

## What we doing to prevent school exclusion and increase attendance in Portsmouth

The Portsmouth Education Partnership Strategic Board has committed to improving school attendance and reducing fixed terms exclusions (suspensions) as one of its key priorities.

A strategy, which is currently being finalised sets out the case, and a proposed way forward, for a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost from school through non-attendance, exclusion or reduced timetables against the background of the learning loss that so many of our children and young people have experienced throughout the pandemic and unfortunately for some continue to do so.

The strategy builds on several years of work and a range of initiatives, including Trauma Informed approaches. Since September 2017, Portsmouth has worked with schools to develop trauma informed approaches through several different but complementary projects. The overwhelming majority of schools have participated in one of more of these projects.

### **Restorative Practice Training:**

Training, workshops, and ongoing Action Learning delivered by the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children's partnership to school staff, including some whole schools training.

The PSCP offers a suite of courses that, in different ways, support the whole of this strategy, including the popular and well-attended ACEs course

### **PACE/ PACE Plus**

The use of the PACE +Approach (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) overtime by key adults with a child or young person who has experienced relational trauma:

- Overcome blocked trust – developing a relationship in which the child or young person allows the adult to have some influence on him/her rather than trying to control the adult.
- Breaks the cycle of blocked care allowing the child to accept the care and support from the key adult and, as a result, stopping the adult from feeling rejected and ineffective.
- Helps the child or young person to become open and engaged to learning (by helping him/her to feel safe) rather than being stuck in a hyper-vigilant state of arousal

### **Attachment Aware Schools**

A whole school programme, delivered by the Education Psychology Team, which builds on and complements work around PACE and restorative approaches in schools. Available to all schools to build their capacity to support looked after children through an understanding of attachment and how to put this into practice in schools.

### **Louise Bomber Webinars**

Three webinars, commissioned during June 2020 - Collective Trauma Recovery Plan during COVID 19. Following the success of these we commissioned two further webinars, Embracing Sadness and Embracing Wonder. Recordings are still available to be shared with Portsmouth schools.

Our **city-wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions**, (available on [www.portsmoutheducationpartnership.co.uk](http://www.portsmoutheducationpartnership.co.uk)) takes a whole system strategic approach to tackling school absence and exclusions, a major strand of which is around a whole

school approach to relational practice building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools.

Relational Practice is not a silver bullet and there are other things we need to do as part of a strategy to reduce schools days lost as set out in the strategy, including continuing ongoing good practice. Moreover, we know the things that count can't always be counted and we do expect to see a wide range of other major benefits from relational practice in schools including improved relationships, children feeling safer and happier at school, reduced anxiety etc. The direct and indirect impact on mental health and educational progress and attainment should not be underplayed. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to set an early expectation that relational practice in schools will make a very significant impact on:

- Days lost to exclusion
- School attendance, and in particular, reducing the proportion of children who are persistently and chronically absent
- Number of pupils on reduced timetables
- Demand for Alternative Provision

The strategy will be delivered under the auspices of the Portsmouth Education Partnership, and alongside partners in the police, NHS, parent representative bodies and the voluntary and community sector

The success of this strategy will ultimately be measured by improvements in school attendance and a reduction in school suspensions, against the last set of reliable data from 2018/19.

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