

confidential to the members of the team and the teacher concerned.

These three people, the members of the team, will organise a time which everyone knows about during the week, when they will meet in a pleasant place, a pleasant part of the school in which the meeting will not be interrupted by anyone marching through looking for the photocopier or the biscuits or the work sheets or their homework or whatever else it is, so it is a quiet place, a place where people can sit down in comfort, have a cup of coffee or tea and a cake. A relaxed environment where teachers can sit for about half an hour, during which time the problems the teacher is concerned about will be discussed in the nature of the problem refined and defined.

Sometimes prior to this meeting the special needs teachers in school would have talked to the referring teacher and say: «Look, would you like me to come into your classrooms so I can have a closer look at what is going on and we can talk about my view and your view about what's happening so we get extra data which can inform the situation or if it's as it often typically is it's an issue of a group of children behaving badly when they are coming from lunch time into the school when we can watch these children and watch what happens, so that we can talk about this problem with some depths of data, some richness of observation.

So part of the meeting which is managed in a way that it has been thought through very carefully and is thought through in the training that we provide for these teams and the teams adopt their own roles, they have thought through the business of active listening so they are not talking across people so they are being supportive, they know how to be empathetic and there will be a sort of brain storming session where lots of ideas are buzzed around the group and at the end of the meeting the group will decide that four people in the room will decide on a strategy.

This strategy may actually be saying something like well, we ought to involve the parents in this and maybe we ought to bring an educational psychologist in maybe we ought to think about involving speech therapist maybe involving all sorts of other people and maybe say why don't you try this out and why don't you come back to

us in two weeks time and we can talk about how it's gone. So this working body is an evaluation cycle, it's saying we've looked to the issue we've come to understanding what the issue really is as far as we can within the intellectual resources of our own group. We've made a suggestion about what seems to be a sensible and feasible way of working and we've set a time when we'll come back and we'll talk about the work.

So that's what these teacher support teams are, we've been training teachers using three days of in service training to do this work. At the central of that work is really stimulating the process of taking requests and managing meetings. Does this lovely problems solving model in a lot of the special needs books where you go identify the problem, analyse it, plan the action, evaluate and you have a feeling a little bit of guilt sometimes that if you are not moving in a nice circular way where you go to identify it, now the next thing I've got to do is actually analyse it. Our view is that might be fine in a machine model of problem solving and human beings aren't machines and they tend to sort of move backwards and forwards in various stages of problem solving and we keep that very strongly in our mind that as your working out what's going on you might analyse it a bit and then even if that's wrong I have to go back and rethink it, that's very typical of what's going on in these support teams. I don't want to say it's messy but we hang on to the notion that the analysis and intervention can be at the individual level, can be at the group level or class level maybe at the whole school level and it is significant in the work that we've been doing that many of the actions that have come out of this work have been at the whole school level. The two most powerful examples which we are pleased to notice in independent inspections of the school have been noted by both local authority and national inspectors have been about the improvements that have been brought about in the general management of the school as a result of teaching to the support team activity.

So that's the kind of problems solving cycle that we induct people into, the training is very much with the school. We present teachers with the list like that. We say: "right in this training you've got to sort out a number of things, you've got to sort out who can request support from you, is it just teachers or is it just classrooms assistance, is it parents. What's sort of problems we can try