



Aims of the session

- To introduce a solution-focused approach
- To apply solution-focused thinking to changing behaviour and attendance patterns
- To identify what is working well in school



Slide 2

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A solution-focused approach helps tackle problems with behaviour, attendance and bullying by:

- helping individuals or groups define what they want
- identifying what already works, even a little
- recognising existing strengths in practice and looking back on past successes
- helping to make decisions about what small step could be taken next



Identifying strengths

Staff role is to:

- use questions to help the individual focus
- amplify small success through questioning
- ensure that the description of the strength is as concrete and detailed as possible
- identify the small things the individual does well
- give feedback constructively, objectively and genuinely
- reinforce identified strengths in order to increase the likelihood of their being used in the future



Goals

Some goals are more helpful (i.e. achievable) than others.

The most helpful goals are:

- **R**ealistic
- **A**ction-orientated
- **I**mmEDIATE
- **S**ignificant
- **E**mpowering



Suppose tonight you were to go home from school and have a normal evening. You go to bed and fall asleep and during the night a miracle happens. Pupils who are disengaged become motivated and are keen to take part in learning. But you don't know this miracle has happened as you were asleep. So, tomorrow morning, what is the first thing you will notice that tells you something is different?

- What else do you notice?
- What will you be doing that's different?
- What will the pupils be doing?
- What will the pupils be saying to you?
- What will they be saying to each other?





- Concentrate on past success and the future without the problem
- Gain respect by empowering people to use their own resources to manage their own lives as they want them
- Allow school staff to be the 'experts' and be in control of their future
- Avoid being problem-focused – while acknowledging a problem, remember that the solution lies in a different direction. Problem talk alone can be demoralising and disempowering



Task 1

Ask participants to work in pairs and describe to each other a professional activity they have undertaken recently about which they feel quite pleased. Ask the pairs to consider the questions that enable their partner to be specific about the area they are describing. One of the pair should be encouraged to identify the skills and strengths they utilised to make this a success. Ask who else may have contributed to this success.

Ask the pairs to consider other times they have used these skills effectively. Ask them to describe what other people might see if they were using these skills effectively.

Ask pairs to consider how they would give each other feedback on their strengths.

Take brief feedback on the process and the skills that have emerged and, if time, ask participants to look at **handouts 1a** and **1b**. These examples relate to systems to combat poor attendance and increased incidence of bullying.

Ask participants to see how the generic skills introduced in Task 1 can be used to identify the strengths in these more specific situations.

Task 2

Ask participants to think of specific examples of behaviour or attendance difficulties or bullying problems that they have encountered inside or outside the classroom. Ask them to record each one on a separate blue sticky note in the form of a complaint, for example – ‘Pupils in my class constantly shout out in lessons.’

Take five or six examples and record them on the flipchart. Explain that it is because of the very nature of issues and difficulties that they can often be conveyed in the context of a complaint. Ask participants to work in pairs and change the complaints listed on their blue sticky notes into goals. Record the goals on yellow sticky notes. Give an example – ‘Pupils in my class put their hands up to answer questions.’

Record on a second flipchart feedback on the possible goals for the five or six complaints recorded on the first flipchart. Ask participants to look at the goals and discuss:

- immediate feelings;
- any questions that are beginning to emerge.

Allow 2 minutes. Take brief feedback and emphasise that, by translating a difficulty or issue into a goal, what emerges is:

- a vision of how it could be;
- questions to prompt movement towards goals;
- the drive towards focusing on possible solutions.

Task 3

Ask participants to work in pairs and look at the goals which are listed on **handout 2**. See whether the goals match the criteria on **slide 4**. Allow 5 minutes and discuss how some of them may be adjusted to meet the criteria more clearly.

Take brief feedback and give time to consider whether these goals are going to support positive whole school practice and how. If not, adjust the wording of the goals.

Take feedback from pairs on:

- adjustment to goals;
- which goals are more likely to have a significant impact on practice.

Ensure some pairs are working on the goals previously recorded on the yellow sticky notes on the flipchart.

Task 4

Exploring exceptions – attendance

Ask participants to see how they may use exceptions in the attendance of one group of pupils to focus on transferring positive outcomes to other groups of pupils.

Give out **handout 4**, which lists a number of actions that were taken in a school to successfully encourage:

- a group of Key Stage 3 boys to attend school on a regular basis;
- a group of Year 8 girls to use appropriate language at lunchtimes.

Ask participants to select one of the actions from **handout 4** that is proving to contribute to the maintained attendance and behaviour of this group of pupils.

Use **handout 5a** to encourage participants to explore why this intervention/action is working, how attendance/behaviour is being managed and whether there are strategies that can transfer to other areas. Use the examples on **handouts 5b** and **5c** as a model if necessary.

Take brief feedback, allowing participants to highlight skills required by staff to manage these strategies effectively.

Task 5

Ask a number of participants to volunteer to stand up at the front of the room to create a 1–10 scale. Identify one end of the continuum as being 1 on the scale and representing a school in which pupils feel extremely threatened by the bullying that is taking place at unsupervised and unstructured times in the school day. Identify the other end of the continuum as being 10 on the scale and representing a school where pupils feel 100% safe and secure at all times in all areas of school.

Ask participants to take on the role of a pupil in their own school and to position themselves along this virtual continuum to reflect their current level of security in school. Once everyone has located themselves along the continuum, begin to ask questions to probe for reasons about why they have placed themselves at a particular point on the scale.

- Explain what is happening in your school that would put you at point 3.
- How might you be feeling at point 6?
- What point could you have been on last year/term/week?
- What can the school do to move you up to the next point on the scale?
- How do you manage to stay on site at lunchtime if you are at point 1?
- What kind of support do you need to move to the next point?
- What common practice will we see when you are at point 9?

Discuss how this activity could be used with both staff and pupils to identify bullying issues and possible solutions in school.

Task 6a

Ask participants, in pairs, to use the technique exemplified in **handouts 6a** and **6b** and work together on an identified individual or shared issue. On A4 paper, produce a scale from 1–10 and decide the indicators for 1 and 10. Put the following tasks on a flipchart. Allow 5 minutes to complete.

- Where are you now? Give reasons.
- What contributes to your being at this point?
- Share outcomes with another pair.

Point out that the activity is more helpful when the response is plotted around the middle of the scale because this indicates that there are past successes on which to build. It is also possible to readily visualise significant progress.

Task 6b

Ask participants to imagine that they are now one point further up the scale. Ask them to consider the following questions (record on a flipchart).

- What is different?
- How do you know you are just one point up, and no further?
- How did you get there?
- What did others do to contribute/help/support?

Give participants time for individual reflection (2 minutes) and then ask them to share responses in their pairs. Summarise the importance of focusing in detail to explore what is working using exception-finding questions.

Task 7

Explain that all pupils fit on a continuum of engagement and motivation. In this session the focus will be on pupils who are at risk of being disengaged. The aim is to move these pupils from disengagement to being keen learners. Pupils will need to move through the stages of being passive learners to receptive learners before they reach full motivation.

Inform participants that they will now explore the miracle question in relation to this issue. They will need to use their imagination. Invite them to relax while the scene is set. Read the scenario on **slide 5** and then display the slide.

Ask participants to work in pairs and consider their responses to the questions on the slide. Ask participants to consider how they might choose to use the miracle question with both staff and pupils when discussing preferred futures and focusing on solutions without spending too much time on the problem.