



The Challenge Model

ACAMH Twilight 9 10 19

Context

- The Royal Free Hospital Children's School (RFHCS) is a community Special School for pupils aged 5 to 18. We are a leading practice school for Mental Health and Well Being.
- Designated as a 42 place school for children who are patients on the paediatric wards at the Royal Free Hospital and within the Royal Free Eating Disorder Service at Queen Mary House. We also have a limited number of places (around 20) on our KS4 GCSE 'Day School' programme for local children who are not currently inpatients at the hospital but who would benefit from attending the school on a full or part-time, daily basis. The school recently took over management of the medical needs outreach service for the local authority.

- RFHCS belongs to Camden Learning, a local partnership set up for the benefit of children and schools
- Pupils are often very vulnerable physically, medically, socially and emotionally. A number of Day School pupils are reintegrating from Tier 4 CAMHS treatment. The school was commissioned to open new provision on Finchley Road in September 2019 alongside an existing health and well-being youth service.
- Designated by Camden & Islington as a Lead Practice School for Mental Health and Well Being and has just achieved the Healthy Schools Gold Award along with Gold Artsmark status. The school leads a successful Mental Health 'Learning Hub' with 17 member schools in 2019/20

Who are the young people who come to our Day School?

- Young people who attend our school often experience a range of mental health challenges. They may include anxiety; emotionally based school refusal and depression. Some are highly vulnerable and come straight to the provision from Tier 4 treatment. Some have EHC plans and a proportion tend to be LAC.
- Due to the specialist nature of the school, a referral to the school must be supported by either -
 - A Paediatric Consultant
 - A Consultant Psychiatrist

What problems do they face in mainstream schools?

- A common difficulty that our young people face is Emotionally Based School Refusal (EBSR). This may manifest itself in students finding reasons not to come to school, or asking to leave school early, because of feigned illness; a sense of being treated unfairly or sometimes a genuine anxiety based illness.
- All of these issues present a need for a sensitive approach on the part of staff but may also require a response of positive challenge, on the part of staff, to avoid these student behaviours becoming entrenched, worsening over time or affecting the emotional responses of other members of the group.

What do young people with such difficulties need to do in relation to school?

- We believe that what a young person with anxiety or depression or emotionally based school refusal needs to be able to do in order to continue to achieve in school *in spite of* these challenges is to manage to contain the anxieties they experience and to carry on their learning and achievement in spite of them. This often requires determination and bravery on the part of the young person.

What do we want young people to achieve whilst they are with us?

- In spite of the anxieties and challenges they face we need them to attend every day, punctually and to achieve in their lessons. They will get a chance to take responsibility for themselves and then at times, to support others. We want them *to feel good about themselves* as a result.

How do we try to help them to achieve this goal?

- We offer a small class environment with a high teacher pupil ratio. We provide a safe and welcoming space for pupils to learn. We provide clear targets in order to make progress.
- Teachers and support staff are trained to contain young people's emotions and behaviours by regulating their own responses and emotions, remaining calm and providing students with clear and firm boundaries (in line with school rules). This is to provide an environment in which pupils can effect (genuine) personal change.

“Cooperation Consideration and Contribution”

- School has adopted a simple Code of conduct and a clear ethos for our learning community
- The code sets out the school’s expectations regarding general behaviour and attitude to work. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour whenever possible.
- The school’s behaviour management policy is based on a positive approach and the use of sensitive discipline – valuing mutual respect, participation and reward. The school operates a Pupil Reward System to reinforce and support positive behaviour for learning

Agreement



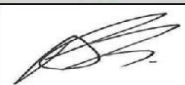
We will...

I will ...

Provide a varied, relevant and stimulating curriculum. As we are a small Special School the curriculum is slightly more limited by subject and may be different to what you are used to.

Maintain smaller teaching groups and a friendly, supportive environment where you can expect to receive regular personalised support. You will be expected to engage in every lesson and complete allocated homework tasks. Rewards will be given for effort and achievement.

Give you clear rules and routines. The school is hosted by The Royal Free Hospital and is an institution where Health and Safety is paramount – over and above what may be normally expected in a school setting.



Alex Yates
Headteacher

Be ready to change and grow - this may involve significant effort on your part. We recognise this can be very challenging for some young people but we are there to help you on the journey.

Develop independence – it is our task to prepare you for your next steps in life and pupils will need to work hard to prepare for the transition to other education, employment or training.

Develop resilience – one of our specialisms is helping young people to try and think differently and take responsibility for their actions.

Signed:

Name:

Is it an easy option for young people?

- For many students a new start here means a change in the behaviours they have grown used to, often in the face of unpleasant emotions. We often ask them to be brave in holding steady, staying at school and working through their difficulties.
- During the school day, in our experience, pupils who experience EBSR may attempt to avoid lessons through genuine anxiety related behaviours, feigned illness, overt disengagement from study or complaints that they are being dealt with unfairly. In such situations there is an expectation that pupils will stay at school for the whole school day and try to manage their difficult emotions with support from staff and in observance of the school rules.

What we do

- [RFHCS Input - what we do - ACAMH.pdf](#)

Interventions

- A quiet safe place in which young people can take time to make alterations to their thinking.
- Make sure it is noticed when the person is trying to get attention appropriately and that staff respond positively to these changes.
- We intervene immediately with displays of negative body language (such as head on desk) and remind pupils of their responsibility to the group.
- We remind them all the time of the progress they are making without dismissing their underlying needs.
- We provide quality time with their personal tutor at times of challenge.

- Teach them to make choices in an assertive way and to say “yes” and “no”
- Introduce them to a situation/activity gradually to help them become used to it
- Use humour as a way to distract
- Notice when they are displaying ‘early warning signs’ that they may be becoming unhappy or anxious and ask them to describe the problem before it manifests.
- Change the way we ask them to do something to avoid confrontation.
- Engage them with ‘Thinking Cards’ to help them analyse helpful and unhelpful thinking patterns
- Alleviate anxiety through the use of interventions like Dramatherapy/Music/Take 10/Mindfulness

www.thinkingcards.org.uk

www.thinkingcards.org.uk



Progress

- Have established a comprehensive check on Day School pupils' ability and achievement when they enter the school inc CATs and developed range of bespoke Pastoral Assessment tools (LAMS/ECM Profile SDQs)
- [LAM&S-NewPupil 6.pdf](#)
- Progress and is tracked from a central spreadsheet that records all baseline testing (CATS/Reading Age) and prior and current attainment.
- Pastoral progress is also correlated and analysed.
- All pupils undertake a S&L screening on entry.
- Completed reading assessments for all day pupils and auditing the results to discuss with EP

- Where additional cognitive and psychological assessment information is desirable, the school refers pupils on to the appropriate service (e.g. CAMHS, Education Psychology Service) for additional baseline information and/or to the LA for a full statutory assessment.
- Effective interventions and approaches are developed to support pupils' learning further through Progress Review meetings on a termly basis. These are pupil-centred and built around the innovative use of 'Wiki Sites' – an effective form of multimedia advocacy.
- We are also looking at longer term outcomes for CYP. These pupils are now tracked successfully and outcomes recorded for statistical and planning purposes over 5 years.

Wiki Sites

- <https://rixresearchandmedia.org/rix/wikis/>



What is expected of parents or carers?

- To communicate with us if they have any concerns. To support us in our work as we put in place boundaries and expectation. To respond to daily morning call. We often need parent/carer support in explaining our approach and our aims to a young person and to support us in maintaining school boundaries and rules appropriate to our clinical setting.
- We facilitate a half-termly Parent Group where people are invited to share their experiences, gain mutual support and get advice from a qualified psychotherapist who chairs the group.

Support for staff

- To provide all staff with a global overview and up-to-date information on all pupils and to ensure effective channels of communication for relevant information; this includes a 40 minute daily handover and a clear focus on safeguarding.
- To provide a structure of team support which will enable staff to deal effectively with challenging situations and to share the load; to include a fortnightly work discussion group led by CAMHS therapist
- To provide tailored INSET
- To develop pastoral targets in consultation with relevant members of the multi-disciplinary team, school staff and parents.
- To provide effective support from Senior Management when problems occur to ensure that the correct procedures are followed.