

EMOTIONAL SECURITY IN THE CLASSROOM

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Background

This research followed a retrospective analysis of Boxall Profiles of 50 pupils. Strand F which focuses on being ‘emotionally secure’ in the classroom, warranted further exploration. The research setting was The Mulberry Bush, a specialist therapeutic school and children’s home for children who have experienced trauma and severe adversity and disruption in their lives.

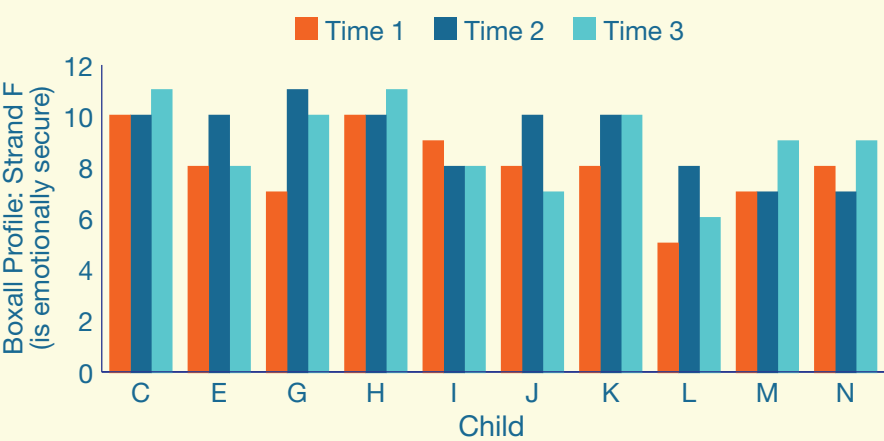
Aim

To investigate whether levels of emotional security in children attending the school could increase through adaptations to the school curriculum and curriculum delivery.

Method

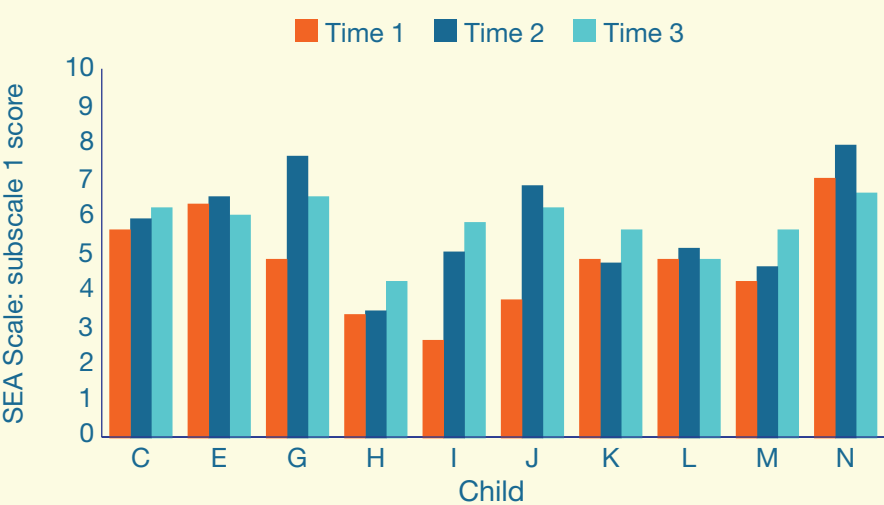
A mixed method small-scale longitudinal study with three data collection points over a thirteen-month period. Participants were ten children and five staff. Quantitative measures were Boxall Profile, Behavioural Indicators of Self-esteem (BIOS), Social and Emotional Adjustment scale (SEA) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and analysed descriptively. Qualitative data and staff focus group interviews thematically investigated perspectives on curriculum training, curriculum impact and broader perspectives on the work at the school.

Boxall Profile: Strand F



For eight of the children their scores for observed emotional security increased or remained unchanged at T3 when compared with their baseline scores.

Social & Emotional Adjustment Scale



www.mulberrybush.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 309565

Findings

Progress in socio-emotional functioning is neither regular nor linear...

...particularly for children with ACE scores of seven or above.

All ten children made positive progress on at least one of the measures, whilst seven also recorded reduced scores at T3 on at least one of the measures.

The curriculum underpins engagement. This study suggests that achieving consistency across classrooms helps pupils feel secure in their learning and the quality of the curriculum will underpin learner engagement.

Thematic map: staff perspectives



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Onions, C., Colley, D., & Wareham, M. (2024). Enhancing the emotional security of pupils in the classroom: a case study of a therapeutic residential special school. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 29(3-4), 152-173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2024.2429190>



Mulberry Bush Insight



Implications for mainstream and special schools

- Progress of children with this profile can be erratic. Appreciating the effects of ACEs on learning is important. The development of socio-emotional skills may take many terms and children must first gain trust in adults. Senior leaders must protect the time needed for staff to develop meaningful relationships with children and young people. Improved outcomes will follow, but time is needed to effect this change.
- Supervision is vital in education settings. Supervision allows staff to work through the impact of a child on their classroom practice, and their personal lives. Acknowledging the challenges presented by specific children and dynamics present in the classroom can help staff to find a perspective on the issues and promote staff resilience and self-care.