

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

Background

Jane turned 12 and was about to start secondary school. During lockdown Jane spent an increased amount of time with her family, as did most children. She started washing her hands more and more but would venture outside for fresh air. Gradually this became less and she found it difficult to go into the garden as she wanted to stay inside. On occasion, before Jane's need to stay at home became really problematic, she would head out in the car to a drive through for food with her family, however this also stopped quite abruptly by June 2020.

When schools returned in June 2020 the primary school tried to engage Jane in transition visits to secondary school but she found the thought of it really challenging. Mum and dad were extremely supportive but worried about what this might mean for transition to the local high school.

Jane was already known to CAMHS and the Family Wellbeing Service as referrals had gone in at the start of Lockdown.

Although Jane was invited to transition visits to the secondary school but did not attend, the Pastoral Support Teacher was in close contact with Mum due to shared information, from the primary school, about how much Jane's mental health had deteriorated. Mum was worried about next steps. The contact with Mum happened quickly, within 1 week of the primary school getting in touch with the secondary school.

The following steps are details of what happened next, from information gathering, assessment, planning and intervention to outcome.

In June 2020, two meetings took place with Jane's parents, at the high school to start of information gathering process using EBSA Assessments (Appendix D and E) alongside the question framework for Families and Staff (Appendix F)

Analysis of the information detailed that Jane was scared to leave home because of germs. She was terrified of being caught out and not being able to wash her hands. She was also worried about catching Covid.

Phone calls took place between Mum and the Pastoral Teacher to agree next steps, which in this case was leave things until August and let Jane relax.

In August, a home visit was offered by the Pastoral Teacher however Mum explained that Jane had made some progress during the Summer and was able to go short car journeys and outside again for a small amount of time. This meant that an invitation to meet outside the school was possible. All meetings took place at the end of the school day when the building and grounds were quieter.

The first meeting was a brief hello from 6 feet away for 10 minutes to engage. Masks on!

The second meeting, 3 days later, was a 15 minute chat with Mum and Jane. Again, just to reconnect and engage. The topic of conversation was anything other than school!

The third meeting, 3 days later, was a brief Walk & Talk around the building. Just Jane and the Pastoral Teacher. Mum waited at the front of the building.

The fourth meeting, 2 days later, was a longer Walk & Talk, just Jane and the Pastoral Teacher.

This approach continued for 2 weeks, where the time spent walking gradually increased, until Jane felt comfortable enough to walk around the back of the building and meet in the school grounds at the beginning of September.

The first time Jane entered the grounds she was shaking and had to turn back. The Pastoral Teacher and Jane tried again the next day and made it to the back of the building where Jane sat for a few minutes “tolerating” the feeling of school. She left looking exhausted but happier.

This approach continued for 3 weeks, allowing Jane to get to know the adult and vice versa. Each time, Jane stayed longer. Adding 5 minutes per visit was agreed with Jane, Mum and the Pastoral Teacher before starting the work together. Once Jane was comfortable with the meetings she explained that she used to really enjoy comprehension and reading. Therefore the novel being used in her English class was made available for her to take home and read, at the suggestion of the Pastoral Teacher.

At the next visit Jane asked what the class were doing in English and wondered if she would be able to try some work to take home. A pack was provided by the English department and Jane agreed to let her English teacher pop down and say hello the next time she was sitting outside at the back of the building.

The English teacher made herself available to connect with Jane at her next visit. She left work for Jane which allowed Jane to do English comprehension work each time she came to the school.

A pattern quickly developed with Jane’s visits and it became a routine. Something familiar that she had a say in. Attending the building, albeit outside in the grounds, twice a week at the same time (3.45pm to 4.45pm) to do the same type of work for English. Mum would drop Jane off and wait for her at the front of the school.

By mid-October Jane was beginning to ask questions about what was inside the building and wondered about cutting through the main foyer to get from the back to the front quickly, rather than going all around the perimeter. The Janitor had got to know her because he would look out for her to open the gate each time she needed to go around the back. Therefore the Janitor was invested in supporting Jane before

she entered the building and was more than happy to help her try something different.

The entry to the building was discussed, planned and communicated to everyone involved.

Jane was reassured that there were gel stations at each door and was reminded of the procedures and expectations of everyone having clean hands before the entered the building. This eased Jane's anxiety around germs.

The entry was to involve a 30 second crossing from one side of the foyer to another. The Janitor was ready to open the doors and Jane met her mum at the front of the building, having entered at the back of the building with the Pastoral Teacher. She held her breath as she went in and breathed out at the other side.

The following week the pastoral teacher reminded Jane of her success and asked if it was possible to try to do the same with the main entrance. Although she looked worried, Jane agreed. As before, Jane held her breath, moved through the main entrance doors, stood for a few seconds and then walked back out to see her Mum.

Realising her success she turned round and did it again...and again.

Motivated to build upon her success Jane asked if she could try to do her work inside the school, at a room at the front of the building, rather than outside. Arrangements were made for Jane to sit in one of the small offices after school hours, alongside the Pastoral Teacher. After only 3 sessions, Jane asked if she could see the ground floor...then the first floor...then the third.

Jane was also introduced to the Head Teacher and her Head of Year during the internal visits.

At the beginning of November Jane was ready to visit the building during the day. To feel what it was like when it was busy. Plans were agreed and put in place for Jane to spend break time in the building with her friends the next day. The Pastoral Teacher met her at the door a few minutes before the bell and took her along to where her friends were going to be, then walked Jane back to the front door when the break was over.

Then Jane visited the next day and the next. After a week she wanted to come in at lunchtime.

Within three weeks Jane was on a customised timetable with key subjects that she felt she could start with. This included time in the support base, a quiet space to go at break and lunch and a daily check-in with her Pastoral Teacher.

As a new subject was introduced to her timetable Jane was introduced to the member of staff, before her first class. All staff teaching Jane were made aware of strategies and approaches that would work with her and were encouraged to speak to the Pastoral Support Teacher at any point, should they have any questions. A

lunchtime Case Conference was also organised for the teachers who had Jane in their class to share key information that would help everyone working with and supporting Jane.

By the beginning of December, Jane was in school full time.

Some additional points to make:

- Very regular review meetings took place between the parents and school, including formal reviews with the Educational Psychologist.
- The Pastoral Support Teacher almost immediately, made contact with the other agencies in Jane's life and agreed the graded exposure plan with the Clinical Psychologist at CAMHS. School and CAMHS used the same strategies when talking to Jane about going back to school.
- It was NOT all plain sailing. At times Jane was overwhelmed with the return to school and this had to be managed to support her at all times. Some days were easier than others and, at times she needed a rest day.
- Mum and Dad required support and for someone to listen to their story, especially about how much Jane had changed during lockdown and what happened to her. The information gathering stage was really important.
- Ongoing support was provided for Jane throughout S1 to ensure her emotional health was also a priority; e.g. group work, daily check-ins, anxiety management work
- Jane was allowed out of class to wash her hands when she felt she needed to. This gradually decreased as the year went on.
- Jane was motivated to get to school, albeit extremely anxious. This helped, a lot.
- Relationships were key: the connections with the Pastoral Support Teacher and the Janitor were crucial.
- The motivation of other staff members to support as a team was very helpful e.g. the English Teacher providing materials and being present at the end of the school day.
- Not all situations will be like this one but flexibility, creativity and determination was a very important factor with this young person.