

# Can Solution Focused Interventions be Delivered by Non-Specialist Practitioners in Schools to Support Pupils with their Behaviour?

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## BACKGROUND

Schools are required to deliver **early intervention** to support **pupils' mental health** (Department of Health, 2018). There is a need to establish effective interventions as delivered by **non-specialists in schools**.

**Solution focused brief therapy (SFBT)** and **solution focused approaches (SFAs)** have been delivered in schools to promote **internalising and externalising** pupil outcomes (Kim & Franklin, 2009). There has been **limited exploration** of the effectiveness of an **SFA** when delivered by **non-specialist school staff** (Galbraith & Alexander, 2005; Franklin, Streeter, Kim, & Tripodi, 2007; Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007; Kvarme et al., 2010).

## METHOD

This study employed a **single case experimental design with multiple baselines**. The participants were **four Year 5 and 6 pupils** from mainstream schools.

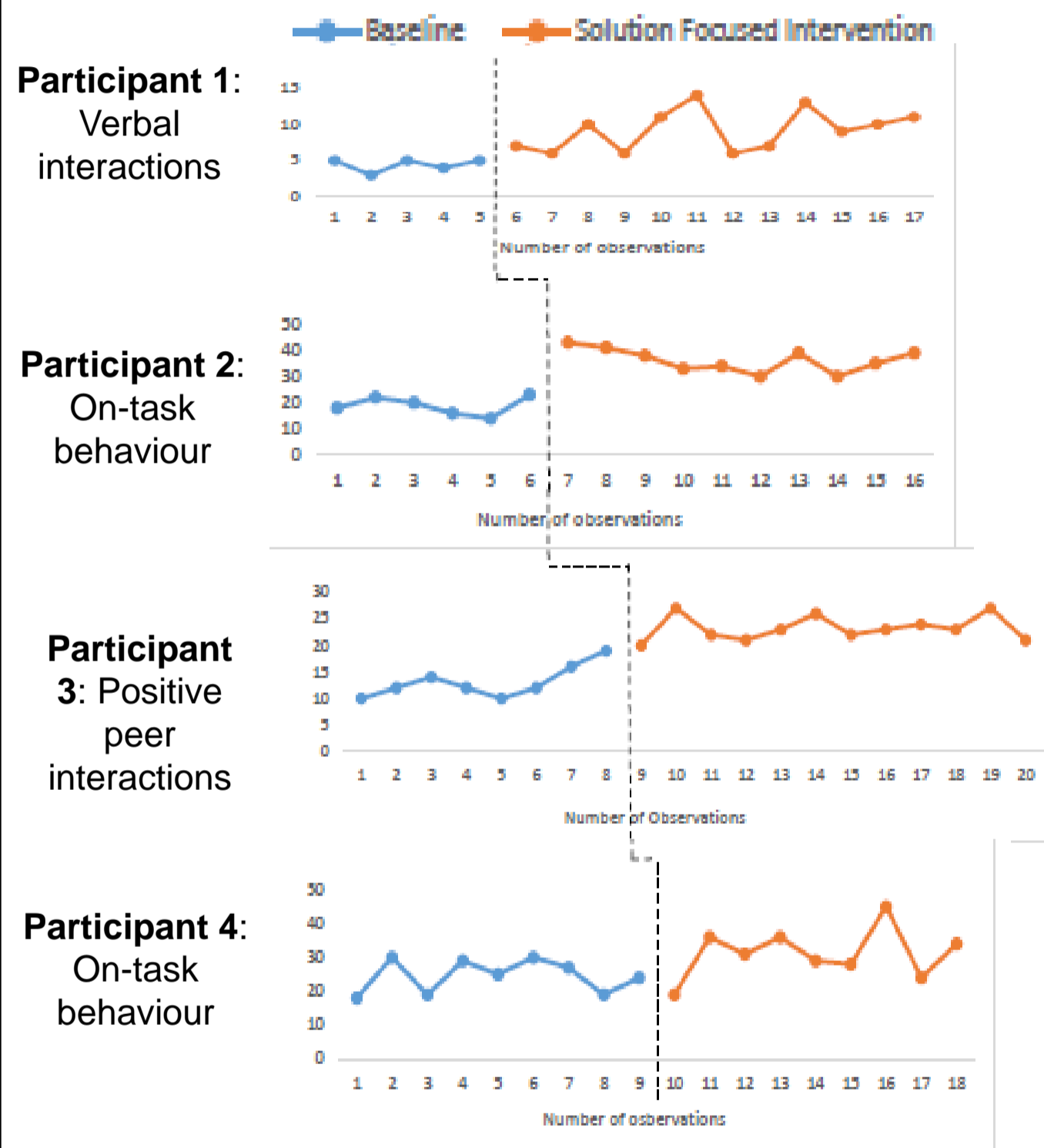
- A specific **positive behaviour** for each pupil was observed before and during the intervention. Analysis: Tau-U and Improvement Rate Difference.
- Pre and post **questionnaires of externalising behaviour** using the Brief Problem Monitor (Achenbach et al., 2011) were collected from pupil, parent and a teacher. Analysis: The Reliable Change Index.
- **Videos** of one session per pupil were analysed to determine the **fidelity** to the manual and **validity** of the **solution focused conversation**.

The **solution focused intervention (SFI)** used was:

- **Manualised** by the researcher based on key SFBT research and theory (Woods et al., 2010; Bavelas et al., 2013)
- **4 to 5 sessions** for an average of 20.24 minutes
- **Delivered by non-specialist school staff**, supported with training and offered supervision.

## RESULTS – Behaviour

**RQ1: Can the SFI impact upon positive behaviour?**



**Effect size findings for specific positive behaviours:**

- Participants 1 and 2: **Large/very large** effect
- Participant 3: **Medium – large/very large** effect
- Participant 4: **Weak – small/questionable** effect

**RQ2: Does the SFI affect externalising behaviour?**

**Externalising behaviour** pre and post questionnaires:

- Significant reduction of **participant 3 parent** scores
- Significant reduction of **participant 4 teacher** scores

## RESULTS – Fidelity and Validity

**RQ3: Can non-specialist school staff follow the manualised intervention to hold an effective solution focused conversation with a pupil? - Video analysis**

- **Fidelity** to specific questions was **'low'** for all participants. **Fidelity to SFBT elements** was **'moderate'** for participants 1, 2 and 4 and **'high'** for participant 3.
- The **therapeutic alliance** was **'high'** for participants 1, 2 and 3 and **'moderate'** for participant 4.
- All participants highlighted at least one **key moment of change** and an **unexpected response** to a question.

## CONCLUSION

- Non-specialist school staff were able to **apply elements from the manual appropriately** to have a **positive impact on a specific behaviour for 3 participants**.
- **Limited support** was provided for the SFI in reducing **externalising behaviour** of two participants.
- The manualised intervention supported the practitioners to hold a **solution focused conversation** with some fidelity and to develop aspects of a therapeutic alliance.

## IMPLICATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

- This SFI has the potential to be delivered by non-specialist practitioners, however **extended support is needed** for future practitioners. **Educational psychologists** would be well-placed to provide training and ongoing support.
- Further research of the SFI in **group-based randomised experimental research with larger samples** is needed to establish its effectiveness.
- The **measure of fidelity** could be applied in further research.