

# PENRYN PRIMARY ACADEMY

How Penryn School used Trauma Informed Practice in response to high needs identified across the setting.

## WHY WAS CHANGE NEEDED?

Penryn Primary values all children as individuals. They are encouraged to learn and grow together, building their confidence in a safe, exciting and happy environment.

The path to become a Trauma Informed School began in 2018 when leaders at the school created an ambitious plan to 'do something differently' in response to the high need that was being identified across the setting.

**"High need required high investment".**

**Chris Lee, Head of School**

It was decided to use a Trauma Informed approach to support their aim of ensuring that every child has the opportunity to enjoy their school life and to achieve their maximum potential within a supported, vibrant, whole child-centred environment.

## WHICH TRAININGS WERE USED?

TISUK Diploma In Trauma and Mental Health Informed Schools and Communities for staff members, ongoing Whole School Training and support for staff.

## HOW WERE CHANGES MADE?

Action began under the previous Head of School, James Hitchens, and this vision has been strongly driven and maintained by the current Head of School, Chris Lee.

From 2018 a number of members of staff undertook the TISUK Diploma in order to provide every year group with an available TIS Practitioner and for the school to work in close partnership with TISUK.

Provision of the TIS Practitioners meant that needs that were evident across the school could be seen, assessed, understood and programmes of meaningful support put in place for each individual. These TIS Practitioners had a key role in establishing psychological safety for all, whilst developing working practices where pupils could be supported in order to begin to access their learning.

## SCHOOL INFO:

Primary Academy

Aspire Academy Trust,  
(31 Primary Schools in  
Cornwall)

Penryn, Cornwall

400 Pupils aged 2-11

[www.penrynprimary.org/web](http://www.penrynprimary.org/web)



Practitioners were also vital in modelling across the whole school different ways of interacting and sharing insights with colleagues.

Whilst keen to focus on learning, leaders clearly understood and supported the need to prioritise the TIS sessions.

*“We needed to follow our moral compass. This had to be a whole school approach and we needed to ensure everyone was on board”.*

Chris Lee, Head of School

In order to achieve this, a continual programme of training, enrichment and development has been provided so that TISUK practice has permeated throughout the whole school. The school has never wavered from the goal it set out to achieve. Regular refreshers, deepening understanding of the neuroscience and consistent use of the sentence stems included all staff, ensuring even staff that are new to the school became immersed in these approaches.

The depth of understanding and level of expectations that leaders have set are specifically reflected in the school’s Managing and Supporting Positive Behaviour Policy’ which states:

*“At Penryn, behaviour is understood neuro-scientifically as a communication of unmet need or as an adapted, defensive stress response. The understanding that children learn best within positive, trusting relationships informs our approach to managing and changing behaviour and we expect staff to work to identify the need and provide developmentally appropriate support to remove these barriers to successful engagement in school life.”*

These high expectations are reflected across all areas of school and are very apparent in expectations about the quality of teaching and learning.

## WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

All adults in the school are now aware of how to create an ethos and environment of both physical and psychological safety and have the skills to respond to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress. All staff fully understand and support the impact that connection with a trusted, emotionally available adult has on a child and seek to maximise this, particularly for those who are identified as requiring additional support.

This investment was celebrated in the Ofsted report from 2021:

*“Leaders invest in the staff. They provide high-quality training and coaching. Pupils are the beneficiaries of this work.”*

Now Chris reports he is rarely called to deal with issues around behaviour. The needs haven’t changed in terms of the challenge within the community, but what has changed is the whole ethos and expectations within the school.

*“It’s become our language, it’s how we all interact.”*

Staff Member

*“Pupils will not be in the right place for learning if it is not engaging enough. We are very proud of the quality of our staff and the skills they have to engage and meet the needs of all learners. Every interaction is geared towards learning.”*

Chris Lee, Head of School

*“Like the adults, the children all want to be in school,”*

Chris Lee, Head of School

In 2019, just over a year after embarking on their TISUK journey, Penryn Primary Academy achieved the Trauma Informed Schools Award Status. This is a remarkable achievement.

The speed, quality and ongoing success of this vision is in no small part due to the drive, determination and commitment of the leadership. This same vision is now reflected within the whole school community, is obvious in the quality of the staff and impacts positively on the wider community.

This view is reflected in the Ofsted report from 2021:

*“Penryn Primary Academy is a caring, ambitious, and inclusive school. Staff value pupils and have high aspirations for them, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil, whose opinion reflects the view of many, told inspectors: ‘staff help us make better versions of ourselves.’”*

Within the Aspire Academy Trust, Penryn is celebrated and drawn upon as a resource of strength for the quality of Inclusion, Teaching and Leadership. The importance of the interrelationship between all three is clear to see.