

A Quiet Place[®]



Theta Group: An Evaluation for A Quiet Place

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About the Author

Dr Sandra Hiatt has over thirty years experience in pedagogic practice and research in education. She has worked in partnership with educational and cultural institutions demonstrating skill and experience in building sustainable, professional relationships across the sector. With a strong track record of undertaking research with teachers, young people, schools, universities and other organisations, Sandra Hiatt is an independent researcher specialising in Arts and Education. In addition, she is a senior lecturer in Teacher Education at Liverpool Hope University, a co-founder of the Artist Teacher Associates, and is a member of the editorial board of the international Journal of Art and Design Education.

Introduction

This report was commissioned by Penny Moon of A Quiet Place (AQP) to evaluate the newly developed Theta Group as a further dimension of an existing provision within a primary school in South Liverpool from September 2014 to September 2015.

The founder, Penny Moon, described the function of A Quiet Place as follows:

A Quiet Place was designed to support children and families by the provision of a room within the school or community which provides not only holistic therapeutic support, but also an environment specifically designed to generate feelings of calm and well-being. It is a welcoming, relaxing space, which communicates clearly its 'different-ness' and suggests possibilities of expansiveness and change. (Moon 2013:7)

A Quiet Place was established in the primary school where this research takes place approximately twenty years ago and children regularly benefit from the AQP protocol. In addition, the school benefits from other associated aspects of the AQP programme including: 'Ready-Steady-Learn', Mindfulness and 'The Magic Carpet'. A Quiet Place protocol was devised to provide children with self management strategies that developed their emotional intelligence with positive short term impact and lifelong benefits.

The protocol forms the framework for the unique programme designed as a bespoke provision for the individual who has been referred. The referral route is discussed and planned with a senior leader in school who oversees the programme, usually referred to as the A Quiet Place champion. The criteria for referral is designed broadly for introvert or extrovert behaviour with no more than a third of the children referred for 'acting out' symptoms. The AQP protocol is generally of six weeks in duration and the client has three sessions per week. These sessions comprise:

1. Emotional intelligence sessions – scripted sessions, approximately 40 minutes in duration
2. Self-management bio-feedback programmes, approximately 20 minutes
3. Touch work – massage, head, hands or feet, approximately 20 minutes

(Moon 2013:9)

It is important to make a clear distinction between A Quiet Place provision and those of a 'behavioural unit' as they are significantly different and are not to be confused.

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The Theta group is so called for its association with altering states of mind, or shifting mind sets from a negative (closed mind set) to an positive (open mind set). Influenced by the work of Jung, Moon (2013:26) presents her rationale for the benefits of Theta waves in that they provide an ideal state to 'maximise learning'. Proposing the use of 'guided visualisation', 'kinaesthetic learning' and 'repetitive practice' Moon has developed a practice that enables participants to improve their well being and to be more receptive to learning. The pedagogic approach that underpins AQP protocol in general, and Theta activities in particular, is informed by the six element of emotional intelligence.

Introduced in September 2014, Theta was a pioneer initiative without precedent and therefore developed modes of delivery within an organic process of practitioner enquiry adapting many of the practices within the AQP protocol designed for one to one sessions to activities within a group setting. As the delivery team established Theta new practices emerged and new insights emerged. These are discussed in detail in the main body of this report. The time line of the research is set out below.

What	When	How long
Immersive experience in Theta	January - February 2015	One day per week for six weeks
Interviews with school-based staff	February 2015	5 x one hour sessions
Interview with AQP therapist	February 2015	1 x one hour session
Annotated meetings with AQP director	September 2014 November 2015	-12 meetings
Attend and observe training sessions	May 2015 June 2015	Five days in total
Attend AQP staff team meetings and day events	August 2015	1 day
Visit other AQP venue	June 2015	Two visits
Training to undertake AQP protocol in school	June - July 2015	Five 90 minute sessions
Take one child through AQP protocol. Debrief after each sessions with therapist	September 2015 November 2015	-Six 40 minute sessions plus pre and post interviews with parent and teacher.
Submit report	November 2015	

The objectives of this research were to report on:

- The development of Theta in the first year of the programme
- The impact of Theta within the context of the primary school setting
- The effectiveness of the documentation tracking children's progress

- The quality and appropriateness of AQP training and support
- The AQP environment and its effectiveness for Theta

Executive Summary

- Theta has been successfully established in the primary school. Feedback from facilitators, senior management team, class teachers and parents have been consistently positive about the impact upon children's well being and learning
- Developing Theta organically has been the most challenging and rewarding aspect of this initiative for the AQP facilitators in school. Regular and systematic professional reflection has informed the ongoing development of Theta and given rise to new and emerging elements that continue to enhance the programme
- Overall, senior management team and teachers were supportive of AQP in school yet several were unclear of what AQP and Theta actually did among those adults not directly involved in the delivery of either programme
- Refurbishing a traditional classroom with the aesthetics and design element of established AQP spaces the Theta environment was a significant aspect of the new initiative and was successful in providing an appropriate setting for Theta activities and children's engagement.
- Training and ongoing coaching of Theta staff is an outstanding aspect of the provision ensuring consistent high quality experiences for children, teachers and parents and the systematic continuing professional development of the delivery team
- Recruitment of facilitators, body worker, AQP champion and therapist was successful in securing a highly functional and dedicated team. The level of autonomy for the facilitators to interpret existing protocol and introduce new elements into Theta was particularly motivational for colleagues and resulted in continuous enhancement of provision that was reflexive and flexible in responding to children's individual needs and aptitudes
- Processes for documentation were well established and provided robust quantitative data, leading to a full report and statistical analysis. Colleagues reported that in the main, the data collected was all relevant and appropriate and that the paper-based format was fit for purpose. Some discrepancies in the completion of forms identified a need for minor revisions to existing templates to avoid misinformation when using the Likert scales
- Theta demonstrated additional benefits to children's well being and readiness for academic learning evident through observations and attainment in mainstream lessons. In particular the development in the relationships between the Theta children was a notable area of success

giving children the opportunity to show increased abilities to empathise with their peers, communicate effectively and to be resilient when faced with factors outside their control

Theoretical perspectives and the wider context

A range of theoretical perspectives and wider considerations have informed this report presented within four distinct themes as set out below.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (Goleman 1996) is the theoretical framework that underpins AQP approach. In this context 'self esteem' and 'managing feelings' are identified as primary elements and are defined below.

Self Esteem: the inner perception people have as being more or less valuable, worthy and powerful in the world (www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk).

Managing Feelings: children need to know that they have the power to cope with negative feelings in constructive ways. They can respond to put-downs and adverse situations by using "self-talk" (Goleman 1995).

Secondary elements of emotional intelligence are, within the context of AQP, 'resilience', 'empathy', 'self-awareness' and 'communication'.

Resilience: is forged through adversity NOT despite it. Resilience is, in fact, a metaphor... resilience is all about how you absorb disruption in your life and manage your emotions (www.ei4change.com)

Empathy: means to recognize others' feelings, the causes of these feelings, and to be able to participate in the emotional experience of an individual without becoming part of it (Keen 2007).

Self-awareness: [is the ability to recognise] your own emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behaviour, know your strengths and weaknesses, and have self-confidence (www.helpguide.org).

Communication: Being a good communicator requires more than just verbal skills and the ability to manage stress. Often, what you say is less important than how you say it, or the other nonverbal signals you send out—the gestures you make, the way you sit, how fast or how loud you talk, how close you stand, or how much eye contact you make. In order to hold the attention of others and build connection and trust, you need to be aware of, and in control of, this body language. You also need to be able to accurately read and respond to the nonverbal cues that other people send you (ibid).

A robust commitment to Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence is a dominant factor informing AQP philosophy and pedagogy towards giving children self-

management strategies that they develop in A Quiet Place and take with them for life.

Mind Set

Observations and interviews throughout the research demonstrated an implicit, yet consistent, commitment to shifting children's mindset as part of the therapeutic approach. Carol Dweck's (2007) research centres on the differences between 'growth' and 'fixed' mindsets asserting that where teachers have a fixed mindset with regards to their students' intellectual abilities that they inhibit children's learning. Conversely, Dweck contends that where teachers have a growth mindset that they not only allow their students to achieve beyond expectations they also develop children's traits of perseverance, resilience and motivation.

Emotional, social and behavioural development

Children referred to AQP are considered to need support with emotional, social and behaviour aspects in relation to their wellbeing. Whilst children participating in Theta are not necessarily considered to have Special Educational Needs (SEN) emotional, social and behavioural development is one of the four areas of SEN identified in the '0-25 Code of Practice' (DfE, 2013).

A medical model of disability dominates mainstream education perpetuating a deficit model of education where programmes of study and support are identified to give individual children who fail to demonstrate the attributes of the 'norm' access to the curriculum. Over more than two decades political activism in disability rights has challenged the dominant discourse and offered alternative models such as the 'social model of disability' and the concept of 'universal design' that grew out of notions of barrier-free education (Penketh & Johnson 2015).

Universal design is not a trend but an enduring design approach that assumes that a broad range of human ability and cultural expression is ordinary, not special. It is an approach to design that is much more than a narrow code compliance to meet the specialised needs of a few. It is an inclusive design process for everybody. (Welsh 1995)

The principles of universal design include:

- Equitable use
- Flexibility for use
- Simple and intuitive
- Perceptible information
- Tolerance for error
- Size and space for approach and use
- A concern with a community of learners

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- Instructional climate – welcoming – inclusive – respectful of diversity

These frames of reference are relevant to AQP and Theta because there is a synergy between the inclusive policy and practice that underpins all aspects of these programmes. Although they do not overtly subscribe to the concept of ‘universal design’ AQP and Theta does provide a holistic barrier free alternative educational experience for children that is significantly different to the provision in their mainstream classrooms. AQP and Theta are not however, in opposition to mainstream education but rather prepare children to be better able to access the curriculum with a greater degree of self-reliance and resilience and in doing so increase their chances of higher academic achievement.

The Learning Environment

Theta takes place in A Quiet Place environment which has a specific aesthetic creating a different space that facilitates children’s participation in the designated programme of activities. The AQP environment provides an antidote to the bright lights, clean lines and utilitarian interior of the traditional classroom. In recent years the suitability of mainstream classrooms have been called into question.

Classrooms were designed for lecture and crowd control with the teacher as the central figure of knowledge and authority. The teacher had knowledge to impart through direct instruction and the classroom works pretty well for this. Teacher at the front controlling the board with a good view of the room – has been the model for over 150 years. Today this is still the case with the chalk board replaced by the “Smart Board.” This is an obsolete notion. (Stack 2012)

In 2002 the Department for Education and Skills in the report ‘Schools for the future’ acknowledged that ‘many school are of poor design, are dull and uniform and have an institutional look’ (DfES 2002). Following this report a nationwide initiative was developed with the aspiration to Build Schools for the Future (BSF). There were, however, concerns at who would influence the design of such schools. In 2008 Luckin drew attention for the need to think carefully and consult appropriately on the designs for future learning environments.

The BSF design process could benefit from adopting a participatory design approach to the exploration of how learning interactions can be supported both within the bricks and mortar of the school buildings and beyond. In particular, the process needs to:

- identify the school as just one of the resources that learners will interact with, and to investigate how the school can be a key resource in fostering relationships with other resources in a learners’ ecology, such as people and other learning locations
- explore how the school can be designed in a manner that enables it to continue to evolve
- encourage people to see the school as a dynamic entity ensuring that there are mechanisms in place through which stakeholders can participate in decisions about its continuing future development

- identify the roles that need to be fulfilled by people and technologies within and beyond the school building in order to support the school as a key resource in a learners' evolving ecology of learning resources.

(Luckin 2008:15)

Many of the plans for schools for the future were thwarted by a change of government in 2010 and an economic downturn. Those schools that were built, however, favoured grand open spaces, flooded with light which is consistent with high status public spaces and the antithesis of AQP environment as discussed later in this report.

Methodology and Methods

This qualitative enquiry was informed by a phenomenological approach (Titchen and Hobson 2005) to investigate the first year of the Theta Group located in a primary school in South Liverpool from September 2014 to October 2015. The researcher visited Theta on a regular basis over the year including one day a week immersive experience over six weeks between January and February 2015 when she took part in all aspects of Theta with staff and children. The researcher had both insider and outsider status during this time. Over the first four months the researcher took the role of an external observer during the daily activities of the Theta group. Bridges (2001:375) questions to what extent the outsider researcher's insights have value stating that value will 'depend on the extent to which they have immersed themselves in the work of the other' and their ability to portray 'its richness and complexity'.

In order to gain deeper understanding of the children's engagement with Theta, and to avoid disruption of the daily routine, the researcher's role developed into an insider co-participant, working alongside staff and children. Mercer (2006:6) claims that 'insiders will undoubtedly have a better understanding of the social setting' and 'understand the subtle and diffused links between situations and events'.

Data gathering included semi-structured interviews with Theta staff, classroom-based teachers and the senior management team in the host school. Observational notes were systematically recorded over the six week period in the form of analytical memos (Altrichter and Holly 2005). All data, including the name of the school, staff and children were anonymised to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Findings

These findings have been presented within eight themes. These themes emerged directly from the analysis of the research data including; observations, interviews, field notes and first-hand experience.

Evidence of success

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When establishing Theta for the first time the children asked why they were there. The facilitators reported that they answered the children's questions honestly and in particular shared with them why they had been chosen and what the programme was designed to help them achieve. Talking about one particular child in year five one of the facilitators spoke about how she 'struggled to get into school', that it took her 'a long time to build up relationships with new people' and that when she became frustrated in class that she was extremely rude to her teacher. Within the first six weeks of attending Theta this particular child was reported to have 'made an enormous achievement'. After twelve weeks her class teacher noted that;

I do think it is helping her a lot because she is able to express her thoughts more, especially if it is one-to-one or in small groups.

Managing the children's expectations was one aspect that raised itself in the early weeks of setting up Theta. This was most acute during the times when the children were not scheduled to be in Theta. The children would challenge the Theta staff saying, 'why aren't you open', 'you are here so why can't I come into the room'? Once the children joined Theta some found returning their classroom a less attractive option in the first instance although they soon became familiar with the new routine. Commenting in the eighth week upon how the children had adapted to the pattern of attendance one facilitator noted how:

When they come into the room now and we say listen we're not here today, they'll say 'oh, ok, we'll see you tomorrow' [...] they could not have done that in the third week.

From the perspective of senior managers in school they stated that;

In terms of the emotional intelligence of those children you can see a difference. They are more articulate, they are more confident.

Although for the deputy head the ultimate measure of the success of Theta was children's academic achievements. Analysis of the children's development over the six week period from January 2015 to February half term demonstrated the following progress by those children attending Theta;

In the opinion of all involved (Parent/Teacher/Facilitator/Pupil)

- There was a **62%** improvement in **Primary Emotional Intelligence** and **60%** in **Secondary Emotional Intelligence**
- **Pupil stress** levels improved by **48%**
- **Adult stress** levels improved by **14%**
- **76%** of pupils calmed themselves quicker than average using the Self management techniques taught
- **100%** used the techniques at **home** and **100%** used the techniques at **sometime of these 87% used them Often.**
- **75%** Improved and **19%** Greatly Improved their **Unique Outcome**

- **Over 100%** improvement in Body Language over the 5 areas covered
- **18%** improvement in **Academic Performance** and **26%** improvement in Academic **Motivation** over the subjects covered.

Generating and developing the Theta programme

The facilitators for the Theta group were clear about the rationale and pedagogic standpoint that informed its development although implementing the programme has been a generative one. As one facilitator commented;

We have had no absolute model for us to use. As we go into our second term looking at those same children we are looking at empathy and resilience. We will look at that through a different mode. We'll look at that through storytelling. I will go back to A Quiet Place [protocol] and I'll look at what they would do on a one-to-one level and see how that can be adapted for a group.

One of the challenges of the first Theta cohort was the range of individual children within the group. This was one of the significant differences in developing an appropriate programme for Theta in comparison with AQP protocol. Reflecting upon the age range including pupils from year 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 in the first group of ten children one facilitator said:

We know the younger children can only concentrate on things for less time while the older ones are more independent. We say the activities today are going to be this and then we split off into our little groups to do our work. We come together then for therapy; for relaxation.

Through experience, the facilitators discovered that breakfast, morning break and lunch time were too long just to focus upon sharing something to eat and drink. Short activities were devised that were accessible to all the children, and often fun, yet reinforcing the emotional intelligence theme in focus. As one facilitator commented;

I think [the children] like the feeling of the small group. It's more like a family. Everybody gets on and teamwork makes everything just roll along so much easier.

Reflecting upon the first year of Theta the facilitators proposed adjustments to the second year programme. In light of the diverse needs of children in year one it was decided that children would be grouped in age groups with children from years three and four as one cohort and years five and six in another. In the second year the programme continued to follow the six elements of emotional intelligence but have been timetabled over half the academic year so each group can attend Theta for a term and a half, with years three and four from September to February and years five and six from February to the end of the school year. In addition, insights into what children might most benefit from Theta informed the selection of children in 2015–2016. Furthermore, the documentation and goal setting of the AQP and

Theta protocol has been extended to the Heartmath component of programme bring a consistent and systematic approach to all elements of the children's engagement. It is too early to say what the impact of these developments have been although follow up conversations with the facilitators and therapist in the autumn term of 2015 indicate that these have been beneficial.

Underpinning the design of the Theta programme was a growth mind set (Dweck 2007) among the delivery and support team. In particular, the therapist and facilitators demonstrated a consistent belief in children's ability to achieve effective self-management over time and as a direct result raise their attainment levels in the classroom. Celebrating children's development against their individual milestone achievements regularly created an atmosphere that facilitated self-belief and high expectations. In establishing the Theta programme the aspirations and approach of the delivery team was consistent with the qualities of barrier free education embodied in the notion of 'universal design' as described by Penketh & Johnson (2015).

Whole school support for AQP and Theta

Overall, senior management team and teachers were supportive of AQP in school yet several were unclear of what AQP and Theta actually did. The senior's leader interviewed for this research revealed that they had been unsure of precisely what AQP was and what it achieved despite being aware of its presence in school over many years. Of the three classroom-based teachers interviewed only one felt she had a good understanding of AQP and Theta. Whilst all the teachers were invited to visit Theta and to take part in AQP activities, including relaxation, visualisation techniques and body massage, only a small number of staff took up this offer. Therefore, many of the adults not directly involved in the delivery of either the AQP or Theta programme remain unclear of the aims and achievements of this significant programme in school.

Teachers' level of awareness and understanding of Theta was directly linked to their level of active engagement in the programme. Those teachers and support staff that were directly involved in AQP and the Head Teacher were fully conversant with its aims, principles and practices. Those who were not directly involved were less well informed and therefore less likely to take advantage of the invitation to take up the invitation to get involved.

One classroom teacher revealed that she had gone onto the AQP website to find out more about the A Quiet Place protocol and Theta. She found a wealth of information but found it lacking in a succinct statement of what these two strands of the programme were and set out to achieve. In reviewing AQP materials it transpired that Penny Moon's publication 'The practical well-being programme' provides a helpful overview what AQP is, its protocol and the origins of Theta. This publication had been disseminated among AQP schools yet its circulation among the school population appeared to be limited.

It was apparent that there were opportunities for sharing selected extracts from this book in a more immediate manner such as a poster for the staffroom, a leaflet for teachers and parents and information bulletins around school has the potential to

inform the school community and raise awareness of the role that it plays in underpinning children's achievements.

Training and Continuing Professional Development

Training and ongoing coaching of Theta staff is an outstanding aspect of the provision ensuring consistent high quality experiences for children, teachers and parents and the systematic continuing professional development of the delivery team. The training and CPD model that informs AQP and Theta is consistent with a therapeutic rather than a teacher training model. Whereas teacher training is predominantly front loaded, with the majority of training taking place within initial teacher education programmes towards Qualified Teacher Status, a therapeutic model provides short periods of intensive training (in this case a combination of one, two and three day training sessions). A Quiet Place has a rolling programme supplemented with weekly supervision sessions for facilitators with an experienced AQP therapist. These supervision sessions are provide one-to-one de-briefing opportunity for the facilitator and ongoing guidance and support from the therapist. In turn the therapist attends equivalent monthly supervision. The participation in regular and systematic supervision is integral to the professional accreditation of the AQP therapists. As one AQP therapist stated;

Without a qualified supervisor and regular supervision I could not belong to UKCP or NHCP because the requirement to work is that you are regularly supervised. The way it was put to me is another pair of eyes and another pair of ears to support you with difficulties with the client keeps them safe.

Speaking more specifically about the development of the AQP and Theta facilitators she added that;

When we support new facilitators its weekly for the first twelve months and then it becomes fortnightly after they've got their diploma. Occasionally we have to be flexible because things happen in their working lives.

Both facilitators interviewed for this evaluation described the important role that supervision took within their professional development in meeting the challenges of Theta and in offering ongoing support. One of the notable benefits of this model, particularly with the organic development of the Theta programme, was the chance to discuss emerging issues and opportunities on a regular basis. This has actively informed its evolution over the first year of the Theta.

The opportunity to discuss insights as they emerge with a specialist therapist has given the facilitators deeper insights into their practice and helped them implement changes and developments with greater confidence and sense of purpose. One such development was the development of the short activities during breakfast and lunch time sessions in Theta when it quickly became apparent that children would lose focus and become restless once they had eaten and drunk their refreshments.

Not only had the drawing, discussion and making activities that were generated maintain the calm, purposeful atmosphere of Theta it also revealed the children's

interests and ideas that could be incorporated into the timetabled therapy sessions and, on occasion, provided a bridge between Theta and academic work. One example of these activities that the children had undertaken at the end of the first term of Theta, and were still talking about in the new term, was creating their own volcanos as a metaphor for anger. Here an activity normally associated with geography in the primary classroom provided a vehicle to engage children in discussing emotions.

Metaphor is commonly used within AQP protocol sessions and has continued to inform practice in Theta to good effect, making abstract concepts more concrete for children and in doing so deepening their understanding.

Recruitment of AQP and Theta staff

Recruitment of facilitators, body worker, AQP champion and therapist was successful in securing a highly functional and dedicated team. The level of autonomy for the facilitators to interpret existing protocol and introduce new elements into Theta was particularly motivational for colleagues and resulted in continuous enhancement of provision that was reflexive and flexible to children's individual needs and aptitudes.

Documentation and Tracking Pupil Progress

Processes for documentation was well established and provided robust quantitative data, leading to a full annual report and statistical analysis which is a standard component of AQP provision for participating schools. The annual reports are detailed qualitative reports that provide schools with statistical analysis of the impact of AQP on children's well-being and academic progress.

One of the aims of this evaluation was to investigate the relevance of the data gathering tools currently employed by AQP. In the main AQP colleagues reported that the data collected was all relevant and appropriate and that the paper-based format was fit for purpose. Discussion about the potential for recording the data in an electronic rather than paper-based format revealed an understanding that participating parents would find the recording of their questionnaire data electronically intimidating. Making notes on a paper-based format was less stressful for parents particularly when they are sharing their anxieties and potentially sensitive issues about their children's sense of well-being.

Some minor issues emerged about the use of old versions of forms that had since been updated but once identified were quickly rectified. Annual monitoring of forms and the inclusion of the date of publication on each template (through header or footer for instance) could ensure that the most up to date versions were being used more systematically across AQP schools.

Some discrepancies in the completion of forms identified a need for minor revisions to existing templates to avoid misinformation when using the Likert scales. Revisions had been made previously to address this issue but some common errors continued. It is suggested that minor revisions are made to the Likert scale tables to include both the numerical and value categories as illustrated in the example below.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Disagree 3	Strongly Disagree 4

The environment

The Theta room was a refurbished classroom decorated and designed in a manner consistent with other AQP environments. The interior is informed by Emotional Intelligence theory (Goleman 1996) and work of Yung in developing an environment conducive to accessing Theta waves and therefore maximising the potential for learning.

The key characteristics of the Theta and AQP environs are soft lighting, soft furnishing, deep pile rugs, aromatherapy oils, natural materials (such a wood and tree bark), a rich variety of materials for creative play, carefully selected range of reading (consistent with Emotional Intelligence themes) and ambient music. The importance of the Theta interior was described by one facilitator:

The environment plays a big role, it just makes them calm and I think they can be who they want to be [...] they can just sort of relax and let themselves go. You know the children who struggle [in the classroom] and it doesn't matter what they do or say [in Theta], they can just be themselves.

The Theta room was designed around a woodland theme and the fixtures and furniture were chosen to develop this as a consistent theme throughout the space. The woodland theme is one of three AQP themes for therapeutic environments, the other two being seascape and mountain ranges.

During the pilot project the Theta facilitators experimented with the layout of the space. They found that making changes to the position of the work/dining table, the wigwam and other contextualised displays of learning resources ensured it continued to gain children's interest. Ensuring the relaxation space remained a consistent feature, however, was a deliberate strategy to reinforce the association with the 'visualisation' and 'repetitive practices' fundamental to the children's increasing ability to use these self-management systems designed to achieve a Theta state of mind.

Although the contents of the Theta room were selected to be gender neutral there was some evidence that the children demonstrated gender differences in engagement with areas within the environment. The wigwam and the heartmath were more frequently used by boys and the making area was more frequently used by girls. The facilitators noted that the location of certain artefacts could encourage or discourage gender groups to engage with them and experimented with the positioning of different elements. While no definitive findings can be claimed at this point it is worth noting that this was a factor in the level of individual children with difference resources.

While the Theta environment was consistent with Luckin's (2008) assertions that appropriate future learning environments should be 'dynamic', evolving space that embraces new technologies. The aesthetics of the space however, is in direct contrast to the bright open spaces, with clean lines, hard edges, and grand scale atrium. The Theta room is an antidote to the mainstream classroom, both contemporary and traditional and it has been a key component in the effectiveness of Theta and AQP environs. This point is illustrated by a class teacher who commented on how Theta was conducive to facilitating calm for one pupil in her class working on managing her emotions.

In the mornings they'll have their breakfast and it's just so nice, its so peaceful and calm in there [...] she's so relaxed and she's gone there and calmed herself down. She has had time to think.



Recommendations

Theta remains in an early stage of its development and yet it has already achieved significant success in meeting its goals in terms of developing children's emotional intelligence and self-management. The impact on children's well-being

has been significant as has the rise in their academic attainment. The following recommendations have been identified as a result of the findings of this report.

1. Theta is a successful pilot project and justifies its development and dissemination to other AQP settings and schools.
2. The wider school community could



be better informed about AQP and Theta through a variety of means including; news bulletins, posters and succinct overview statements on the AQP and school web-sites.

3. Paper-based documentation best serves the AQP community at this time and so should be continued with revisions to the Likert scale tables to avoid errors in data gathering.
4. Forms and questionnaires should be updated on an annual basis and the year of publication included on each form to avoid the use of outdated templates.
5. To develop the proposed CPD accredited programme in collaboration with a university partner such as Liverpool Hope University.
6. To develop a longitudinal study tracking children attending Theta into the next key stage within their mainstream education to document medium and long term impact on their well-being and academic attainment.

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