Michelle Simpson

How Can Independently Accessed Self-Regulation Support Be Effective in Supporting Learners in Their Classroom Setting?

<u>Introduction</u>:

Having previously worked as a teacher supporting learners for 4 years, my remit often involved taking pupils out of class. I noticed that at times they became accustomed to 1:1 or small group work and found returning to class and participating in whole class lessons more difficult. Over time I worked more with class teachers to provide strategies and resources that could be used in the classroom and empower the class teacher to support the pupil as part of the class.

Now back in class full time, I see the difficulty in meeting the needs of pupils who have become accustomed to being out of class and have become reliant on 1:1 support outside of the classroom setting. The main issue with my own class has been with pupils leaving the class, either to access different areas around the school or seemingly struggling to cope with the classroom environment. I feel that inclusion in the class is important and leaving the room means missing out on vital learning as well as the social aspects of participating in the whole class experience.

I would like to develop my classroom pedagogy to support these pupils effectively in class and give them an element of responsibility for their own learning and support if required. Working with a P7 class, this is also an important skill for them to develop before starting high school.

Since beginning this project, I have been moved into a different class, P3/4. With my interim findings being so positive, I was keen to replicate the principles in my new class, albeit at a more appropriate level for the identified pupils' age and stage.

Background: Policy Context and Research

Support for Learners is at the forefront of teaching with the GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) principles ensuring that teachers provide a level of support for every child that allows them to access their education and be successful (Education Scotland, 2020). It also highlights the importance of treating pupils as individuals and this is what has led to some pupils being removed from the class for individualised support. Local and National policy agrees that as educators, we are required to provide additional support for each and every child that requires it and that this support adequately meets their needs (Supporting Learners Policy Framework, 2017; Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act, 2004; Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014; The National Improvement Framework, 2016). In addition to being appropriate to the needs of the child, it is the recommendation of the GIRFEC Principles that this support be implemented in the least intrusive way possible (GIRFEC, 2020). For the majority of pupils, effective individualised support can be provided within the classroom environment, allowing them to be fully included as part of the class. For others, the local Supporting Leaners Policy Framework provides guidance on providing appropriate support "at the right time, in the right place" (2017). The Scottish Attainment Challenge (Education Scotland, 2019) aims to raise the attainment of pupils in deprived areas by closing the inequity gap. To provide all pupils with an equal opportunity to succeed, support must be provided to those who require it. The Additional Support for Learning Statutory Guidance (Scottish Government, 2017) sets out advice and guidance for identifying and addressing the needs of children who face a barrier to their learning, including ensuring efficient provision for the additional support required for each child. In this way, it needs to be individualised. It is hoped, through this research, that this can also be accessed independently by the pupils in question, without them feeling the need to leave the classroom.

Regulating emotions and behaviours is key to ensuring pupils can access their education fully. There is research to show how self-regulation can positively impact behaviour management (Cauldwell, 2019; Smith et al. 2015). Interventions designed to support self-regulation have been shown to improve academic performance (Popham et al., 2018) and it is hoped that providing targeted pupils with interventions that they can access in the classroom will encourage them to access them effectively. The work of Professor Steve Peters on the "Inner Chimp" provides a tool that can be used to explain behaviours and self-regulation to pupils in a way that is understandable to them (Peters, 2018). It is believed that by helping pupils understand their emotions and behaviours better, they will eventually gain more control over them and understand what strategies they may need to support this. As Smith et al. put it, the effectiveness of any program designed to address behaviours is improved by targeting self-regulation deficits (2015).

Research on the development of younger children's self-regulation often focuses on children of a pre-school age (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009; Timmons et al., 2016; Viglas & Perlman, 2018) but the learning environment is shown to be a crucial element and this can also be applied to older pupils. Viglas and Perlman suggest that the classroom environment needs to provide children with opportunities to practise self-regulation in order to develop social and emotional competence (2018). Codima et al. (2016) highlight the importance of social processes in the development

of self-regulation, lending weight to the benefits of allowing the social aspect of learning in a classroom environment to develop, rather than in isolation where possible. Eshel and Kohavi's findings (2003) showed that when teacher and learner control of learning is high, there is an increase in the adoption of self-regulation learning strategies. While there is little comparable research available, it is possible that this principle may also apply to the adoption of additional support materials and strategies – allowing pupils to have an element of control over their support.

This concept of giving pupils control of their learning in order to increase their self-regulation has led to some additional insights into the positive effects of empowering pupils in their own learning. Empowering learners is vital to the process of learning (Frymier, Shuman & Houser, 1996; Houser & Frymier, 2009) and giving pupils a sense of ownership within their learning is important in the pursuit of effective teaching. However, Woodhead warns that while "embracing child-centred, child-enabling, child-empowering values underlying participation is one thing, putting these values into practice is quite another" (2010). In order to support those pupils who struggle to fully access their learning independently, it could be important to give them a sense of ownership in the support they require. A sense of empowerment can be linked to increased motivation (Brooks & Young, 2011) and empowered learners are more motivated to perform given classroom tasks (Houser & Frymier, 2009). As motivation is a vital precursor to learning it should become a meaningful aspect to any classroom experience (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In this way it was hoped that in engaging with the development of the support provided in the classroom, the pupils in question were motivated to see success in their learning support. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) highlight the principle empowerment factors of meaningfulness, competence, impact and choice. Ensuring the targeted pupils felt an element of each of these factors was key to the development of this project. Woodhead reminds us that we need to not only listen to what pupils have to say but focus on involving them in active participation (2010). Quigley (2014) stated that young people cannot fully develop their own "strengths and independence without being empowered to take charge of their lives", which can certainly start in the classroom.

Florrian and Beaton advise that what pupils have to say about their learning can be used by teachers in the context of whole class teaching (2018). The inclusive element is vital in this research as it aims to look at providing effective support in the mainstream classroom. Spratt and Florian (2015) recommend creating learning opportunities that are available to everyone in the class, so this has been considered in the delivery of the interventions. Webster and Blatchford found that the experience of pupils with additional support needs tended to include time away from the mainstream class, teacher and peers (2014). They argue that the 1:1 support comes at the expense of interactions with their class and is likely to adversely affect social development and involvement in school life. This is the primary reason this project hopes to show that support can be provided in the classroom environment.

There is also research available on the benefits of empowering other learners, most centring either on empowering teachers as learners (Davies, 2011; Osmond-Johnson, 2018; Taft, 2019) or college students (Davies & Gonzalez, 2017; Hains & Smith, 2012). All found, however, that empowering learners leads to better

engagement and increased motivation so there is no reason to believe this will be any different with younger pupils.

While evidence shows that there is benefit in learners feeling empowered, there is little work on the effects of empowering learners in the development of their own support strategies and the benefits to their self-regulation. For this reason, this study has focussed on the empowerment aspects of involving pupils in the development and implementation of individualised support materials and strategies. This strand of research has raised an additional element to the original question posed in this paper, namely how empowering pupils in the development of their self-regulation support will impact their use of these strategies independently.

Research Design

It was decided to target pupils who frequently left the classroom for unscheduled reasons, those who were displaying difficulties in achieving success in the classroom environment. Pupils who required to leave the classroom for precision teaching in Literacy or Numeracy were not considered. To begin, baseline data was gathered over 3 weeks on how often these pupils left the room, for how long and in what lesson learning was lost (Appendix A). An engagement scale was developed to measure engagement in key lessons as well as any support accessed (Appendix B). Prior to the pupil-led intervention, this support referred to universal support available to the whole class. The scale was devised with 7-points as research has shown this to be within the optimal range of points shown to measure effectively (Preston & Colman, 2000). Data was gathered from a range of sources as combination of instruments has been shown to be preferable to a single assessment tool of the self-regulation process and the impact of any intervention (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005)

The results from the observations were used to lead reflection on teaching style and the interactions with the pupils in question. As there was a whole school Pivotal approach, guidance was taken from Paul Dix (2017) and John Hattie (2009). The principles from Professor Steve Peters' work on the Hidden Chimp (2018) were of a particular interest as a tool to explain the process of behaviour and self-regulation to the pupils in question.

The whole class was made aware of the project and involved through Health and Wellbeing lessons using the Inner Chimp analogy to support them in their own development of self-regulation. It encouraged all pupils to reflect on what strategies helped them in difficult times and resources were provided in class for them to access such as fiddle toys, mindful colouring sheets and a calm corner. It also encouraged them to be accepting and supportive of their classmates' strategies and the whole class showed a desire to see them succeed in their use.

Separate conversations were had with each targeted learner and these were paramount in engaging them in the process.

With Pupil 1, the chimp analogy was very effective in explaining behaviours and helping them identify their feelings. We discussed what helped them concentrate and learn. They reflected that they liked to work alone in a quiet area, which is why they often left the room. A small den was created in the corner of the room with a weighted blanket, which provided a quiet, darker area to complete work in. The knowledge that there was access to this space encouraged them to listen during teaching inputs so that they could complete work independently in the den. A Calm Sequence was constructed together to provide a reminder of the options available when they felt 'wobbly'. As well as the den, options included brain breaks and movement breaks. The choices encouraged them to stay in the room in an environment they felt safe in but also allowed for short breaks from the classroom if they felt they really needed to leave. In this way the exit was more structured, controlled and mutually agreed.

Communication difficulties made the conversation with Pupil 2 more complex. Discussions to establish a preferred learning environment or support required proved ineffective. Instead, teacher-led strategies needed to be tried and the success

observed to establish the best support to offer. Nevertheless, each stage of the development of the support put in place was explained to the learner and they were given the opportunity to offer opinion or feedback if they chose. Feedback from the learner was most often non-verbal but a positive relationship with the teacher meant this could often be interpreted effectively.

Some strategies, including a calm sequence and a 'First and Then' visual, proved less effective than hoped but the pupil did admit that knowing exactly what targets were expected from a lesson helped. This led to a visual on the pupil's desk explaining what was required from them during a lesson (e.g. listening to teaching input then writing 3 sentences) but allowing them to place their own visual in the final box to show the teacher where they would be completing their work. In this way, on the occasions they left the room the teacher was able to check the visual to see where they were. For each lesson, while placing the visuals, it explained what time the lesson would be finishing and so what time they would be expected back in the class if they left. Only on 2 occasions was a reminder required to them to come back.

In this situation, as with Pupil 1, the options encouraged them to stay in the room but if they felt they really needed to leave, it provided a more structured and controlled means of taking that break.

An APDR (Assess, Plan, Do, Review) plan was used to record the interventions and each cycle recorded observations (Appendix C). Once the interventions were in place, the engagement scale was used again to measure engagement in key lessons (namely Numeracy and Literacy lessons) as well as any support that was accessed. All data from the engagement scales were plotted on a graph to show any impact. An engagement target was set for each pupil and shared with them.
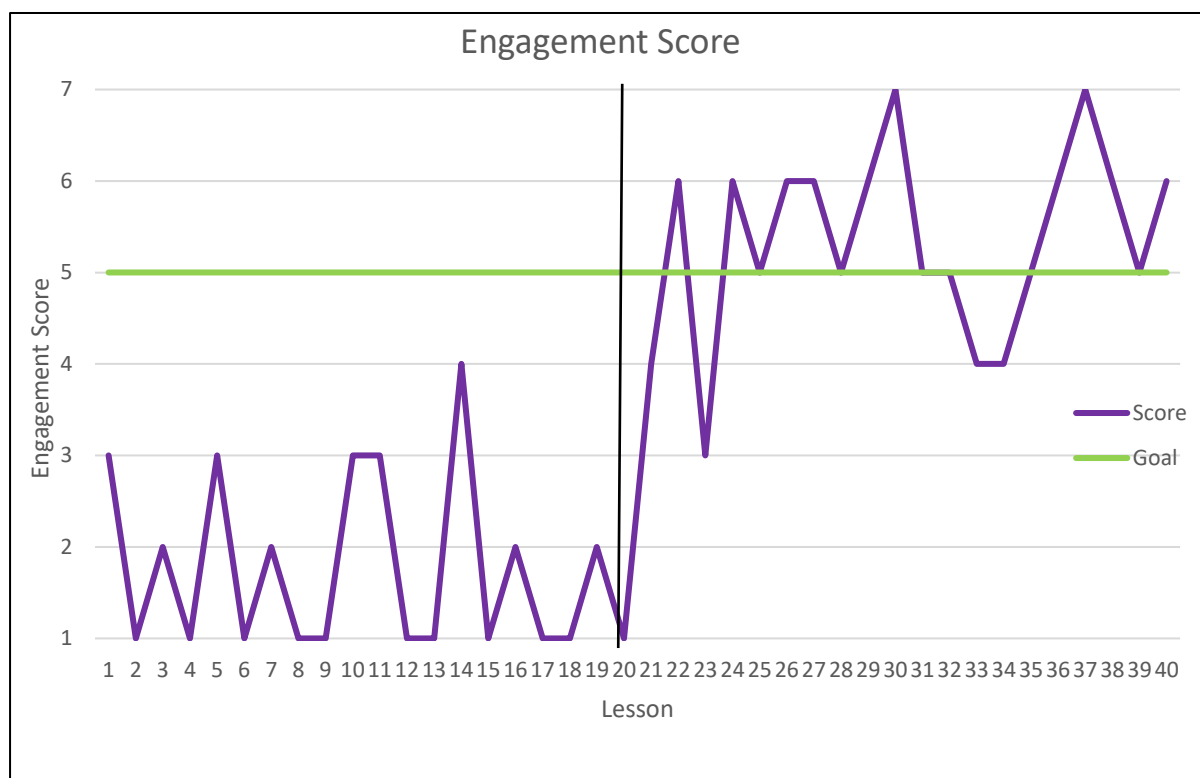
Findings and Analysis (1556)

As recording engagement in every lesson was unrealistic in a busy classroom, it was decided to focus on only certain lessons through the week, a mixture of curricular areas. Every unscheduled exit from the classroom was recorded. The initial baseline data confirmed the frequency that each pupil left the classroom as well as any pattern of lessons they found most difficult to complete. This provided a more precision focus for the interventions as it was clear Numeracy and Literacy were most likely to pose a challenge for the learners to remain in the classroom. As a result of this, it was decided to focus the measurement of engagement in Numeracy and Literacy lessons after the implementation of any support strategies.

The engagement scale revealed low levels of engagement in identified lessons and were plotted against a target score of 5 (Graphs A and B). The graph was shared with both pupils to allow them full involvement in the project and show them how their engagement would be measured going forward. The conversations detailed above followed in order to develop individualized support, which the pupils could access independently in the classroom environment.

Engagement in Literacy and Numeracy lessons was measured following the implementation of the support materials and strategies and also plotted on the graph.
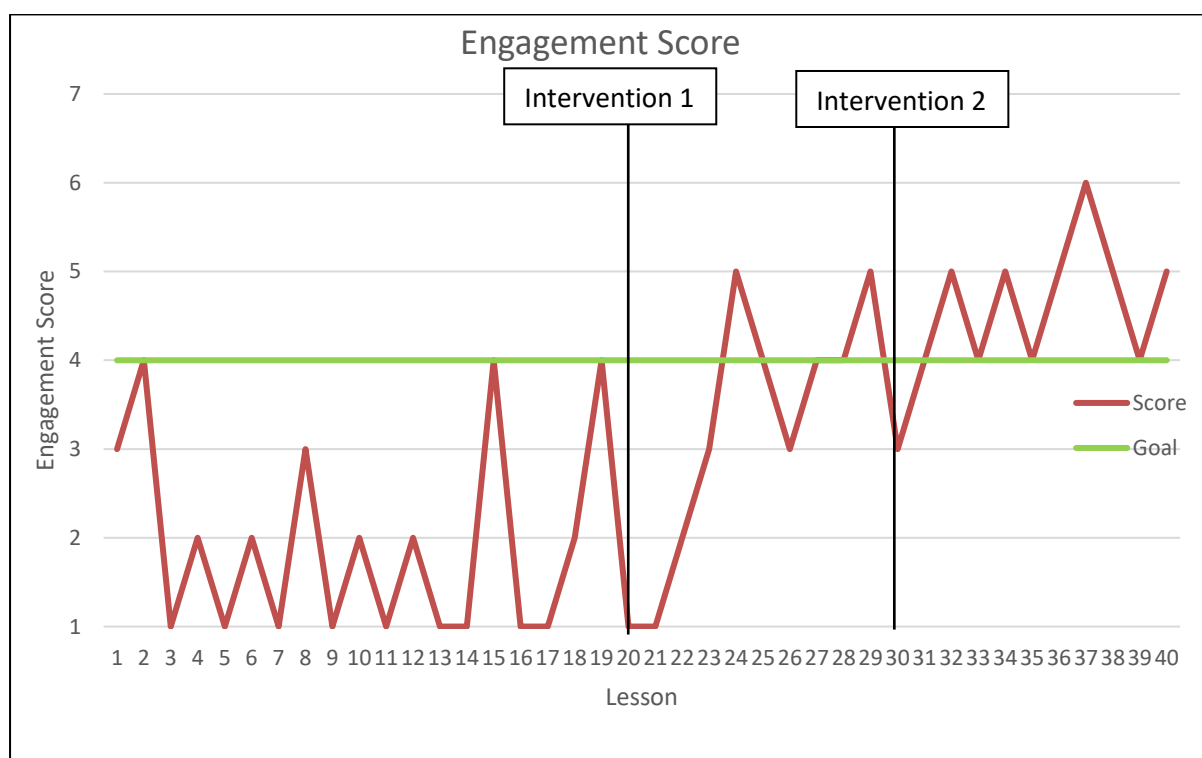
Graph A – Pupil 1's engagement prior to and post intervention

The graph shows the low levels of engagement observed prior to the intervention as well as the frequency of classroom exits (Score of 1). The target score of 5 was shared with the pupil and as the project progressed, they began to reflect on their engagement score at the end of each lesson, expressing pride when it was above 5. It can be seen that there is an obvious improvement in engagement scores following the intervention and regular check-ins with the pupil supported a positive outcome.

Feedback from the learner and observational analysis revealed that enthusiasm about using the support materials increased motivation to succeed in learning and see positive results. Knowing that a lack of engagement would result in the strategies needing to be changed encouraged the pupil to use the materials effectively. Their verbal feedback regarding the support revealed that they felt the support was 'theirs' and wanted to keep them in place

Graph B – Pupil 2's engagement prior to and post interventions.

As before, the low levels of engagement and frequency of classroom exits are seen in this graph. Feedback from Pupil 2 was minimal due to their difficulties in communication, so analysis needed to be primarily observational. As can be seen from the graph, the initial intervention did not prove as effective as hoped but the second intervention brought about more positive results. The learner engaged with the visuals on their desk and completed more work than before the intervention. No unscheduled incidents of the pupil leaving the classroom without the teacher's knowledge were recorded in the post-intervention stage of data collection.

Involving the whole class in the change in pedagogy was vital to ensure support from peers and a feeling of fairness within the class. A conversation with the class revealed they now felt they had an input in any support they required and that it could be individual to them. The targeted pupils showed measured improvement in their engagement following the individualized intervention they helped develop. The findings have shown that empowering pupils in a structured and scaffolded manner can have positive results in engaging them in their learning and allowing them to independently access support materials and strategies to enhance their classroom experience. Giving pupils ownership of their own support has proved very beneficial with the pupils I have worked with. It has given them an enthusiasm for learning and a desire to see the support work, which has in turn increased their engagement in the classroom. It is too early to determine whether or not this will have an impact on their attainment but it is hoped their increased engagement in learning will lead to an increase in their attainment over the coming years, providing subsequent teachers continue to allow them ownership of their learning and required support.

Using the engagement scale as a measurement tool, it can be seen that the introduction of the pupil-led strategies improved the engagement of all pupils involved in the study. The graph shows, particularly with Pupil 1 that the introduction of the support strategies generated an increase in engagement and much of this was with access to their own support strategies. With Pupil 2, results were also positive but took more time as strategies needed to be tried and tested with the learner. It is evident from the results, that the level of impact is dependent on the individual child and therefore it is vital for the teacher to build a relationship with and get to know the pupil so that the development phase can be tailored to the needs of the child.
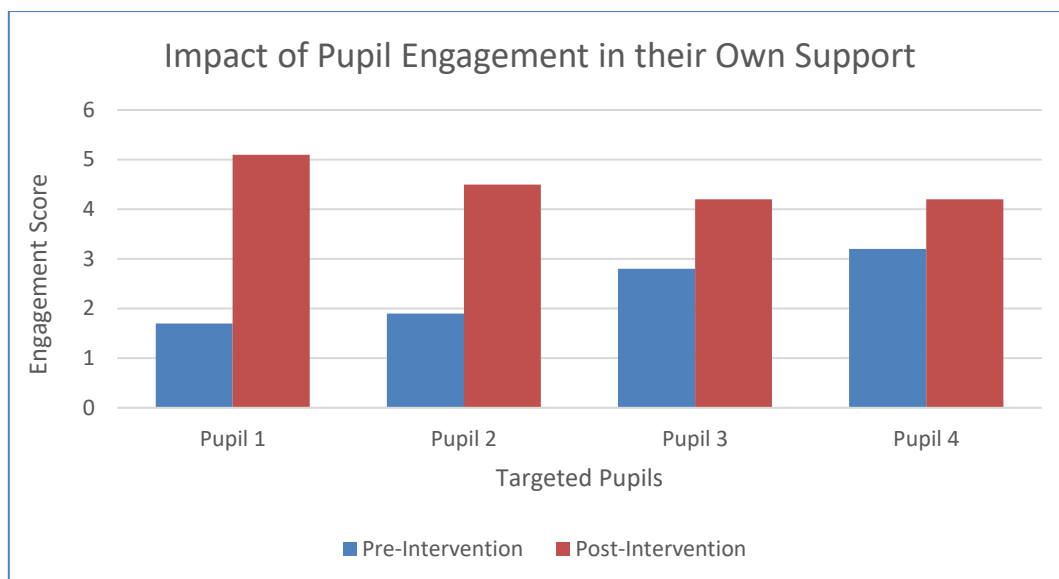
This project has provided some wider insights in addition to the initial focus on self-regulation and accessing support independently. The issue of empowerment has been a frequent subject raised throughout the research reviewed and linked heavily with the development of self-regulation. Within this, the importance of giving pupils a sense of ownership within their learning environment has been highlighted by many, as mentioned previously. The 4 principles of empowerment; meaningfulness, competence, impact and choice as identified by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) became key components in trying to involve the pupils and keep them engaged throughout. Simply involving them in the initial implementation of the support was not enough, it was important to continually consider the pupils' feedback and responses to their support strategies so that they felt that their input mattered.

Results from this study have confirmed the theory that involving pupils in the development and implementation of their own learning will lead to improved engagement (Frymier, Shuman & Houser, 1996; Houser & Frymier, 2009). It was encouraging to see that this can be applied to the development of support strategies as well as learning, to increase engagement and hopefully in time, attainment. Empowerment is a key component in engaging pupils in their learning but also in utilizing their support systems effectively. Involving the class as a whole meant we

could include peers as a part of the support system and not isolate the learners. It is hoped this reinforced social development and involvement in school life (Webster and Blatchford, 2014).

Due to a change in circumstances, further data could not be collected from the class in question as I was moved to a younger class midway through the academic year. However, the change meant a different class, with different pupils with different barriers to their learning. Two pupils were identified as potentially benefitting from individualized classroom-based support and the initial stage of the project was carried out with them. The whole class were introduced to the Hidden Chimp analogy and were more enthusiastic than their older peers to find ways to best control their own chimps. Baseline data was collected by observing the identified pupils, and discussions had with them. As they were younger pupils, it was found that this conversation needed to be more teacher-led, identifying undesirable behaviours and giving the pupils limited strategies to choose from. Without this, the pupils wanted access to all support materials available to them and it was believed that this was due to being overwhelmed with choice and unsure of which strategies would genuinely be of benefit to them. Instead, a calm sequence was established with the whole class as part of a Hidden Chimp lesson. This was primarily to model appropriate strategies that would be available and demonstrate to the targeted pupils how to select strategies that would be of most support to them. Moving classes allowed me the opportunity to try and transfer what I had found with the older class to a younger group of pupils. It was clear that the principle of empowerment was just as effective in engaging pupils in their learning and giving them ownership of their support provided increased successful access of strategies and materials. What was different, however, was the level of teacher-led input in the initial stages as the younger pupils were not as able to identify their own behaviours or identify what triggered these actions.

Despite the short timescales, results for each child that was supported in this way were clear and positive. The graph below shows a summary of the average engagement scores prior to and post interventions and although the exact results vary, all show an improvement.

Impact of Pupil Engagement in their Own Support

A bar chart titled "Impact of Pupil Engagement in their Own Support" with the y-axis labelled "Engagement Score" (scale 0 to 6) and the x-axis labelled "Targeted Pupils". For each pupil, a blue bar (Pre-Intervention) and a red bar (Post-Intervention) are shown:

- Pupil 1: Pre-Intervention ≈ 1.7, Post-Intervention ≈ 5.1
- Pupil 2: Pre-Intervention ≈ 1.9, Post-Intervention ≈ 4.5
- Pupil 3: Pre-Intervention ≈ 2.8, Post-Intervention ≈ 4.2
- Pupil 4: Pre-Intervention ≈ 3.2, Post-Intervention ≈ 4.2

Legend: ■ Pre-Intervention ■ Post-Intervention

The biggest challenge faced during this research was changing classes midway through the year, making completion of the data collection on the targeted pupils impossible. Nevertheless, while the change was initially a disappointing and inconvenient step in completing my project, being able to apply my findings to other pupils so soon became an interesting challenge to overcome. I found that the level of scaffolding required to involve the pupil in devising their own support is dependent on the age and stage of development. My younger pupils were surprisingly receptive to the Hidden Chimp analogy and teaching it as a whole class ensured classmates were supportive of their peers' efforts to remain engaged in lessons and accepting of the individual strategies that were put in place for them.

Conclusions

This research has shown that individualized support for pupils can be used effectively in the classroom to help them benefit from the social aspects of the classroom environment as much as possible. It was found that involving pupils in the development of their support and empowering them to have ownership of the strategies is the most effective way of ensuring pupils are engaged with the assistance and use it to participate fully in their learning. Their engagement with their support strategies was maintained by seeking regular feedback from the pupils on how they felt the strategies were supporting them. Small changes were made when required to reassure the pupils that their impact was valued.

It was also discovered that involving the whole class in lessons that explain everyone's need for occasional support and the need for different people to access different strategies was vital. Understanding equity allowed children to support their classmates and allowed the targeted pupils to feel comfortable accessing their required support in a safe environment. It also gave the rest of the class the confidence to seek support when they required it as the classroom environment was more conducive to providing supportive opportunities for all.

Finally, changing classes during the year allowed for the opportunity to see that while younger pupils require more scaffolded support in identifying and developing the strategies they need to access their learning, they are no less able to benefit from the empowerment and ownership.

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Michelle Simpson

Abstract

Support for learners with self-regulation difficulties is often provided outwith the classroom environment, often by a Support for Learners teacher. The purpose of this investigation was to look at how independently accessed self-regulation support can be effective in supporting learners in their classroom setting. This was principally in order to reduce incidences of targeted pupils leaving the classroom and missing out on important classroom learning and experiences as well as being a fully included member of the class. It was initially designed for a Primary 7 class as a means to prepare them for their transition to high school.

Data was collected on the number of occasions that targeted pupils left the classroom and their engagement in lessons using a 7-point engagement scale. Discussions were then had with the pupils to identify difficulties and possible support strategies that could be provided in the classroom. Once these interventions were in place, data on engagement was again collected and plotted on a graph to identify any changes. Pupil feedback was regularly sought, and teacher feedback was shared with the pupils. The whole class were involved through lessons on emotional health using My Hidden Chimp to support learning. Pupils engaged well with the analogy and were supportive of their classmates using individual strategies to control their own 'chimps'.

Early results showed that the support strategies led to improvements in engagement in key lessons. Research and discussions with the pupils suggest that these positive results are due to the increased feeling of empowerment and ownership given to the learner. Often support materials and strategies are provided for pupils but rarely with them. This project has shown that involving pupils in the development of their own support can increase engagement and motivation to succeed in learning effectively. Involving the whole class ensured inclusion and led to other pupils accessing independent support within the classroom as well.

Appendix A

<u>Pupil A</u>

	Number of Occasions	Lessons
Week 1	III	Numeracy, Numeracy, HWB,
Week 2	IIII	Numeracy, Numeracy, Numeracy, Literacy, IDL
Week 3	III	Numeracy, Numeracy, HWB (PE)

<u>Pupil B</u>

	Number of Occasions	Lessons
Week 1	III	Literacy, Numeracy, IDL
Week 2	IIII	Literacy, Literacy, HWB, Numeracy
Week 3	IIII	Literacy, Literacy, Numeracy, Numeracy

Appendix B

Engagement in Learning

7	Listened to input, started activity & completed all of task – with or without **independently** accessed strategies
6	Listened to input, started and completed task with **reminders** to use agreed strategies
5	Listened to input, completed **some** of task using agreed strategies **independently**
4	Listened to input, completed **some** of task using agreed strategies with **reminders**
3	Listened to input, completed **none** of task
2	In room but unable or unwilling to access support strategies. No work completed
1	Disengaged from lesson, refusal to enter room or left room. Refusal to access support strategies. No work completed

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Appendix C

Assess Plan Do Review planning sheet

Pupil/Group's name Group 1……………..………………………

Class……P7……………………………………………………….

Assess

Pupil 1:
Self-regulation difficulties. Often leaves classroom when things not going well. Work not completed
Interest in learning
Needs strategies to support focus and completion of work – particularly if pupil feels injustice or is dealing with a playground issue.
On track to achieve second level with support.
Lacking confidence in own abilities

Pupil 2:
Difficulty communicating with adults
Work not completed
Leaving classroom without informing teacher
Lack of written evidence to support attainment or abilities
Lacking confidence in own abilities

Plan

Support strategies in classroom to be put in place for pupil to access independently if/when required. Over time, strategies to be reduced if possible.
Outcome: Increased engagement in learning, more work completed. Remain in class more often

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Do		**Review**	
Actions Taken	**Date**	**Outcome**	**Date**
Baseline observation evidence gathered using Engagement in Learning Scale Data gathered over 3 weeks	11/11/19	Data gathered and plotted on run graph. Goal set	29/12/19
Met with pupils to discuss difficulties and agree possible strategies Pupil 1: individual area for calming (den); planned opportunities to leave class for brain breaks; use of hidden chimp to explain emotions, scorecard Pupil 2: No input from pupil. Agreed to try visuals on desk for learning targets	2/12/19	Engagement in Learning recorded and plotted on graph. Pupil 1: Much improved. Increased confidence, acknowledgement of behaviours, recognising emotions and accessing support with reminders. Using den so not leaving classroom. Much more work completed Pupil 2: Began using visuals to let teacher know when leaving the classroom (not effective)	19/12/19

and offer choice of place to complete work Review impact in 3 weeks		Used visuals to show teacher where he wanted to complete work at start of lesson. Improvement in communication with teacher but still little or no communication with other staff. Slightly more work completed	
Continue with Pupil 1 strategies Introduce Blether Board with Pupil 2 to encourage communication Review 3 weeks into new term 24/1/20	19/12/19	Change in class	