

INPP Developmental Exercise Pilot Programme in Kingstanding Education Action Zone

Report by Gill Turner, Co-ordinator for the INPP Project
in Zone Schools

Why did we undertake this programme?

Since its inception in 2000, the priorities of Kingstanding Education Action Zone (EAZ) for raising achievement have always focused on long term programmes which produce sustainable, long term outcomes rather than 'quick fixes'. Some examples are Creativity programmes, child led learning in the Foundation Stage (Reggio Emilio approach), Learning Diversity classrooms (Barbara Prashnig), VCOP (Verbs, Connectives, Openers, Punctuation) with Ros Wilson and Forest Schools.

We were aware that, despite various interventions, some children did not achieve as well as others but neither did these same children have a statement of Special Educational Needs. We therefore thought that the Developmental Exercise Programme might help these "hard to reach" children.

Demographic background

The Kingstanding Ward is one of the most deprived electoral wards in the country (Health Profile for Birmingham 2006 – APHO).

All but 2 of the Education Action Zone primary schools have over 80% of pupils in Quintile 1 of the Multiple Deprivation Indicator (MDI) – Post Code Analysis - which is the highest level of deprivation. The average MDI for primary schools in the EAZ is 86% whilst the national average is 20% (2006).

When children are baselined on entry to school, pupils in the Kingstanding area are lower than the Birmingham average.

Kingstanding is a predominately white area. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has identified that 'white British students on average are more likely than other ethnic groups to persist in under-achievement'¹.

How was the need identified?

- A member of school staff whose niece had undertaken an individually tailored programme with DDAT² spoke very favourably of the outcome. We thought it would be

¹ 'Tackling low educational achievement' Joseph Rowntree Foundation (www.jrf.org.uk)

² www.dore.co.uk

³ "Is the INPP Reflex Inhibition Programme Effective?" (23/09/03) Brainbox Research Ltd

good to be able to offer something similar to pupils who might benefit but whose parents' financial circumstances might preclude this.

- We had already identified that some pupils lacked co-ordination and had difficulties with balancing during dance workshops.
- We were in a position to support our schools, both financially and otherwise, to take part in a developmental delay exercise programme, and therefore felt that the INPP Programme would be suitable for us.
- The approach was non-invasive and drug-free.

What was the starting point?

We spent some time looking at INPP's Developmental Exercise Programme and the published results and discussed it with Sarah Bertram, an INPP Consultant who had carried out a study³ at Prince Albert Primary school in Birmingham.

The Education Action Zone offered to support a Pilot Developmental Exercise Programme in the zone primary schools and organised a training day with Sarah Bertram for 2 members of staff from each primary school.

The programme started in 8 primary schools in Kingstanding Education Action Zone (North East Birmingham) as follows:

- Christ the King RC Primary
- Hawthorn Primary
- Kings Rise Community Primary
- Kingsthorpe Primary
- Perry Common J & I
- Sundridge Primary
- Twickenham Primary
- Warren Farm Primary

Subsequently, 2 schools did not re-start the programme after the summer holidays 2006. One of the remaining schools has yet to submit their data (July 2007). There were staffing issues in a third school towards the end of the programme which resulted in an abrupt termination of the programme and a delay in re-testing the children until a member of staff had returned from sick leave.

What were we trying to achieve?

We were trying to improve pupils' co-ordination and balance which we hoped would in turn lead to a corresponding improvement in concentration, confidence and self-esteem. We also hoped there might be an improvement in social skills and possibly improved Literacy skills.

What did we do?

Following the training, staff went back to their schools to identify possible pupils for the programme using their own observations, teacher recommendations, simple screening tests such as balancing on one leg, then confirming potential children for the programme by using the INPP Test Battery for schools. This is a neurological test battery used to determine whether primitive reflexes are still present in children and includes other tests of co-ordination and balance. The INPP Exercise Programme aims to give the brain “a second chance” of replicating and inhibiting the primitive reflexes.

We also asked teachers to complete the INPP Parent/Teacher assessment questionnaire and we substituted the Goodenough Draw-a-Person⁴ test for the Tansley & Bender Gestalt tests for 7 years old and over and the Pencil & Paper tests for 3 – 6 year olds. Following consultation with Sally Goddard Blythe, we planned to use only the Romberg, One Leg Stand and Creeping (Crawling) Tests for children aged 3 as staff were finding it quite difficult to carry out some of the tests with children as young as 3 years old.

We were advised by the INPP Consultant to start small, therefore a group of pupils (on average 8 in each group) was selected in each school. Pupils were between the ages of 3 to 9 years and there turned out to be twice as many boys than girls.

Parents/carers were informed by letter that their children would be taking part in a small exercise group to help their child’s balance and co-ordination.

Within each school, practitioners tried to run the programme every day with a stipulated minimum of 3 days per week only where unavoidable. Most of the programmes started in October or November 2005 and finished between December 2006 and June 2007.

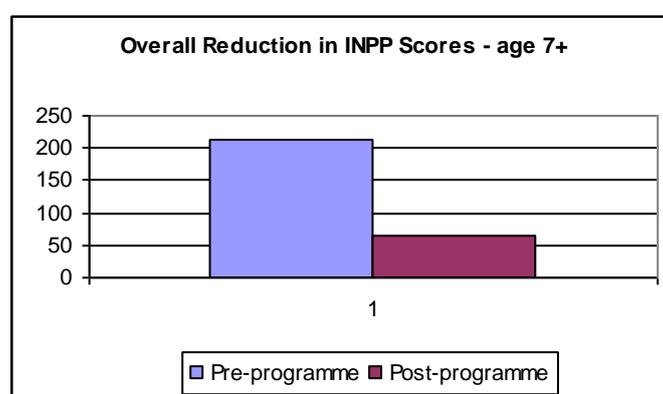
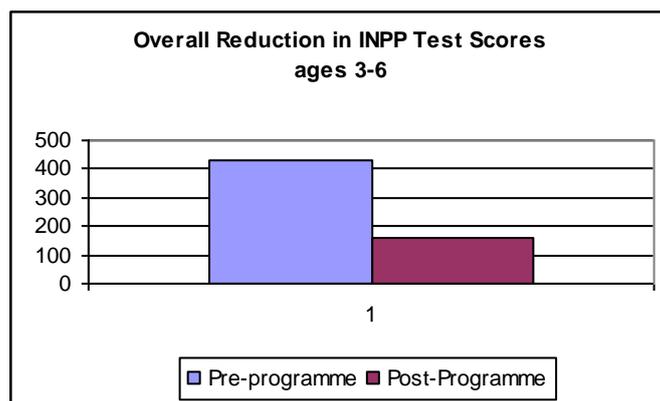
A Support Group for practitioners was set up to share ideas and good practice meeting every half term. Sarah Bertram supported us by attending these meetings, visiting groups in schools and doing staff In-Service Training sessions to help raise awareness of the programme.

We also carried out a mid-term review and drew up some guidelines for running further groups based on what we had learned.

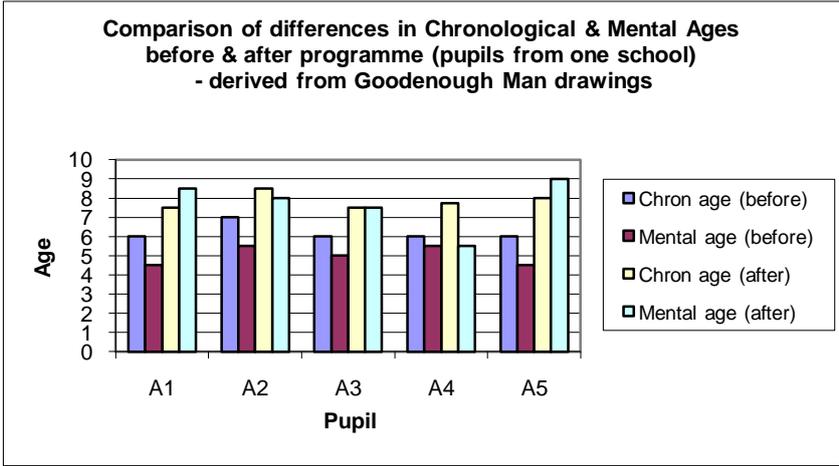
What has been the impact and achievements to date?

The exercise programme produced a decrease in abnormally retained reflexes, as measured with the INPP Test Battery.

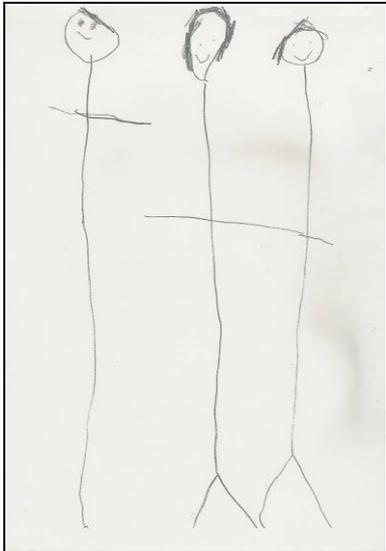
⁴ Florence Goodenough (1926) *Measurement of Intelligence by Children’s Drawings*, Harcourt Brace & World, New York



- Previous studies have shown that a decrease in retained reflexes correlates with an improvement in cognitive ability (see footnote 3 above).
- All of the practitioners who have submitted comments on their pupils' test scores have noted improvements in co-ordination (one boy had made the best progress in PE in his class and was now able to catch a ball) and confidence (a previously shy girl was now an outspoken member of her school council).
- Staff also reported an increase in children's self-esteem which has led to their being able to cope better socially (at lunchtimes, in the playground and making friends).
- There has not been an overall increase in reading and writing levels although one child who had been on level 2c in writing for about 2 years prior to the programme, had moved up to level 3c by the end of the programme (an increase of 3 sub levels)..
- The Goodenough Draw-a-Man test results showed that in 74% of cases, the children's mental age had caught up with, or surpassed their chronological age by the end of the programme.



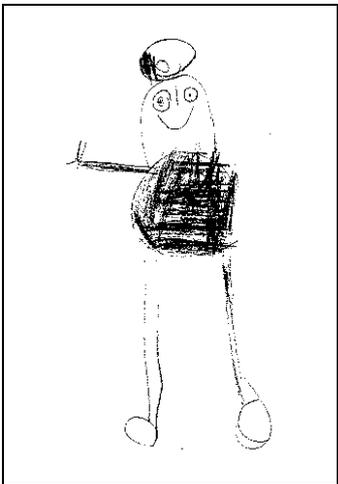
**Child A1's Goodenough Man drawing
Pre-programme**



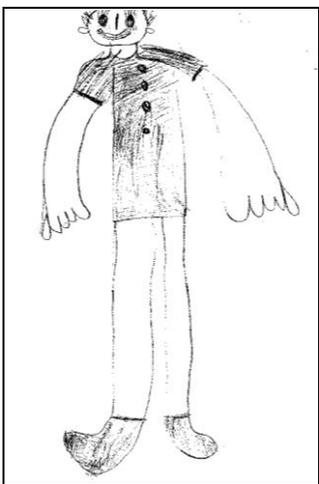
**Child A1's Goodenough Man Drawing
Post-programme**



**Child A2's Goodenough Man drawing
Pre-programme drawing**



**Child A2's Goodenough Man
Post-programme**



What would we do differently?

Pupils who have a lot of high scores in the initial testing would probably benefit more from an individualised programme.

We felt that children from Nursery, Reception and possibly Year 1 were too young to be included in the programme in future. There were difficulties both in testing and during the exercises (ensuring they understood what you were asking them to do and sustaining focus at this early age). We understand that it is possible to do the programme with this age group, however, we have since been working with Penny Greenland from Jabadao⁵, to introduce Developmental Movement Play in the Foundation Stage and feel this is more suitable and is working better with the younger age group.

Practitioners have worked with children from more than one class in their schools and some have had real difficulty in securing a regular venue and time slot to carry out the programme. This contributed significantly to the length of time it took to complete the exercises. It may therefore be an issue to be addressed in the future in some schools.

How have we ensured that the development work is sustainable?

A further training day was organised with the INPP Consultant to ensure sufficient staff were trained to carry on the programme in schools.

The only cost to schools is in staff time once a day for approximately 15 minutes.

We have a very committed group of practitioners, some of whom have already started their second group.

Continuation of the half-termly support group meetings will give practitioners an opportunity to share ideas, good practice and seek support with any difficulties.

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⁵ www.jabadao.org