

Educational Psychotherapy in Schools Initiative

2024 - 2025



Overview

From September 2024 to September 2025, Fleet Primary School led an initiative to upskill its Mental Health Lead through the Advanced Diploma in Educational Psychotherapy. In response to rising mental health needs and stretched external services, the school sought to embed therapeutic expertise within its own team - ensuring timely, relational, and systemic support for pupils. Educational Psychotherapy combines psychoanalytic and attachment theory with educational practice. It offers a unique approach to supporting children's emotional development and learning, particularly those whose needs fall between thresholds for CAMHS and Mental Health Support Teams. By training an existing staff member, Fleet built on trusted relationships and created a sustainable model for whole-school impact.

"In class a lot of words get stuck in my head... this makes it feel better."

Goals and Intentions

The initiative set out to:

- Provide 1:1 therapeutic support for pupils with complex emotional needs.
- Host trainee placements to increase therapeutic capacity.
- Disseminate psychoanalytic and trauma-informed principles to staff.
- Link theory to practice through group interventions and reflective models.
- Build a systemic approach to emotional wellbeing across the school.

Why This, Why Now?

Children today face increasing emotional challenges - from anxiety and trauma to social instability and the effects of digital life. Yet, access to specialist support is limited. Schools are often left to manage complex needs without the tools or training to do so effectively. Embedding Educational Psychotherapy within the school setting allows for early intervention, continuity of care, and collaborative working with families and staff. It also fosters a culture of emotional literacy, resilience, and mental health awareness - key protective factors for learning and wellbeing.



What we did

Fleet's Mental Health Lead completed the final year of the Advanced Diploma in Educational Psychotherapy, focusing on:

Clinical practice: Five pupils received 1:1 therapy; six participated in a term-long therapeutic story group.

Staff development: All teaching staff received training on attachment, trauma, and psychoanalytic principles (e.g. defence mechanisms, transference).

Group work: A learning mentor prepared to launch a new therapeutic group informed by course content.

Reflective practice: Plans were made to embed reflective group practice for staff supervision and emotional processing.

Multi-agency collaboration: Training covered working with EPs, SALTs, SENDCos, and clinical psychologists.

Neurodiversity and EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance): Modules addressed autism, dyslexia, executive functioning, and emotionally based school avoidance.

DEI and trauma-informed care: Cultural competence and anti-pathologising approaches were embedded throughout.

"My son is now better able to express his emotions... I'm better placed to respond to his needs."

Key Learning

Pupil outcomes: Children receiving therapy showed improved emotional expression, confidence, and engagement. Teachers noted better learning behaviours and classroom participation.

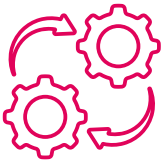
Staff confidence: Training helped staff understand the emotional roots of behaviour and respond with empathy and strategy.

Systemic change: The therapist's dual role enabled joined-up support between families, teachers, and external agencies.

Sustainable practice: Reflective Group Practice and group interventions will extend the reach of therapeutic support in 2025–26.



Key Takeaways



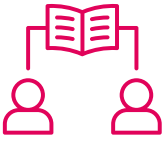
Embed therapeutic support within the school

In-house therapy is more accessible and relational than external referrals. It allows for systemic impact and better integration with teaching.



Use existing relationships to build trust

Training a known staff member strengthens family engagement and enables more responsive, joined-up care.



Disseminate learning to upskill the whole team

Psychoanalytic and trauma-informed principles can be shared through INSET and reflective practice, improving staff confidence and consistency.



Offer group interventions to reach more pupils

Therapeutic story groups provide a gentle, inclusive way to support vulnerable children across year groups.



Support staff through Reflective Group Practice

Structured peer supervision helps staff manage emotional demands and maintain resilience.



Build capacity through placements and collaboration

Hosting trainees and working with external professionals strengthens the school's therapeutic ecosystem.

