

Funding for teacher classroom management study

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Disruptive behaviour in the classroom has an adverse effect on both teachers and pupils. It is a common source of stress for teachers and often a catalyst for leaving the profession. For pupils it may affect mental health, academic attainment and adversely impact on all children in a classroom.

Researchers from the [Child Health](#) Group at the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry (PCMD), University of Exeter, have received funding of £1.7m to test the effectiveness of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) course, a US initiative. The course has the potential to transform the classroom experience for both pupils and teachers, reduce the number of exclusions from school, assist the most vulnerable children in our society and provide cost-savings by reducing demands on educational support and [mental health](#) services.

The project is titled The Supporting Teachers And children in Schools (STARS) study and it is supported by the National Institute for Health Research Peninsula Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (NIHR PenCLAHRC).

The research team has already carried out an initial feasibility study with a small number of primary schools. For STARS they will work with teachers from 80 primary schools in the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay local education authorities, starting in September this year. Teachers will be from Reception to Year Four, which means that the pupils will be aged four to nine years when the study starts. The study will run for five

years in total.

STARS will test whether a teacher's attendance at a TCM course will improve a child's socio-emotional well-being; his or her academic attainment; the teacher's emotional well-being; and the teacher's belief that they are able to manage behaviour in the classroom more effectively and less stressfully.

The research team will measure socio-emotional well-being using the well-known and robust Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. This will be completed by teachers and the parents of their pupils before and after the TCM course, and at one and two years after that. Academic progress will be measured using the National Curriculum standard levels used in all state schools. The team will also measure teachers' sense of professional effectiveness, their emotional well-being and whether they feel work-related stress to see if the TCM course leaves teachers feeling more confident, motivated and less stressed.

Through a mixture of focus groups and interviews the team will find out from teachers, head teachers and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) how useful they think TCM is, whether they use it in their practice and/or schools, and how it fits with other sources of support for emotional and behavioural difficulties. They will speak to them shortly after they attend the course and a year later. Using questionnaires completed by parents and SENCOs, backed up by detailed interviews with some parents, STARS will find out about additional help used by families concerning their child's well being. This seeks to identify any cost-savings that TCM might produce by reducing demands on educational support and mental health services.

One teacher who took part in the initial feasibility study was Ruth Dixon from Haywards Primary School in Crediton, Devon. She said: "The three main things that we took from TCM were: very practical ideas that we

were able to take straight from the course to the classroom; lots of creative ways to do things, maybe with a different emphasis from our usual practices; and the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas and experiences with teachers from other schools. Without doubt the course helped us to improve communication with our pupils and their parents, to focus on the positives and to introduce new policies that could be used by colleagues throughout the school. We are looking forward to seeing the results of the full study."

STARS is led by Dr. Tamsin Ford, Clinical Senior Lecturer at PCMD. She said: "Our initial study showed that TCM has the potential to be a powerful and effective tool in education in the UK: by taking that forward into a larger study we hope to be able to draw conclusions that will be of benefit to teachers, their [pupils](#) and their parents. Certainly TCM could well be the catalyst for ways of working that support the most vulnerable children in our society within the education system and which motivate and empower [teachers](#). Not only would this be a worthwhile investment in human terms, but could also result in financial savings through better teacher retention and decreased demands on educational support and mental health services."

Provided by The Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry

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