ANXIETY – FINDING AN EASIER WAY TO BE

The development of a Nurture Portal in a small primary school from a governor’s perspective

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A SCHOOL WITH EXCELLENT PRACTICE, EQUALITY, WELL-BEING AND LEARNING SUCCESS AT ITS HEART.

“At an unconscious level, what is hoped for from an education system is unreality…that all children will be equally well equipped to meet all life’s challenges” Anton Obholzer
Working in a sea of anxiety is hard.....helping children and families facing anxiety issues takes time....acknowledging ones own and ones institution's ways of dealing with anxiety is important...
If you see great parenting, make sure the parent and child knows how grateful you are and why....
If things don’t stack up after you’ve worked with an anxious family/child and you feel awful about it and are wondering why….there’s most likely more to it and it probably involves projections of anxiety.....you may be suffering “sea of anxiety sickness”.......
The LearningShared Podcast: Episode 1
A Recovery Curriculum
www.recoverycurriculum.org

Part 1
Loss and Life for our children and schools post pandemic
Barry Carpenter, CBE, Professor of Mental Health in Education, Oxford Brookes University.
Matthew Carpenter, Principal, Kidderminster, Worcestershire.
Three Principles

01
The portal development would be institutionally HOLISTIC- its existence only explicable by reference to the whole school and BASED ON NURTURE PRINCIPLES.

02
The portal development would be a LONG TERM cultural development.

03
The portal development would promote BELONGING and NOT be BUDGET LED in the thinking phase.
Institutionally Holistic

The Portal’s existence is explicable only by reference to the whole school.
Analysis of current anxiety drivers led leaders’ thinking
Not an attempt at a short term fix

• A pilot project had shown valuable culture softening changes from using referral from staff, parent and children.

• The Portal needs to be a boundaried secure base with capacity for great flexibility.

• Bowlby’s description of the happiness engendered by a school life lived as “a series of excursions from a secure base peopled by strong attachment figures” strengthened governors’ vision for a triad of potency between main classroom, ARC and Portal working based on ideas of dynamic equilibrium.
Dynamic Equilibrium-Triad of Potency

- COMMON RITUALS AND ROUTINES
- TRUST IN AVAILABILITY AND RELIABILITY
- GROWING EXPERTISE
- SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS
- ARC
- CLASS
Belonging – Not budget led in thinking phase

Aristotle’s theory of place and assertion that some places have unusual potency to attract humans and contain their anxieties.......led to hope that children, staff and parents would be drawn into the Portal by the feelings of belonging evoked by the innermost containing boundary.....that it would be a TOPOTROPIC HUB that promoted an easier way to be.....minimising tension, optimising integration and maximising value to school, families and local authority.
Images from the portal area
Colours and shapes from the ARC are being replicated in the Portal.
The visual is less "homey" than many nurture provisions.
Certain resources from the ARC are being added e.g. colourwash wall lighting.
New outdoor and indoor extension spaces are being created as satellite safe spaces e.g. willow igloo and Time and Space rooms.

Deputy Head in charge of development and operations.
Expert ARC staff work closely with main class teachers.
All staff are well being and autism qualified.
4 main school staff have advanced mental health qualifications.
An ex social care case worker has been appointed as pastoral lead for children using the Portal to manage the maintenance of the equilibrium of portal use and provide direct support.
A professional/parent library is being created in the attached library area of the Portal.
Additional contracts have been taken out or extended for SALT/OT/EP/EWO and LST services and all are engaged in the development. Local authority communications support services have been integral in the development of the whole provision.

Governance oversight is from SEND governor

Curriculum is school values led and linked directly with main school Gold Standard Curriculum. Outdoor learning is prioritised. Strategies used in the lock downs successfully e.g. happiness/self soothing boxes are retained.

A family room like the one in the ARC will be established. Parents will continue to be fully involved in the development and use of the portal. Family linked assessment tools from Evidence for Learning will be available for Portal users.
Acknowledgements

Anton Obholzer – Managing Social Anxieties in Public sector Organisations from The Unconscious at Work Routledge ISBN 9780415102063
John Bowlby  Attachment and Loss Penguin ISBN 9780140226065
Cathal Lynch- Building Belonging John Catt ISBN 9781912906536
The Philosophy of Aristotle- ISBN 0451531752
Evidence for Learning Assessment Tool/ Recovery Curriculum think pieces and podcasts- evidenceforlearning.net
Professor Barry Carpenter- et al- Engaging Learners With Complex Difficulties and Disabilities Routledge ISBN 9780415812740
Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk