happier with her writing since going on this group .
* She is more confident lately in her own ability.
* No recent outbursts.
* Fantastic engagement and focus during a big write assessment piece and changing his book EVERYDAY!
* Pupil is much more willing to put her hand up to answer questions.
* She offers help to others and often shares her work/ideas to the class.

**Emotional Well-being**

**Ability to express feelings:**

* Is now able to do this more appropriately – can say & explain in a sensible way how she feels.

**Capacity to recover from distress:**

* Since the therapeutic intervention commenced the pupil seemed to be able to recover from distress quite quickly.
* Is managing to turn behaviour around after reflection time.

**Engagement with writing in the classroom**

* Much improved! Can now work slightly more independently and takes greater care with the quality of her written work.
* Effort and motivation, as well as the quality of her writing has improved.

**Other comments**

* Pupil has notably produced more in her work, since the intervention- hopefully will be maintained.
* Still talks about the group fondly.
* Overall positive outcome, although still work to do.
* She enjoyed the sessions and I believe they had a positive impact on her.
* He really benefitted from this group. His attitude to writing has improved and as a result his standard of writing has gone up.
* The story writing intervention has had an effect on his self-confidence. He is able to make and sustain a friendship with another child in the class. He has also gained more confidence with his writing. This handwriting is also much neater. He seems to have developed some pride in his work as it’s of a better quality.

**Pupil Questionnaires**

For the following rating scales, an increase in the post intervention rating indicates a positive change.

**Pupil Comments**

**How have you felt coming along to the story writing group?**

* I feel very good and I want to go again.
* Very happy and excited to be there.
* I have felt happy because when I started I thought it would be good and it was.
* Excellent. Really good.
* I have liked it because I had fun.
* I was so excited to go. I love it.
* Fun.
* Happy/excited.
* Happier than ever.

**Has it made a difference to your writing? In what way?**

* Yeah, helped with handwriting.
* Stories more creative.
* Yes as I now enjoy it more.
* Has improved my writing & spelling.
* Yes it has helped me listen to new words and learn them.
* It has changed my writing. I write more things now.
* Yes, because it has made me think more about characters.
* Yes. With my spelling.
* Really enjoyed it .
* It has made me more imaginative.
* It improved my writing.
* Big improvement- my teacher said so. My writing is neater, on the line.

**Has the story writing group affected your writing in class?**

* I learned more about writing.
* Yes, it has improved. People can read my writing.

**If yes, in what way?**

* Writing more neatly & thinking before I write.
* Write more and working faster.
* I can use new words in my writing.
* Yes it made it neater.
* Makes it neater and I’m much happier because my writings neat.
* Neater, not rubbish, it’s good now. I got ‘star of the week’ for my writing.

**What has the relaxation and saying how you feel at the beginning of the session been like?**

* Good, helped to clear your mind before writing.
* Good, helps to be relaxed before writing.
* It felt good and relaxed.
* It is good and it makes me very relaxed. I like being quiet.
* Yes, good because it made me feel less angry.
* Really nice. Helped me focus on my writing.

**What was it like to have the teacher also write a story?**

* I liked it because my wish was for everyone to join in the group and they did.

**Did your stories help you think about feelings? In what way?**

* Sometimes, making me think about them.
* Helped to imagine the feelings of those in the stories,
* Yes, by writing about someone made me think about their feelings.
* Yes, made me think how other people felt.
* Yes it did because it painted a picture in my mind.
* They made me think about my mums feelings.

**How would you describe the group to another child who knew nothing about it?**

* Relaxing, writing group which uses your imagination.
* Fun, it helps you to write more.
* I would say that we went to a story writing group and did fun activities like drawing, writing about stories, writing a little piece of paper about your feelings. I would also tell them it was so fun, I wish you could go there.
* It was brilliant!
* Awesome, you can write any kind of story you want.
* You should because it’s fun and it makes you happy, you get to write some fantastic stories.

**How do you feel about the group ending?**

* Miss it.
* Sad.
* I felt very upset.
* A bit sad because I want to do more.
* I wanted it to carry on for a bit longer so we could do more.
* Sad because I liked it.
* A bit sad but I can do more writing in class now.

**What sort of children do you think would benefit from being in a group like this?**

* People who need help with writing.
* Different types of feelings that stop them from writing.
* To be able to think more of the characters feelings.
* Kids that are half confident.