Evaluation of a psychoanalytically informed psychotherapy service in a Leeds primary school: Supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing across the school and community

Richard Baron, partner, Research in Dynamic Environments
Christian Moeller, partner, Research in Dynamic Environments

Cuts to local services and support systems have placed tremendous pressures on families and adversely affect children’s quality of life, their emotional wellbeing and behaviour within schools. The main aims of this evaluation were to explore the development and effectiveness of the Impact North psychotherapy service, as well as specific challenges when practicing within a non-clinical school setting. Our research contributes to the growing national evidence base regarding innovative therapeutic intervention for children and young people in school communities. As independent research consultants, we conducted in-depth interviews with parents, the psychotherapist and senior school staff in addition to focus groups with learning mentors and parent support workers. Thematic analysis shows that the service has had significant impact on children’s behaviour, families’ social life and the wider school environment. Parents reported dramatic changes in their children’s behaviour and better communication with the child, while the service also offered a reflective space to teachers, parents and support staff where they could develop a better understanding of the child’s background and emotional needs. We finally illustrate the benefits, and unique challenges of developing close collaborations between therapists, staff and parents in busy school environments with suggestions for best practice.