

Proposal to teach the Alexander Technique to Reception Classes at Philip Lane Harris Academy

Alexander Technique practitioners have for a long time assisted people in overcoming their habitual use of excessive tension when both at rest and in activity.

Mr FM Alexander, who developed the Alexander Technique (AT), realised the potential the technique had in relation to children, and for this reason founded a primary school in London in 1924. He also foresaw the necessity for modern society to equip future generations with the skills to physically and mentally look after themselves, in a world of ever increasing complexity and stress.

Many private schools, for example Uppingham, Sunningdale, and Eton, utilise the skills learned in the Alexander Technique, including it in their curriculums. I would like to bring this powerful technique into the state school system, allowing children of all backgrounds to benefit from it.

Main goals of the project:

- For the children to learn more about themselves both physically and mentally, through simple, enjoyable games and stories.
- To equip the reception teachers, and teaching assistants with the basic skills and language, to carry on working with core Alexander Technique concepts with the children in the months afterwards.
- To work responsively to the children's needs, both in groups and individually in the classroom.
- To evaluate the impact of the my lessons through speaking with the children and teachers, as well as monitoring the children's early learning goals.
- To develop and deepen my own experience and knowledge.

Anticipated benefits:

- For the children to start to become more aware of their bodies, and for different thoughts and ideas on how they use their bodies to become apparent to them.
- For the children to begin to learn methods that will help them let go of excessive tension.
- For children to experience using these skills in various everyday activities.
- For teachers to have a space to observe their class and discover for themselves how the new skills change both the class dynamic, and the individual potential of the children.

- Other possible anticipated benefits such as being more imaginative, bonding more socially, more calm behaviour, increased ability to focus, more imaginative play. This was what happened when I worked with Oak class from September 12 until April 13. The attached document shows how the Spring Being Imaginative percentages of Oak class was quite different to Ash class at Philip Lane Harris Academy, N15. The teachers put that down to my intervention.

Proposed work

- To work for 2 hours with both the teachers and teaching assistants of the reception classes for 3 consecutive weeks. A recent Alexander Technique graduate (with full CRB check) would be able to assist me for these sessions and we will give individual AT lessons as part of the work.
- To work with each class for 1 1/2 hours over 6 consecutive weeks. This would involve working individually with students but the majority of the time working with the whole class. A recent graduate will be able to assist during these sessions as well.
- After each week's sessions, I would like to spend at least 30 minutes with the teachers when we could discuss what came up from the session. I would hope to get vital feedback in these session in order to fine tune my work to support their needs in future sessions.
- At the end of the 6 weeks I will evaluate the project and produce a short document collating experiences from the people involved.

Future possibilities

If the work were to proceed over more weeks I could work with every child individually. It would also be good to work with groups of 4 - 5 children at a time as well, as group work gives the children a chance to explore the ideas with each other, and I could give more attention to each child. Children could create artwork, role plays, or use dance to express some of the ideas raised in the sessions.

Other year groups could be worked with. Classroom activities like hand writing, and computer use could be explored as well as sport, drama and music activities.

I am speaking with Education specialists in order to start a research study into the possible benefits of children learning the Alexander Technique.

Breakdown of costs

Preparation time: 3 hours

Working with teachers: 3×2 hours prior + 6×0.5 hours during = 9 hours

Working with children: $6 \times 3 \times 1.5$ hours = 27 hours

Evaluation process: 4 hours

Total (3 + 9 + 27 + 4) x 30 = £1290

(All work carried out at £30 per hour.)

When this will take place

Initial sessions with teachers could start from January 2014, and work with students following straight on from then.

My Background

I graduated from my three year Alexander Technique training at LCATT in 2009, and I am now a full member of the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT), since then I have volunteered at the Royal College of Music and at ArtsEd. I have also worked at the MS Society HQ in Wembley, and in various locations around Tottenham and Highbury giving individual and group classes. I have given talks at the Big Green Bookshop in Wood Green. I have a full CRB check.

Since having my first child, River, when I was still in Alexander Technique (AT) training, I have deepened my interest in children's development and education. Through an AT professional development course run by Sue Merry and Judith Kleinman last year I started to gain the skills to work with groups of young children.

Reference from Cem Emin who was the assistant teacher in Oak class from September 12 until April 13, during which I taught Oak class class the Alexander Technique for children.

“During the past eight years of working with children within the Foundation Stage in a range of different settings, I feel Jeremy's work is one of the most effective ways supporting overall development, in a child centred approach.

To see Jeremy interacting with the children was a pleasure, he has a lovely manner with the children and provided them with an opportunity to be creative whilst developing core learning skills in a playful and interesting way. The work Jeremy did with the children covered many aspects of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, which supports the ethos of holistic learning in the early years. Jeremy's work supported the evidence that both Maxine and I could collect for the children by providing them with learning opportunities that ordinarily we may not have covered/panned, this shows in the recent data collected as there is a gap in evidence between both classes.

When Jeremy worked one to one with children he was really able to engage with children who needed extra support. In two particular cases he was able to engage with children who have learning difficulties. The children couldn't wait to have a chance to work with him, they would often ask when it would be there turn. All children were able to access learning with Jeremy, regardless of EAL or SEN needs. He is very good at differentiating activities to support and stretch children's learning.

Another reason why I feel Jeremy's work was such an asset to us is because a lot of our children do come from vulnerable backgrounds, so to have time with an adult who is so enthusiastic when interacting with them is a pleasure to see; the children really do feed off it in a positive way. He is a great male role model to the children.

As a practitioner I have picked up lots of skills and ideas from Jeremy, by just observing him, provides a wealth of ideas that can easily be implemented in day to day practice. It has been a pleasure to of had the opportunity to work with Jeremy and to witness a positive impact of all children's learning.”