Transition to South Thames College

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ABSTRACT: The case study discusses the transition of a class, with some positive environmental changes of increase space for pupils through less crowded classrooms; reduction of noise as a result of this; and consistent members of staff as pupil's tutors.

It looks at Individual Education Plans (IEPs), behaviour that challenges (ABC) and Schoolpod data. The data that was reviewed was Spring term 2021 and Spring term 2022.

This case study is about a Sixth Form class, with one year 11 pupil. The class consists of 6 pupils aged between 15 to 19 years old. There are some verbal learners, as well as some non-verbal learners that use Makaton signs and Proloquo2go to communicate, with one learner using eye gaze and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to communicate. The learning objectives for the class are varied as one pupil has motor difficulties which limits the activities she is able to take part in. Some pupils can participate in structured group teaching, whereas others do not due to the range of comprehension and attentional abilities instead attending Attention Autism groups. Some pupils attend work experience weekly, and all pupils have IEP target related to the community.

In the previous year (2020-2021), these pupils were going to school at Tram House, moving over to South Thames College in the 2021/2022 school year. They were given the opportunity to attend South Thames College due to their perceived capacity to learn in this new environment and participate in the surrounding community, to prepare them for adulthood. This case study will explore how the pupils' behaviours and IEP changed and improved when they made this transition to college, due to environmental changes such as reduced levels of noise, a less crowded environment, and consistent staff. Negative outcomes and stable outcomes will also be observed and discussed.

Literature Review

The current research shows loud noises can be overwhelming to learners and cause stress, with one study finding a correlation between increased noise levels and an increased frequency of autism-related behaviours such as repetitive speech, hitting, ear covering and loud vocalisations (Kanakri et al., 2017).

This can cause sensory discomfort as well as impact social interactions, attitudes and learning performance creating an environmental barrier for pupils in school (Pfeiffer et al., 2017). When the environment is changed to provide areas of personal space and eliminate objects that create background noise, it creates an environment that reduces the probability of behaviours that challenge, prevents behaviour problems from those who are at risk, and allows those with minimal behaviours to access learning without interruptions (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010).

This also ties in to crowded classrooms, as when there are more pupils in class, there is increased noise and distractions that impacts focus and concentration of both teachers and pupils (Meador, 2021). Large classes have been shown to increase conflicts, tension, and general disruptive behaviour in pupils, with teachers often spending more time managing these behaviours rather than teaching, causing pupils who need minimal distractions to fall behind (Meador, 2021). It can also be detrimental to how it impacts the teachers, causing stress and a higher likelihood of leaving the profession (Tapper ,2018).

Furthermore, when consistent staff are present, this allows for uniform practices in behaviour choices and supports the pupils' understanding of expectations, through unchanging rules and classroom norms (Newman, 2019). This consistency creates an effective learning environment, as when pupils receive consistent responses to their behaviour they are in better control of their actions (Newman, 2019). Additionally, knowledge of autism in staff allows for enhanced service to pupils, this is especially important as new staff not having had direct experience with autism, resulting in inconsistency of rules and over prompting (Kucharczyk et al., 2015).

Method

To carry out this study an examination of pupil's behaviour (which was recorded as ABC data), IEPs and Schoolpods from 2021 were compared to this 2022. This was done by looking at data collected in the 2020-2021 school year specially the Spring term. Data has been kept on Excel files labelled ABC data, Whole school data drop data and with the Schoolpod this was broken down into Months and Years. A meeting was held, and the tutors discussed the similarities and differences between Tram House and South Thames College. We decided to examine this in terms of noise level, crowding and consistent staffing.

These changes were researched by an internet search of websites using the key words of autism, school and behaviour.

This produced 11 websites which were reviewed for this case study.

Results

This table above shows data of Spring 2021 when pupils attend Tram House and Spring 2022 when pupils attended South Thames College. This data is broken down into individual pupils, years, how well they performed in their IEPs, frequency of ABCs and Schoolpods.

Pupil 1 had an increase of 29% on her IEP and a decreased of 286 behaviours that challenge (ABC). There was an increase of 1 Schoolpod.

Pupil 2 had a decrease of 9% on his IEP and a decrease of 141 behaviours that challenge (ABC). There was an increase of 6 Schoolpods.

Pupils 3 had a decrease of 20% on his IEP and an increase of 26 behaviours that challenge (ABC). There was an increase of 21 Schoolpods.

Pupils 4 had a decrease of 3% on her IEP and a decrease of 4 behaviours that challenge (ABC). There was an increase of 2 Schoolpod.

Pupils 5 had an increase of 4% on her IEP and an increase of 102 behaviours that challenge (ABC). No changes in number of Schoolpods.

Pupil 6 had a decrease of 12% on her IEP and a decrease of 154 behaviour that challenge (ABC). No changes to number of Schoolpods.

Discussion

IEP

There was one significant improvement; three which were stable and two that declined.

In the case of the of pupil who made significant improvements, the staff who were consistent from the previous year reported that in the new environment Pupil 1 was able to communicate more, related better to female staff, had less peer behaviour that challenges around to distract her, she was able to have more independence and more enjoyable community involvement.

Pupils 3 and 6 have had a decline in their IEP's. For Pupil 3 discussion centred on introduction of new and untrain staff in his environment. His 1:1 staff member was a new staff member who had limited experience with autism and ABA. Pupil 6 had 10 absence days of 56 school days and lethargy when she was at school which tutors believe had a negative impact on her learning. Inconsistent staffing had an impact on her IEP being run as she was being covered be staff who didn't know how to run her IEP targets.

ABC

There were three significant improvements, one which were stable and two that declined.

Pupils 1, 2 and 6 all saw significant improvements. Tutors discussed this and believed this is due to reduced noise levels within their classroom, classrooms not being crowded, a structured timetable to follow for their day, less peer behaviour that challenges around to distract them, Female pupils having female staff and more positive community involvement. Pupil's reguraly label themselves as feeling happy when in this new environment.

Pupils 3 and 5 saw a decline in their ABC data. For Pupil 3 discussion centred on a introduction of new and untrain staff in his environment. Tutors also believe data wasn't accurately collected in 2021 and tutors believe there were more incidents that should have been recorded again this is due to new and untrained staff in the year 2021.

Pupil 5 was discussed and it was believed this was due to an introduction of a new behaviour plan as well as a need for more of her sensory diet being run daily.

Schoolpods

There was three which were stable and four which declined.

Pupil 2 had an increase of Schoolpods due to increase transitions around his classroom and increased independence.

Pupil 3 increase in Schoolpods is lack of data collected in 2021 and January and February of 2022. This was due to new staff and pupils being paired up.

Tutors researched Pupil 4's Spring 2021 data and found she had six incidents that should have been recorded as schoolpods so in-fact in Pupil 4 a decrease of Schoolpod incidents. Tutors put this down to a structured timetable and consistent staff being aware of early behavioural interventions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the change from Tram House to South Thames College has seen improvements in the behaviour pupils have engaged in, as well as some advances in their IEPs.

This can be attributed to stability of staff with pupils having some of

Data	Pupil 1		Pupil 2		Pupil 3		Pupil 4		Pupil 5		Pupil 6	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
IEP	58%	87%	76%	67%	87%	67%	86%	83%	66%	70%	90%	78%
ABC	329 total	43 total	169	28	35	61	26	22	194	296	185	31
Schoolpod	0	1	6	12	0	21	5	5	0	0	0	0

Figure 1.

the same tutors they had the previous year, and therefore allowing for uniformity in behaviour plans and knowledge.

Another key factor that contributed to this was reduced noise, more space and behaviours occurring around them.

Although there have also been some declines in improvements noted, there are many factors that came into play such as, health, inconsistencies in data and new untrain staff.

We recognise that the interpretation of the data doesn't not account for outside influences such was what is happening at home individual mature over the one-year period as well as stress due to Covid and its restrictions.

Staff involved in the study are train behavioural analysts who have firsthand witnessed these changes over the year.

Overall, it can be recognised that environmental changes of reduced levels of noise, less crowding, and consistent staff can be greatly effective in creating a better learning space.

Recommendations

Based on these results we recommend maintaining small class size, consistent staffing, structured timetables and increased level of female staff to be role models for female pupils.

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