Presentation Speech

Hello, my name is Bethan Petty. Most of you probably know who I am already, but for those who don't, let me introduce myself, I am the year four class teacher and also I am on the senior leadership team. I am also in charge of the health and well-being area of learning within our school. I have been allotted enough time on the agenda to discuss how I believe it is necessary to introduce an intervention that helps improve the social skills of some of our pupils in order to enable their progression. Let me elaborate on this seemingly broad statement.

On our school development plan, which you all have received a copy of, point one highlights how we, as a school, intend on ensuring and providing more support for pupils with social interaction issues. This is an area I feel, and I am sure you would all agree, is something we as a school need to work on. Therefore, we have decided that there needs to be intervention at the earliest possible point, in order to help these children achieve their full potential. By the end of this part of the meeting, I hope you will all have a clear understanding of why we are implementing the intervention, who will be the 'stakeholders', what the benefits and limitations are, and how we intend upon implementing.

I am sure you would agree that our teachers do their utmost to ensure that our children's social skills and wellbeing are being encouraged while developing a broad and exciting curriculum. However, our challenge advisor has informed us that more needs to be done to help aid children who struggle with social interaction. This issue was raised at the end of last term, when children were tested by our additional learning needs co-ordinator and it was highlighted that most of them would benefit from an intervention. It was concluded that their lack of social interaction is detrimental and hindering their progression, and this needs to be addressed.

The responsibility for selecting a suitable intervention was put in the hands of myself and our additional learning needs co-ordinator in consultation with class teachers. We have reached some judgements through extensive research and consultation with our school's challenge advisor, and following local authority policies. After extensive searching we discovered multiple different interventions that could have been suitable. We examined a guide by Together for Children and Young People (Appendix Six). There were several interventions closely examined and explained in the guide. It was most beneficial when selecting out what we believe to be a suitable strategy. The intervention we ultimately concluded would be most beneficial was friendship groups by

Barnardo's. Friendship groups are proven to help children to develop social skills in a focused and small group setting. It was our belief that this would be the most beneficial strategy to suit the group of pupils' diverse and complex needs. According to the guide, the programme has evidence of a long term positive impact with studies having evidence of improving a child's outcome lasting up to a year or longer.

Through observation and interviews some 'target children' (Appendix Five) were identified that would benefit from an intervention. Half of these children will be progressing onto comprehensive school next year, hence, we believe it is fundamental for these children to receive the intervention. The children make up a group of eight, and each of them would benefit from the scheme for their own personal reasons. However ultimately they all struggle with forming friendships and maintaining them. It is essential we get the 'whole team' onboard. What we mustn't forget is to explain to these children what this intervention is, and how they would benefit from it. We would liaise with the pupils identified to create individual action plans which would then be reviewed upon completion of the intervention. Their progression would also be tracked and monitored throughout using our school's provision mapping. We must explain to their parents, carers or guardians why their children would benefit from the intervention. Next, we will speak to staff and make them aware of procedures and ensure the school development plan is followed through and everyone understands the outcomes.

There are some financial implications to this intervention, however, luckily our budget would allow us to implement the intervention in the forthcoming Spring term. We have agreed we could use our pupil premium as extra finance to provide for the intervention if needed. According to the guide I referred to earlier, the intervention is recognised as band one which highlights that the programme is low cost to set up and deliver. However, our school would have to get a days teacher supply cover at the approximate cost of £100 per member of staff and the training session itself costs £250 per staff member. It has been suggested that as wellbeing co-ordinator, I should deliver the friendship group and I will be willing to do so, as long as it does not affect my main role as class teacher. Also, I have worked with several of the target children throughout my career, so I have a fairly good awareness of their needs. One child who receives support from a relief needs support assistant will be attending the group so therefore, I would have the additional help from the assistant if necessary.

Children and young people need to experience social and emotional well-being to thrive and engage successfully with their education according to Donaldson (2015). According to Barnardo's (unknown date c) the intervention helps improves self-esteem, self control, emotional intelligence, classroom behaviour, conflict resolution and academic engagement. It also reduces aggressive behaviour, emotional distress, and conduct problems. There is a lot of positive feedback in regards to this intervention. According to key findings by Barnardo's (unknown date a), in Wales alone, there was a nineteen percent improvement in children's emotional regulation thanks to friendship groups. Our school would have to send our additional learning needs co-ordinator and myself on a training course, when we return, during the next appropriate staff meeting, we would allot sufficient time for us to feedback to our staff and inform how we successfully integrate this intervention into our school.

Now I would like to give a quick overview of the timeline of the intervention, which will last for ten weeks, at forty minute sessions per week. During each session there will be focus upon a different aspect of social skills. An idea would be to carry out this intervention during assembly time, and this motion has been given the go ahead by our headteacher. This would mean that it would not impact upon the children's learning time. Myself and our additional needs co-ordinator would create a session plan to show how each activity links to the curriculum also. I also want our teachers to be more equipped with a better awareness of how to help children who have difficulty with social interaction skills. Therefore, I suggest to create a resource pack to leave in the staff room. This pack will remain in the staff room on the notice board for members of staff to examine, it will have the core aims and principles of the intervention. Also, I would always be able to advise if necessary.

To witness good practice, I along with our additional needs co-ordinator visited Fair Valley Primary School, which as you know is in our local consortia. This school was recently deemed by Estyn as being 'excellent' in regards to maximising pupils well-being and helping them reach their full potential. What we witnessed was of an immense help. The school actually implement Barnardo's PATHs scheme which is the foundation of which friendship groups is based on.

To sum up, we have a duty of care as a school to ensure children's needs are met. I am sure you will agree that our staff have high expectations for our pupils. As you know, we are a UNCRC rights respecting school, and one of the rights is that children are entitled to freedom of association, Every

child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups. So therefore we will refer to this scheme as a ‘friendship group’ to ensure children don't feel stigmatised and just as if they are attending a club with some of their peers. We plan to incorporate the activities that Barnardo’s suggest through fun activities that the children I am sure will enjoy. One of our targets on our school self-evaluation is to continue to enable progress for all learners. This intervention if successful should enable progress for the children involved and increase attainment and engagement. And we will regularly monitor progress to see whether the strategy is as suitable as we believe it to be. I sincerely hope this intervention does work to the full potential. Our headteacher has already approached me and suggested she would be interested in sitting in on one of the sessions to witness the impact first-hand. If this intervention is as successful as research suggests, it could be worth incorporating into our school’s long term plan.

In our school’s achievement, behaviour, and discipline policy (Appendix Thirteen), it states our aim is that our children should learn and achieve their full potential. It is so essential that we help raise the standards of these children and help them gain the skills they need. We will adopt Barnardo’s principles and also embed our school ethos into the scheme. Please if you have any further questions about the intervention, do not hesitate to ask. I hope that you, our board of governors, will approve our plan and offer your support in raising the standards of children with social interaction issues. To conclude this part of the meeting, according to Barnardo’s the ‘principle aim of their service is to increase pupils’ emotional well-being in order to improve their learning potential’. This is exactly what we as a school, want for our children. Thank you.

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