

Dynamix Play Therapy

Play Therapy in Schools



What is Play Therapy?

Play Therapy is a form of therapy that helps a child modify behaviours, build self-esteem and boost confidence. The Play therapist would create a dynamic relation with the child, enabling the child to feel relaxed and able to express emotions and make sense of their difficulties through elements of play such as role play, sand tray work, puppets and many other toys. This is known to be a healthier form of communication for children as the thought of needing to use words may be very daunting for the child.

Play therapy is a good form of treatment for a child who struggles with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some of these difficulties are derived from experiencing trauma, neglect, loss and abuse for example.

Why does play therapy work in schools?

Many children suffer with mental health issues and it is usually the schools that are the first to spot a child having difficulties. Schools often work with children who have complex emotional and behavioural attributes who may not be able to get the help that is needed from the educational system.

Play Therapy would be a form of therapy that would help assist in a child's difficulties and issues, allowing a child to be more receptive to learning and being sociable in the classroom and at home.

- Play therapy helps build a healthier relationship between the child and teachers and classmates.
- It reduces emotional, behavioural and social obstacles that may hold back a child's learning and possibly the learning of others.

- Play Therapy enhances communication and play skills
- Play Therapy helps the child but also the teachers in how to cope and approach a child who is inwardly struggling with their emotions.

Play Therapy in schools is effective because...

- Schools are a familiar environment to child and for their parents/ care givers as well as being an easily accessible location.
- School teachers are attuned to how a child works and would be able to identify difficulties and changes within the child early on.
- The close interaction between a child and a teacher allows helping the child develop and modify learning and behaviour.



How can Play Therapy be on schools?

In order to provide school based Play Therapy, schools will need the following in regards to the BAPT leaflet:

- A dedicated, private room that is accessible every week at the same period of time.
- Regular slots for relevant teaching staff to meet and discuss referrals, Play Therapy cases and other issues.
- Regular liaison between the Play Therapist and SENCO and teacher with responsibility for behaviour or another member of teaching staff to discuss child protection issues, parent/ care giver contact, teaching staff support etc.
- An understanding of the Play Therapy rules and requirements.



The five C's of Play Therapy

Confidentiality

The Play Therapy is private but not secret. The Play Therapist will not share specific information apart from if they are concerned about the child's safety. In this case, they will have to take their concerns out of the Play Room.

Consistency

The Play Therapy sessions will happen in the same place at the same time, every week to create a no- disruptive relationship between the Play Therapist and child.

Commitment

The Play Therapist, teacher, parents/care givers are all committed to helping the child which will require patience, trust and dedication from all parties and it usually seems to get worse before it gets better.

Consent

Before Play Therapy can start for the child, written consent from the parent/care giver for the Play Therapy to commence. The child must give verbal consent to this also.

Child Protection

Play Therapists will adhere to the schools Child Protection procedures, the Child Protection Act (2004) and the Local Authority Child Protection procedures.

The process of Play Therapy working in schools

Play therapy generally follows the same procedure as it would in a private intervention.

1. Referral
2. Referral discussion and initial contact
3. Consultation with parent/care giver
4. Assessment and first meeting with child
5. Play Therapy sessions
6. Regular review meetings with parent/care giver and teachers (roughly every six weeks)
7. Endings
8. Discussion with teaching staff to pass on strategies to further help the child in the classroom

The Play Therapist would want to have the teachers and parents involved with the process and have regular meetings to discuss themes that have risen from play and the child's progress. Specific information will not be shared so the child knows what they say or play with in the play room isn't spoken about unless the Play Therapist thinks they're unsafe. The child will know what the Play Therapist will discuss in the meetings.

The amount of time that a child will need Play Therapy is dependent on the individual. The teaching staff need to be aware of this and sensitive to the fact that it may get worse before it gets better. In order for the child to feel safe, the teaching staff should not ask questions about the Play Therapy sessions to the child. If the child would like to tell or not tell a teacher what they have done, this is their choice and it is OK.



