



Supervision in education

Ten top tips for setting up
staff supervision groups in schools

INTRODUCTION

This resource has been written to support schools and other professionals understand how a programme of 'supervision' can benefit staff and pupil wellbeing as part of a whole school approach.

It has been written in conjunction with Hollie Edwards, the Director of Mental Health and Wellbeing at Herne Bay Junior School in south east England, based on their experiences of establishing a successful model of supervision.

Hollie's 'top tips' are designed to help you understand the benefits of supervision in school settings, how it is different to line management, and includes suggestions to ensure it is run in a safe, supportive and sustainable way. We hope you find it useful.

Alongside this resource, you can also access a video of Hollie explaining more on each top tip [here](#). The time at which the tip appears in the video is given below each tip.



1 WHO WILL FACILITATE SUPERVISION?

Think about who is suitable for this important job. Could it be your mental health/pastoral/inclusion lead? Consider their relationship with staff. Someone too senior may put someone off talking openly. Equally, it must be someone respected and professional. Those attending must feel safe and confident to share. Does the person have adequate training and an understanding of supervision? Do they receive appropriate supervision themselves? In both cases this should include an awareness of the function of supervision and different supervision models.

TIME ON VIDEO: 4.17

2 WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SUPERVISION AND WHO IS IT FOR?

It is vital that the purpose of supervision is understood, and agreed upon, by the supervisor and the school's senior leadership team. Discuss this before you introduce it to staff.

Anyone can benefit from supervision but who will receive supervision in your school? Time, class cover and other factors all need to be thought about.

TIME ON VIDEO: 7.06

3 UNDERSTANDING SUPERVISION

Explain what supervision is to staff as they may not have experienced it, or even heard of it, before. Delivering a staff meeting whilst you are in the planning stages is a good idea. This would be a suitable time for staff to ask questions and raise any concerns. Be clear that 'supervision' is very different from 'line management', and focuses on building a safe space to support the development of knowledge, skills, confidence and reflective practice in the workplace. Take this opportunity to explain that supervision is compulsory – rather than optional! This should help ensure everyone gets the most out of it.

TIME ON VIDEO: 9.32

4 SETTING UP YOUR SUPERVISION GROUPS

This is a big one and will initially take the most of your time as there is a lot to consider and plan for. Getting this right saves time later on!

- It is useful to think about the name of it. Is 'supervision' the right name for your school?
- How many people will be in each group? We'd suggest a maximum of five – any more may make it hard to give enough time to everyone.
- How many groups will there be? This will depend on the school size and which members of staff are receiving supervision.
- How often will they meet? This should be a minimum of six times throughout the school year (ideally once every half term).
- How long will the sessions be? 1.5 hours minimum to 2 hours maximum, depending on the group size. It may be that specific time is set aside for each group member to discuss issues, although this should be flexible according to the need in each session
- When will they take place? Time is valuable in school – what will work best for the school and staff attending?
- Consider part-time and job-share staff. Some people do not work on the same day as others. Run supervision groups at the beginning and end of the week to include everyone e.g. Monday and Thursday.
- Think about the relationships between staff. Who works well together, who doesn't? Split year groups where possible so individuals build relationships with different people, and hear from those they might not otherwise, to gain the most benefit.

TIME ON VIDEO: 14.48



5 TIMETABLE

Once you have chosen suitable days and times for the sessions, remember to check upcoming events in the school diary such as staff training, parents evenings, exam dates and so on, to ensure supervision sessions do not clash.

Send out a supervision timetable for the year ahead. Ask those attending to put their supervision dates in their diary and inform you immediately if they cannot make any of their sessions. If they are absent from school on the day of their supervision session, ask that you are informed as soon as possible (otherwise you may be left waiting for them when they do not arrive!). Send the timetable to office staff and senior leadership team so they are aware of the dates. Follow up with an email from the headteacher to reinforce the importance and value of supervision – and a reminder that it is an expectation for all to attend!

TIME ON VIDEO: 18.34



6 STAFF FEEDBACK

Staff feedback is crucial to ensure the process of supervision is effective. To evaluate supervision, create a staff questionnaire before supervision starts. It is also useful to do a mid and end-of-year evaluation. Consider the questions you might want to ask.

Here are some examples for the staff questionnaire before it begins:

- What is your understanding of supervision?
- How do you feel about attending supervision?
- Do you have any concerns?

Here are some examples for the mid and end-of-year evaluations:

- Are you finding supervision useful or not? Why?
- How do you feel in your group?
- How might your experience be improved?

TIME ON VIDEO: 21.29



7 ENVIRONMENT

It is important to use a room which is suitable for supervision. It should be a neutral and confidential space that remains the same. Try to make it as comfortable as possible, e.g. the chairs and the right temperature, offering a hot drink at the start of the session and have water on the table. Ensure there is a sign on the door to indicate the room is being used for a confidential meeting and no one must enter or disturb.

TIME ON VIDEO: 27.80



8 CONTRACT

At the beginning of the first session with each group, set a group contract. This should include:

- The boundaries and limitations of confidentiality
 - for those in the group.
 - for the supervisor or facilitator.

Clarify what information will be passed on, if any, and under what circumstances? How and to whom?

- Clarify subjects which may be discussed. Although supervision is a work-based discussion, it may also include how work impacts on staff personally and in their private lives. Trust, respect and safety are key.
- Clarify who will be responsible for timekeeping.
- Clarify who will be responsible for note-taking.
- Respect – allowing each person the opportunity to speak, respecting the opinions of others and not mentioning names of colleagues outside of the group.
- Will mobile phones be allowed in the room? If so, should they be switched off or be on silent?

Ask if anyone would like to add, change or comment on these points. Remember, it is a contract for the group, owned by the group. The contract should be re-negotiated each academic year.

TIME ON VIDEO: 31.39

9 CHECK-IN/OUT

Start each session with a check-in and end with a check-out. This informs the supervisor, and the rest of the group, how each member is feeling at that moment. They can say just one word or it may take longer. It may be useful to ask participants how they feel on a 1-10 scale, where 1 is low/negative and 10 is high/positive. Each person and group is different – be flexible enough for the group to feel comfortable, whilst also keeping a structure and boundaries as they create a feeling of safety.

TIME ON VIDEO: 34.22

10 PREPARING FOR SUPERVISION AND REFLECTION

Encourage every member of staff to prepare for supervision sessions by thinking about what they want to discuss before the session.

Additionally, at the end of each session, encourage staff to reflect on the process before they rush back to work. Ask staff to consider what they have learned and how they might use that learning in the future. Reflection and awareness are key and should be encouraged in supervision. Typically, school staff will think about what was discussed during the session but it is important they also consider how the process made them feel.

TIME ON VIDEO: 37.44



About the Charlie Waller Trust

The Charlie Waller Trust was created by the Waller family in 1997 in response to the loss of their son and brother Charlie to suicide.

We believe the issue of mental health in our young people represents one of the greatest challenges of our generation. Our mission is to educate young people and those with responsibility for them – parents and carers, teachers, employers, GPs and nurses – about their mental health and wellbeing.

We do this through working with schools, colleges, universities and workplaces. We deliver training, resources and consultancy, working in partnership with organisations to help them embed a culture of mental wellbeing.

Our focus is on supporting all young people, throughout their journey from primary school age to the early years of their working lives.

Our approach is positive, focusing on prevention and early intervention; it is proven – all our work is based on sound clinical evidence; and it is practical – we offer strategies and tools to help people care for their mental health.

SUPPORTING US

If you have found this resource useful please consider donating to help us continue our work



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