

PERSON SPECIFICATION: SPECIALIST SUPPORT WORKER

To work effectively within the school, a person must have:

SELF-AWARENESS

A thorough, realistic and resilient sense of self and self-esteem

Working with these challenging pupils involves managing the effects of verbal and physical abuse, and the process of deskilling that can occur during periods when the pupils do not access the provision. Awareness of your own personality traits and the impact on others is necessary to manage a team effectively.

Understanding of a personal need for control to manage anxiety, self-concept

Often it is necessary to concede elements of control over a child in the short term in order to develop the child's capacity to accede to adult in the long term.

A capacity to objectively, accurately and independently self-evaluate

Working with these pupils requires the constant processing of information from observations, especially with the regard to the effectiveness of adult interactions and interventions. Every member of staff must be able to reflect on their own and each other's practice and how effective it is in meeting the child's needs. This also means that these reflections must be shared openly and honestly so that all staff can develop a thorough knowledge of each other's styles and profiles of strengths and weaknesses so that all can develop and be supported. This is also a key strength in ensuring that all adults can develop real strengths on their practice through coaching and mentoring.

MOTIVATIONS, DRIVE AND REWARD

Motivated by internal not external reward

It is highly important that staff working with these pupils feel most motivated by achieving their own internal goals. Usual rewards when working with children, such as reciprocal or affectionate relationships with the pupils, or the obvious progress of pupils, are not available to staff within the Specialist Provision. These staff must be able to enjoy and be rewarded by the observation of development within a pupil, or the knowledge that they have contributed effectively to the whole provision, when that is not necessarily apparent to others not used to Provision practice.

Enjoyment of constant learning, problem-solving and analysis

Each child presents a unique profile of needs and difficulties. The evidence based practise means that all staff have to be motivated by constantly learning and researching current theory, interventions and practice. These children constantly change and develop in unique ways and each staff member must be able to work collaboratively and independently to develop practice and provide the highest quality learning environment tailored to each child. Staff must be able to celebrate the self-knowledge that they know that they don't have all the answers all of the time, but the self-belief that they are capable of finding them in time. Observing the positive effects of the provision on each child is an internal reward for staff when they can identify and evaluate their own practice and that of others.

A strong drive for reciprocal relationships

Because these pupils are unable to / are not rewarded by reciprocal relationships themselves, all staff have to be able to maintain both sides of the relationship on behalf of the child, regardless of the presenting behaviours. Also, because of the highly intense and pressurised nature of the working environment, the strong reciprocal nature of the relationships between staff is a necessity.

CHARACTERISTICS

A high capacity for empathy

Staff must be extremely empathetic and have a strong theory of mind for others. This enables staff to effectively read, communicate with and manage the pupils at all times, as well as predicting and pro-actively managing future behaviours. This also enables staff to work effectively as part of a team to support each other positively. As a manager this will allow you to ensure all members of your team can perform their duties to the best of their abilities.

Resilience

Staff must be able to manage their own reactions to working with complex and challenging behaviour in the moment. Although all staff debrief and support each other when needed, that often comes after the event, and often it is the constant and minor behaviours of the children that are the most difficult to manage the effects of. Staff also have to be able to regard making mistakes as a positive learning step, in regards to themselves, others and children. Staff also have to be able to constantly motivate themselves despite the knowledge that they may have periods of time when there is a high possibility of failure in their lessons.

A no-blame attitude

Whilst everyone, children and staff, are expected to take responsibility for their actions, no-one should feel blamed. The children have specific reasons and needs which cause their behaviour, just as adults do. Therefore, everyone is expected to change and develop with support.

Flexibility

Staff must be able to pay attention to, and respond quickly to huge amounts of information in their immediate and the larger environment. They must be able to suppress and enhance different aspects of their own personality at different times with different children. They must also be able to change a planned course of action in the moment in order to maintain the best possible environment to meet the needs of the child in the moment.