

# Working Together to... Build Positive Relationships



Lisa Moore; Head Teacher (Howden St Andrews, West Lothian) and Gillian Amos, NHS Lothian

'A trusted adult' project is a collaboration with NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council Education Services, specifically the St Margaret's Cluster. Evidence suggests young people are experiencing more mental health and emotional wellbeing problems and the waiting lists for treatment are very high. It is also recognised that not all young people are pathologically unwell; often they need an adult to talk to help them process and regulate their emotions.

Evidence suggests that having just one consistent and trusted adult throughout life can prevent young people developing and experiencing mental health problems. 'A trusted adult' approach brought together head and nominated teachers across the cluster to form a steering group to drive forward the programme within the cluster. This storyboard will focus specifically on the work at Howden St Andrews.

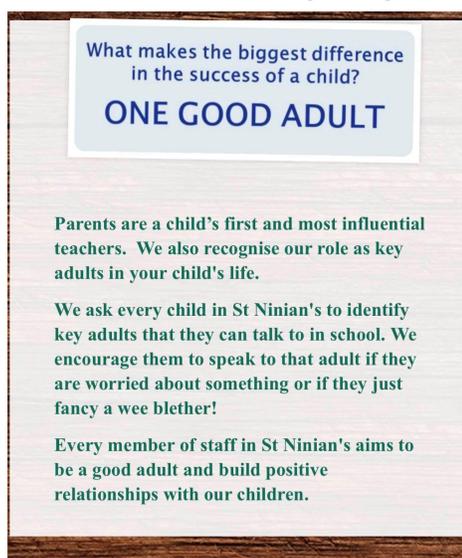
**Aim: To decrease the number of violent incidents at Howden St Andrews by 50% by June 2019**

## Method

The steering group developed a cluster driver diagram and each school focused on a particular area with an overall aim of increasing the number of children who reported as green on the self reported wellbeing indicators. Howden St Andrews specifically focused on reducing violent incidents and recorded a baseline before beginning the intervention.

## Process Change

The primary schools tried different approaches to improve child-adult relationships and also communicated this with parents as the child's first and foremost trusted adult. St Ninians and St Nicholas introduced wellbeing check in's which included asking children who their trusted adult were and supporting staff to recognise their role as a trusted adult. Howden St Andrews introduced a positive behaviour strategy which all staff have signed up too, as well as daily mindfulness sessions for the pupils.



## Achievements

There has been culture change within the schools where staff have really come on board to develop new skills to manage behaviour where they have had to be consistent, calm and unshockable and provided containment for children when they are in distress. This new approach has created a calm and consistent approach to managing behaviour.

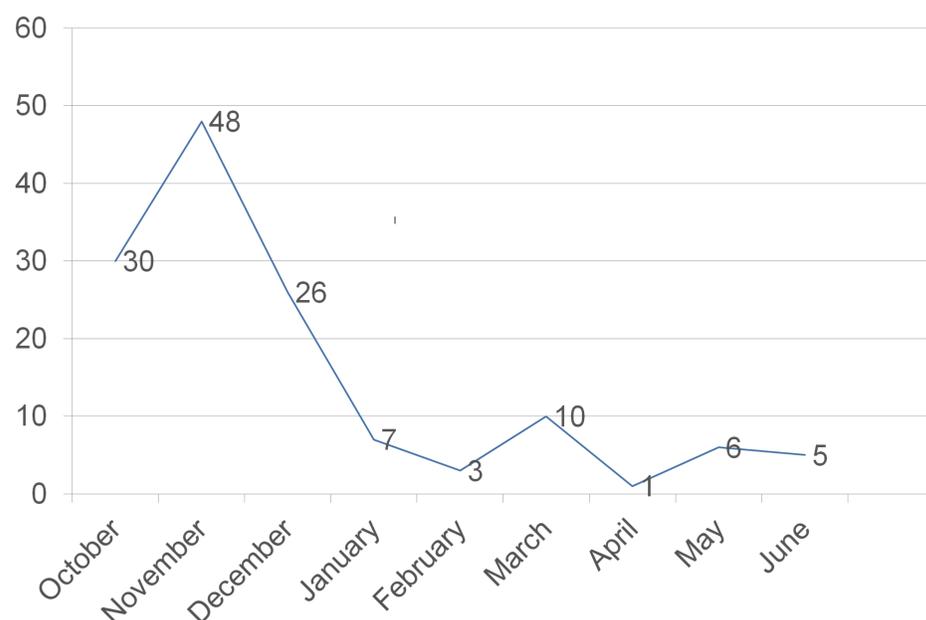
## Key Learning Points

**OWNERSHIP:** The cluster approach worked really well, this was kicked off with a full cluster event where 200 staff attended. There was a consultation as part of this that helped ensure staff were on board.  
**PARTNERSHIP:** NHS Lothian provided input on the evidence base at this event and training (improvement methodology and mental health training) and support to the improvement projects. The schools all took ownership of their 'test areas' and met regularly to discuss progress.



## Results

Number of violent incidence at Howden St Andrews is shown in the run chart below (new approach introduced in January):



## Conclusions

Violent outbursts are a sign of stress (fight or flight physiology) and changing the adults approach is enough to change the child's reaction. Children cannot learn when they are in a state of stress therefore we should start to see an improvement in attainment, as well as mental wellbeing, through using this approach. Having a nurturing environment where children are encouraged to talk and behaviour is managed positively is providing key life skills to develop resilience for our children and young people. Events were held for parents to inform them of this approach to ensure they were part of the journey. These were positively received.

## Scale / Spread

St Margaret's cluster are developing a package of successful approaches to build positive Relationships.

**Scaled up:** James Young Cluster are now developing their 'Trusted Adult' project based on the learning at St Margaret's

**Spread:** this is gradually being spread to other clusters in West Lothian with Whitburn coming on board in January and Bathgate cluster after Easter.

