

Seasons for Growth Newsletter

Summer 2019



The evaluations we get from parents and carers at the end of our Seasons programmes show the profound impact our groups have on our children, young people and families.

I have noticed a difference in her confidence since starting this programme.

She emphatically said...I want to go because it makes me feel better.

It allowed her to have the courage to address her worries, knowing it was confidential.

It taught her how to express her feelings in a calm way for people to understand.

She realised that all children go through times of change/challenge and that she's never alone.

Not everyone has parents they can talk to and I commend the school for providing this service.

He opened up more at home.

Involve more children – I believe a lot more children would benefit from the group and will improve their confidence.

I hope it remains for the future of other children experiencing difficult times.

It's OK to have all different feelings, but it's important to understand them and know how to cope with them. I've seen great improvement in her coping skills.

A small group is important and enables the children to feel comfortable and share their feelings.

He learned that it's OK not to be OK.

He has been so happy to attend that he would like to come back next time.

He recognises when his feelings are hurting him and how he/we can help this.

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DATE

Reconnectors 2019 – 2020

Wednesday 18th September 2019 3.30 – 4.30 pm

Wednesday 12th February 2020 1.30 – 2.30 pm

Thursday 21st May 2020 1.30 – 2.30 pm

Involving parents in Seasons

The few suggestions for changes to the programme we get from the parents/carers evaluation forms revolve around their desire to know more about how their child is getting on in the group, and how they can support them at home.

Feedback on how he got on

Give work at home to encourage discussion between parents/child

Invite parents/carers to be part of some sessions

We know that the Seasons is effective because of the group dynamic, the confidentiality and mutual trust of the group, and children feeling more able to 'open up' away from their home situations without fear of upsetting or alienating family members. It would be entirely inappropriate and counter-productive for parents to come to any sessions of Seasons, or be given information that we have agreed with the children is confidential. Indeed, many parents tell us how valuable it is for their children to do this within a supportive group of peers and companions, and that they could only do this away from family:

He was able to talk about things he doesn't want to discuss with us at home

She could share things good and bad with kids and teachers

He could express himself knowing it was confidential and private

However, it is really important that we ensure the parents know what Seasons involves, and that they trust their own children and the Companions to let the programme do its work and deliver the excellent outcomes we know it does. Schools and Companions do this in **TWO WAYS**.

1. **The parent/carer meeting PRIOR TO A GROUP STARTING.** It is ESSENTIAL that parents/carers are always invited to a meeting in school just before the group starts, at both primary and secondary level. It is ESSENTIAL that the Companions who will be running the group are present, though school management may choose to be present also. At this session, you can give parents/carers information about the group, explain the Worden/Seasons model and metaphor, discuss confidentiality and group dynamics, show them the journals, describe the activities and the sorts of outcomes children usually experience. This is the time to explain why they can't attend a session, and why they can't be given information about what their child shares, unless it involves a child protection issue. We can set their expectations as to what the children *may* tell them during the programme, but emphasise that it's the child's choice whether to share, and the programme is designed to be effective just as it is. The Companions are experienced in running groups, so they are best placed to explain this. As the people who will be working with the children, the parents need to have the opportunity to meet them. Some parents/carers, particularly at secondary schools, aren't able to come along to the meetings, but it is essential that we still give them the opportunity.
2. **The celebration.** The majority of primary schools invite parents/family members/carers to the Celebration at the end of the programme, and the turnout is usually high. This gives them the opportunity to hear directly from the children about what they've done in Seasons, and the evaluations show us how deeply moved and awed they can be by the courage, capacity and resilience their children have. Some participants choose to show their journals to their parents/carers, though they have the right to keep them private if they wish.

Seasons for Growth has recently produced two Parent Programs: 'Supporting your child following separation and divorce' (two 2-hour sessions) and 'Supporting your child following the death of someone they love' (one 3-hour session). A small number of educational psychologists and pupil and family support workers are trained to deliver this programme, and it would be ideal if we were able to offer it more widely. However, although many parents/carers ask for information on how to support their children, it has been difficult to find a way of delivering the Parent Programs that they are able to take up. A parent programme was run in Our Holy Redeemer Primary School last term. Comments from the evaluations:

It was good to sit and talk with like-minded people

This made me think and understand more, and also reassured me on the things I was already doing

I'll make my child more aware of the benefits of talking about feelings with teachers or myself or peers