

Playdough Therapy

Intent

At River View Primary School, we use Playdough Therapy as a therapeutic intervention to support children's emotional wellbeing, communication, self-regulation and social development. The sensory and creative nature of playdough provides a safe, non-threatening medium through which children can explore thoughts, feelings and experiences that they may find difficult to express verbally.

Through structured and child-led activities, we aim to develop emotional literacy, resilience, self-awareness and confidence. Playdough Therapy enables children to communicate and process emotions through creativity and play, whilst developing positive relationships with trusted adults and peers. The intervention is particularly beneficial for children experiencing anxiety, emotional regulation difficulties, social communication needs, low self-esteem or difficulties expressing emotions.

By providing opportunities for reflection, discussion and creative expression, we seek to remove barriers to learning and support children to develop the emotional skills required to engage successfully within school and wider social environments.

Implementation

Playdough Therapy is delivered through individual or small-group sessions facilitated by trained staff. Sessions provide opportunities for children to explore emotions, experiences and relationships through the use of playdough-based activities, storytelling, discussion and reflection.

Activities may be adult-directed or child-led depending on the individual needs of the child. Staff use open-ended questioning, modelling and therapeutic conversations to encourage communication, emotional expression and self-reflection. The sensory nature of playdough provides a calming and regulating experience whilst supporting meaningful interaction and discussion.

Principle	Purpose	Examples in Practice	Expected Outcome
Emotional Expression	Support children to communicate feelings	Creating models to represent emotions or experiences	Increased emotional literacy

Therapeutic Conversation	Promote reflection and discussion	Talking about creations and their meaning	Improved communication and self-awareness
Self-Regulation	Support emotional regulation	Sensory exploration and calming activities	Increased emotional regulation
Creativity and Problem Solving	Encourage flexible thinking	Open-ended modelling activities	Increased confidence and resilience
Relationship Building	Develop trust and connection	Shared activities with adults and peers	Improved social interaction and wellbeing

Examples of Playdough Therapy Activities

Area of Development	Example Activities	Resources
Emotional Literacy	Create an emotion monster or feeling face	Playdough, emotion cards
Self-Awareness	Model something that makes you happy, worried or proud	Playdough, visual prompts
Communication	Explain and describe creations	Playdough, discussion prompts
Social Development	Collaborative model building	Playdough, shared resources
Emotional Regulation	Sensory play and calming activities	Playdough, sensory tools

Impact

Children will demonstrate increased confidence in expressing their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Through regular opportunities for therapeutic play and discussion, pupils will develop improved emotional literacy, self-awareness and communication skills.

As children's emotional understanding develops, they will demonstrate greater resilience, improved emotional regulation and increased confidence in seeking support when needed. Improved wellbeing and self-regulation will support engagement in learning, participation in social situations and the development of positive relationships with peers and adults.

Ultimately, Playdough Therapy will contribute to improved emotional wellbeing, enabling children to feel safe, understood and ready to learn.