

On the edge.....

An example of an EP consultation in school

The situation

Joe was being excluded from his secondary school with increasing regularity. The SENCO of his school was concerned that a permanent exclusion was a possibility. Joe became anxious and frustrated during some lessons in school. He was unaware that this was happening to him until it was too late and he would be very angry and verbally abusive to staff.

The SENCO had the agreement of all staff that Joe could use a 'get out' card to remove himself from a classroom if he felt he needed to. Joe was not using this system of support.

What happened...

During a school consultation the SENCO and Educational Psychologist discussed this situation. Why was the support system not effective for Joe? He was keen to succeed in school. The hypothesis emerged that perhaps Joe's lack of self-awareness of his feelings prevented him removing himself from class in enough time. From the discussion a new plan was agreed. The SENCO would work with Joe to devise a 'feeling scale' linking numbers, descriptive statements of feelings and how Joe behaves when he feels like that. Once this was constructed the SENCO and Joe agreed at what number on the scale Joe needed to remove himself so that he was removing himself at a level lower than an angry outburst.

What happened next...

All of Joe's teachers would follow an identical script and ask Joe at the beginning, middle and end of a lesson what number Joe rated himself on his scale. If Joe gave a number higher than the agreed 'safe' level the teacher's script told Joe he needed to go to his time out place. This scenario was practised with Joe and the SENCO until Joe was able to use the support system appropriately.

The result

Two months later.... Joe had not had any further exclusions from school. He was using his feelings card to remove himself from lessons when needed. The SENCO was able to work out which lessons were causing Joe anxiety and was able to focus Joe's support even further by addressing this.

Psychology Used:

Developmental Psychology and Cognitive Behavioural Psychology

