



## What is The Spot? A brief introduction.

As well as a space for delivering tailored interventions, The Spot at Whitehouse is a place **any** child can choose to visit **any** time they're feeling a little 'out-of-sorts' (or feeling great and want to share).

Our approach works on the principle that the child is usually the first to know when something doesn't feel right, so it makes sense to trust their judgement when they say they need a moment to reset, even if they're not always sure why.

This 'self-referral' is the first step in a four-part process which looks like this.

- Step 1            Asking for space.            *(Something doesn't feel right)*
- Step 2            Identifying emotions        *(This is the name for the way I feel)*
- Step 3            Recognising triggers.       *(I feel that way when this happens)*
- Step 4            Providing tools/strategies. *(Next time, I can...)*

Working through these steps might take a day, or it could take several months. There's no expectation or pressure to communicate and each child is different so they'll each need varying degrees of assistance. However, once a child is familiar with the process, replicating the steps next time will feel more natural. Eventually, they'll be able to implement strategies for themselves.

## How does this help children to become more resilient?

When a child feels anxious, sad, annoyed, or just distant and we ask them to carry on, we're not providing them with the strategies to address their emotions; we send the message that they should be feeling differently without helping them to find the tools to cope. Eventually, the child will learn to suppress feelings and, on the face of it, many of them will seem fine. Others may display behaviours that can adversely impact their learning *and* that of their classmates. From an academic point of view, that child will not be in the best place to learn. But, more importantly, from a developmental perspective, they miss the opportunity to learn from the experience; they will not have any strategies in place to cope next time they are faced with a challenging situation.

The child can keep suppressing emotions, but they will inevitably face a threshold, a situation where this approach no longer works.

## What happens at The Spot?

When children arrive at The Spot, they're encouraged to share their feeling on the 'feelings board'. Children (and many adults) can struggle to verbally communicate their emotions and we use emojis to do this. It's a quick and simple way to track how everyone's doing and work out whether they might need a little extra help.



Once they've checked-in, what they do next is up to them. They can sit quietly on a sofa, read a book, colour, complete one of our challenges, answer our 'question of the week'... The list goes on. There are lots of engaging distractions. And, of course, they could choose to talk.

The space is designed to be absorbing and comfortable. Everybody visiting The Spot has chosen to be there. The rules of The Spot are that it is a calm and a kind place and by choosing to be there, the child is already communicating that they want to be calm and respect the others using the space. They communicate a little more by using the feelings board and this communication process is further facilitated by the adult in the room but always led by the child.

If a child arrives with something to share but the adult isn't available. They can leave a message knowing the adult will find them later. This is usually enough for them to return to class to engage with their learning. The emotion hasn't been dismissed, the child has taken the first step to getting help and they can trust that someone will come to check-in.

## What else happens at The Spot?

There are lots of teacher-referred groups that deliver activities aimed at helping with a wide range of social and emotional needs. These include, among others:

- Improving confidence with learning
- Building and maintaining friendships
- Developing social communication skills
- Managing emotions
- Coping with transitions
- Reinforcing self-esteem
- Understanding protective behaviours
- Processing loss
- Acknowledging anxieties

In addition, the children participate in drop-ins, pop in for 'calm start', some visit for lunch, we have a group responsible for recycling in the school and even a team of Woodland Warriors - working together to develop a plot of land that will help foster a deeper appreciation of nature within the school.

For a place that's so calm, there's a great deal going on at The Spot.



## The Spot Online.

In response to the Covid 19 pandemic, The Spot Online has been designed as a way for children to access some of the activities they'll recognise from The Spot at school whilst at home. It's something familiar they can engage with while providing them a means to stay in touch in addition to their weekly calls from teachers.

## Want to know more?

It's really tricky to explain everything that we get up to in such a small space but, if you have any questions, feel free to get in touch. We love sharing what we do.