**UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER
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ABSTRACT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Doctor of Philosophy (by publication)**

THE USE OF THERAPEUTIC STORYWRITING TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES

 by Trisha Waters

*This thesis is comprised of five published pieces of research, with commentaries, that explore the use of therapeutic storywriting to support pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESDs) in primary schools in England. These pieces were selected from a larger body of work in order to illustrate the underpinning theoretical perspectives of two models developed by the researcher as well as the progression from practitioner research to a broader research design which evaluates the impact on pupils’ learning when these models are delivered by other educational professionals trained by the researcher.*

 *The first three papers focus on the Therapeutic Storywriting Groups model. The first is a piece of practitioner research and explores the psychodynamic aspects of therapeutic storywriting, illustrated by an individual profile of a pupil with selective mutism. The second is also practitioner research and extends the theoretical framework to include aspects of psychosynthesis theory and in particular Assagioli’s theory of subpersonalities. The third paper evaluates the impact of Therapeutic Storywriting Groups, delivered by a cohort of educational professionals trained by the researcher, on pupils’ emotional, social and academic development. The findings, largely drawn from interviews with the pupils themselves, show how the groups enabled pupils to use the medium of story writing to process emotional experiences and increased their motivation to engage in writing.*

 *The final two published pieces explore the Story Links parent-partnership model which uses therapeutic storywriting to include parents of individual pupils who are at risk of exclusion because of their extreme BESDs and who also have poor reading skills. Story Links draws on the relationship between attachment anxiety and behaviour. The fourth paper is a piece of practitioner research and a case study of Story Links work with an individual pupil at risk of exclusion and his parent. It illustrates how the emotional containment provided by the Story Links sessions created a potential space where a parent with a previously hostile attitude to the school could begin to collaborate with the school in supporting her son’s learning. The final and major piece of research included was part of a 20-month Story Links project funded by the TDA and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (attached as a separate document). It is an evaluation of the impact of the Story Links intervention delivered by a cohort of educational professionals on the emotional and social well-being of the pupil; parental engagement with their child’s learning; rates of exclusion; reading skills; and pupil engagement with learning. It adopts a case study approach, and uses both qualitative and quantitative measures. The findings contribute to an understanding of how parents of pupils at risk of exclusion – often a hard-to-engage parent group – can be facilitated to support the learning and emotional well-being of their child.*