

Therapeutic Thinking

What is Therapeutic Thinking?

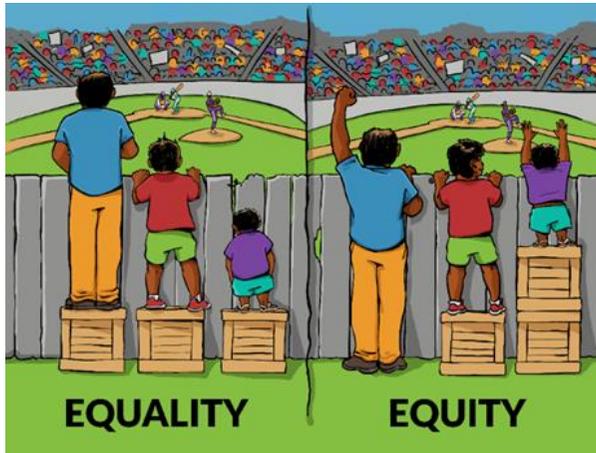
Therapeutic Thinking is a whole school approach that focuses on promoting positive experiences and feelings for all children, leading to better emotional and educational outcomes. Within Therapeutic Thinking, we recognise that **all behaviour is communication** and seek to understand the feelings motivating the behaviour.

Therapeutic thinking allows us to respond to the individual needs of our children and ensure that every child enjoys the benefits of a calm and positive learning environment where emotional wellbeing is a high priority. Positive emotional wellbeing leads to higher levels of engagement and attainment for all, and promotes our children to become kind, helpful and accepting young people.

Children at Aldermaston have had a range of different experiences outside of school. Some have risk factors in their lives which mean they are more likely to have negative feelings which lead them to display negative behaviours. Positive experiences lead to positive feelings and positive (pro social) behaviours. We want all of our children to have as many positive experiences as possible to support our teaching of positive learning behaviours.



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Central to the therapeutic approach is the focus on equity over equality. For things to truly be 'fair' it is not equality we seek where all children are treated the same, rather we must ensure equity by providing every child with what they need to succeed. It is already widely accepted that some children will need to use glasses, hearing aids or perhaps coloured overlays in order to succeed in their learning, and yet it is not always accepted that this same approach is needed when responding to the behavioural needs of our children. We are committed to meeting the needs of all children so that every child has the best chance of success.

“There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people”

Thomas Jefferson



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Why has Aldermaston CE Primary School adopted Therapeutic Thinking?

We are committed to going further in terms of meeting the needs of learners and providing the best possible educational experience and outcomes for all. In adopting Therapeutic Thinking, we have committed to taking the time to understand both the learning and behavioural needs of our children as individuals so that we are able to respond to these appropriately with the necessary support and intervention.

Following the past couple of years of uncertainty due to the Covid 19 pandemic it is even more important to get the culture right in our school and address the emotional and wellbeing needs of our children.

How will Therapeutic Thinking benefit my child?

Our school ethos and values align seamlessly with the therapeutic approach. As our staff model the therapeutic approach in their actions and language, all children are encouraged to become caring, supportive and develop strong relationships. They are supported to recognise and understand difference and value individual contributions in a positive way that builds self esteem.

Through providing children with what they need and addressing behavioural concerns on an individual basis the learning and educational experience for all children is



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improved with less instances of learning being disrupted by the unmet needs of others.

Does Therapeutic Thinking mean no discipline?

Adopting a therapeutic approach involves considering the impact of punishment, consequence and sanctions on the behaviour of our children and young people. We recognise that it is the case that a 'punishment' or 'consequence' in the traditional sense does nothing for changing the behaviour of our children and young people. In actual fact a 'punishment' will only add to or create negative feelings for the child, making it more likely that they will display negative behaviour in the future. Instead when presented with a behavioural need, we consider the roots of the behaviour and seek to implement protective factors for the child as outlined in the Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools document:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools_.pdf

We will respond to all children depending on their individual circumstances and address the concerns privately to protect the well-being of the individual. We will then implement the necessary protective and educational consequences to teach the child to regulate their feelings and behaviour.



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For all children it is important that when overwhelmed by a situation they are not 'shamed' for the way they acted, therefore the consequences implemented will remain private and other children should be reassured that the situation is being handled appropriately.

“You cannot teach a child to behave better by making them feel worse. When children feel better they behave better”

Pam Leo

The word 'discipline' comes from *discipulus*, the Latin word for pupil – it's origin is in teaching. We are aiming to teach all our children to develop the skills to self-regulate and manage their emotions and feelings. We understand how it is difficult for all children when negative behaviour is displayed in school and we work to implement a restorative approach to repair relationships in situations where an unmet need has caused disruption in the classroom.

In some circumstances, a protective and/or educational consequence may be required in order to teach the child the skills required to cope in the classroom while minimising the disruption and impact on the learning of others. This might involve changing the dynamics in the classroom or implementing a small garden approach.



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What is a Small Garden?

A small garden is an adapted learning environment designed to meet the needs of a particular child or small group of children. This may occur for some or all of the school day and will be planned around not only the academic needs of the child but also their social, emotional and behavioural needs. A small garden is not necessarily an actual garden... but it could be! The aim of the small garden is to take the child out of the 'big world' (classroom) and place them in a smaller environment at a time when they would have been overwhelmed. This planned and different learning opportunity allows the child to develop the skills they need to cope in the wider school environment.

A small garden aims to provide the child with positive experiences in order for them to develop the confidence, resilience and perseverance to be able to cope in the classroom, playground and wider school environment.



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How can parents/carers help support Aldermaston CE Primary School with a Therapeutic approach?

As parents/carers you can support us in implementing a therapeutic approach by:

- Reading the school's policy on positive relationships and behaviour.
- Support the Therapeutic ethos, practices and decisions of the school.
- Support your children to understand that we are not all the same and so what is 'fair' will be different for everybody.
- Inform the school of any changes in circumstances that may affect your child's behaviour.
- Recognise and understand the context and need for equity in the school and the benefits it can have for all.

