



It is easy to miss Broad Elms School. Tucked away in one of Sheffield's leafier suburbs and catering for just 36 pupils it's not what you expect of an urban primary – but then neither is its intake. Drawn from all over Sheffield – and in some cases beyond – the 5- to 11-year-old boys have all been deemed too hard to handle by their local schools. As the city's only special school catering for primary aged children with emotional and behavioural difficulties Broad Elms is their last chance saloon: succeed here and they could return to mainstream at the end of Year 6; fail and they will transfer to one of Sheffield's two similar schools for secondary age pupils.

Broad Elms' staff do their best to ensure it's the former – and with some success. According to their recent Ofsted report, while the standards attained are below normal for pupils of their age this is largely due to their history of disaffection and their time spent excluded from school. Against this background Ofsted rated their achievements overall as good, due in large part to the leadership provided by the acting headteacher and the efforts of the small team of teachers and CCAs (child care assistants).

Pupils at the school are taught in classes of six, each with two members of staff: a teacher and a CCA. Generous staffing like this doesn't come cheap and LEAs are understandably reluctant to discuss exact costs but the recent Ofsted report gives a figure of £18,000 per pupil for the financial year ending March 2003. This compares favourably with residential provision, but it is still the sort of expenditure that can draw flack from disgruntled taxpayers.

Of course Broad Elms' success is not all down to favourable staff-pupil ratios. Considering the school's intake its achievements are impressive. There are a number of factors cited in the Ofsted report, one of which is the school's system for managing and promoting good behaviour. As the inspectors note this is given a high priority. "A member of staff has overall responsibility for training staff in Team-Teach, a range of risk reduction strategies which include non-verbal, verbal, and where absolutely necessary, physical intervention," their report explains. "This enables staff to safely intervene when a

Team-Teach

A small special school in Sheffield has just earned an accolade for its use of Team-Teach to tackle disruptive behaviour. *Special Children* paid it a visit

pupil may be a danger to themselves or others, and allows pupils to reintegrate back into lessons after examining and talking through the reasons why their behaviour was unacceptable to others, and often, themselves.”

Indeed so proficient is the school in implementing these strategies that it was awarded Team-Teach Gold Standard status in September 2004. Achieving Gold Standard means that Broad Elms has become a centre of excellence for Team-Teach and is the first establishment in the country to do so. This is remarkable in itself but especially so in that the member of staff who has overall responsibility for the programme is a CCA.

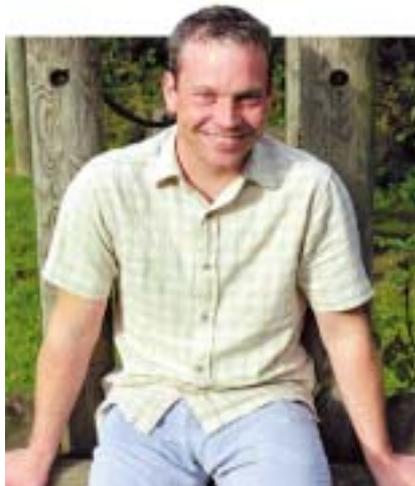
Goals

Dean Cotton has been at Broad Elms School for four years. One of six CCAs he joined the school shortly after its then headteacher had decided to introduce Team-Teach to the school. Dean expressed an interest in the programme and was sent off on a basic Team-Teach course. He says the experience was both stimulating and daunting. Despite Broad Elms being a special school for children with EBD he felt its approach to behaviour management left something to be desired. At the time the number of incidents in the school was sky high.

“The main reason was that there was no follow-up,” Dean explains. “Children were involved in an incident and then were sent back to the classroom to carry on with their work. I just thought this was wrong; that they needed time to sort themselves out, advice, the chance to sound-off to somebody and learn from what had happened.”

On his return to the school he managed to persuade the headteacher to assign him to Team-Teach full time. He drew up his own job description and set his own goals. These included reducing fixed-term exclusions, supporting children who couldn't manage in class, doing Life Space interviews (see below) and working towards Team Teach Gold Standard Status.

Three years later the results have been impressive. The term he took on the job there were 166 recorded incidents at the school; last term there were 12. To top it all there have been no exclusions since Summer 2003. Dean is now the Team-



What is Team-Teach?

Team-Teach is training in positive handling strategies through a whole setting holistic approach to managing difficult, disturbing and sometimes dangerous behaviour. Team-Teach is the largest provider of training for mainstream, special, child and increasingly adult services in the UK and is accredited by the British Institute of Learning Difficulties and affiliated to the National Control and Restraint (General Services) Association. There are over 1,500 tutors having taught between them over 400,000 people principally across a wide range of care, education and health service settings, promoting a multi-disciplinary approach between education, social services and health. The training has evolved from a residential care, education and health background working with service users with a variety of emotional, social, behavioural, learning, communication and medical needs.

Dean Cotton

Teach Co-ordinator for the school. So how have these results been achieved?

Team-Teach

Team-Teach itself is relatively new. Its origins go back to a trip undertaken in 1996 by George Matthews, an experienced teacher and deputy head, to the USA to study techniques for managing aggression and violence in adults and children. The trip was part funded by a Churchill Fellowship and highlighted the fact that none of the programmes at that time had been specifically developed for use with children. As the *Team-Teach Workbook* explains: “As a teacher George was keen to help staff to develop the diversion, defusion and de-escalation skills which can allow

95% of situation to be resolved without the need for physical intervention.” Team-Teach was the result of his endeavours.

At Broad Elms School the programme has led to a sea change in the way in which disruptive incidents are dealt with, as Dean Cotton explains: “The first thing I did was to look at incidents and monitor them. In the early stages I was just putting the information into my computer and seeing how many incidents we were having, which staff were involved, which children were involved and why they were happening. I also introduced a behaviour support plan, which tells us how we can handle certain children. We put the child's name on, what the behaviour looks like, what usually sets them off, what are the best de-escalation techniques, what we can say to the child to try to get them out of it, praise points that they respond to, if they have got any problems that we need to take into account before we physically intervene, what's the preferred handling strategy and what follow-up, recording and notification is needed.”

It is the drawing up of these policies and procedures and their effective introduction into the day-to-day practice of the school that has won Broad Elms its accolade. Every aspect of the programme is meticulously documented and, as the name Team-Teach suggests, the agreed procedures and protocols are followed by all staff whatever their status.

“The teachers and child care assistants in this school work as one,” Dean Cotton explains. “It's not a case of the teacher being in charge and the child care assistant being there to help. Everyone is equal. I've taken over incidents that the headteacher has been involved in and anybody can. It's all about working together as a team.”

This emphasis on teamwork extends to the development of Team-Teach itself. Everybody involved in the programme, from classroom practitioners to Advanced Tutors, can contribute to its development. Ideas are filtered through a national steering group while new techniques are brought to a Risk Assessment Panel before being authorised for operational use.

Within Broad Elms every other staff meeting is given over to behaviour management and staff attend a six-hour refresher course every year. Dean Cotton

is now an Employer Advanced Tutor, which means not only can he train other staff within the school but he can lead courses in other schools within the authority. Basic courses are generally six or twelve hours in duration and consist of both core and optional modules depending on the needs of the institution. Training is also accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD).

Procedures

Team-Teach procedures revolve around three key documents: risk assessments, incident reports and the behaviour support plans mentioned earlier. Risk assessment allows staff at the school to form a collective view about the current emotional state of each child. As the *Handbook* states: "Where the risks concerning a particular individual are foreseeable there is a requirement for a fully documented risk assessment which outlines the risk and gives details of planned and agreed preventative strategies." At Broad Elms classroom teachers and CCAs carry out risk assessments every term. Frequent assessments mean that staff can see if the child is moving up or down the scale.

Detailed incident sheets also feed into the behaviour support plans for each child. For a programme that is based on building strong relationships between staff and pupils analysing each incident in detail is crucial. "Out of an incident three things can happen," Dean Cotton explains, "the relationship between you and the child can be damaged, it can stay

the same or it can be improved. What was happening before was that it was either staying the same or being damaged and people couldn't see that it could actually be improved. So I introduced what we call Life Space Interviews where we go through a set routine, talking to a child and letting the child talk, seeing it from their point of view and trying to link it to something else that has happened."

Team-Teach's training focuses on the verbal and non-verbal skills practitioners need to avoid situations spiralling out of control

Life Space Interviews is a technique developed by Fritz Redl. It emphasises active listening and a non-judgemental exploration of an incident. According to the *Handbook* it "involves rebuilding relationships, learning from what has happened and exploring the link between feelings and behaviour."

With its emphasis on de-escalation much of Team-Teach's training focuses on the verbal and non-verbal skills practitioners need to avoid situations spiralling out of control. These include posture, awareness of space, paraverbal skills – such as the use of tone, pace and volume, and the fostering of a culture in which staff work as a team, readily accepting help from other members of staff. An important part of the Team-

Teach programme is help scripts aimed at defusing situation through the use of carefully scripted exchanges. These can play a part in calming a child down but also in signalling support or relief for a fellow member of staff when a change of face might help resolve a situation before it escalates further.

Of course there remains the five per cent of incidents where physical intervention becomes necessary, as Dean Cotton acknowledges: "When something gets to a certain stage there is nothing else you can do. Once everything else has been exhausted and you have tried everything, if someone is going to get hurt, or hurt themselves, damage property or severely disrupt class, by law we have got to stop them doing that, which means physically intervening. There's no other way."

Even in these circumstances Team-Teach has prescribed procedures with stress placed on using the least intrusive intervention likely to be successful.

The future

In a context where violent behaviour is becoming more common an obvious question is does Team-Teach have a role to play in other school settings? Dean Cotton believes it does and has run a number of basic courses in mainstream primary schools in Sheffield. He gives an example of a mainstream school with an integrated support unit where he delivered a 12-hour course over three twilight sessions. He's uncertain, however, whether it could work as well in large secondary schools, not least because of the problem of holding or restraining 16-year-olds.

This question may be answered in the very near future as Sheffield embarks on a restructuring of its provision for pupils with EBD. In the summer of 2005 Broad Elms will close, along with the other specialist provision in Sheffield, to be replaced by two new all-age special schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Dean Cotton doesn't know at present whether he or Team-Teach have a future in the new schools, but it seems certain that somewhere in a school system now contemplating metal detectors and random weapons searches that there will be a place for the Team-Teach approach.

