

Project Number 2 – A Helping Hand – Art Therapists at Pakeman School

Need: There are times in children's lives when they may need a little extra support, perhaps due to bereavement, abandonment, difficult living conditions, behavioural and friendship issues. Among other things, these can leave them feeling confused, isolated, anxious, depressed, stressed and angry. We want to provide additional support for children in the form of art therapy to help them get through these times and build coping mechanisms and strategies for the future.

Action: **To employ an art therapist to work two days a week at a cost of £15,000.**
The therapist will do one-to-one sessions with a small number of children, run lunchtime drop-in sessions and provide training for teachers to enable them to help children, as necessary, to develop coping mechanisms and strategies. A major part of the therapists' work will be facilitating creative play that allows children to communicate through art, sand-tray, clay, puppetry, drama, music and bodywork movement.

Outcome: For the one-to-one sessions, the specific outcomes will vary depending on the child and the issues involved. A child who is stressed cannot learn properly, so we need to support them in such a way that they can reach their full potential. Art therapy will provide a safe medium to explore how they feel and facilitate them to express themselves without using complex language. In this way, their mental, emotional and physical states will be supported so that they can process their feelings and begin to heal. It will reduce their anxiety and tension, thereby helping them to feel less stressed and overwhelmed. Children will develop an increased awareness of themselves, improved communication skills, and healthy and effective coping skills. For some children, the nature of their problems can mean that they have found it difficult to build relationships and the therapy will enable them to develop social skills that allow them to build better relationships.

The drop-in group will provide a space for children to share their feelings and concerns and support their day-to-day well-being.

The art therapists' work with teachers will provide practical help, advice and strategies to help them support children more effectively in the classroom.