

The effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the Incredible Years® Teacher Classroom Management programme in primary school children: results of the STARS cluster randomised controlled trial

Bryony Longdon, Matt Allwood, Kate Allen, Rachel Hayes and Tamsin Ford

Introduction

- Disruptive behaviour is a common and persistent problem in schools
- Teachers complain of inadequate training to manage challenging behaviour, which is associated with higher stress levels, poorer mental health, burnout, and exit from the profession
- Extreme disruptive behaviour in childhood predicts all types of adult mental health disorders **Conduct disorder affects 5% of children - 1 in 20**
- An intervention to support teachers to optimise children’s mental health and behaviour could potentially benefit every child subsequently taught by that teacher as well as the teacher themselves
- We evaluated the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the Incredible Years® (IY) Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) programme on children’s mental health



Incredible Years® TCM programme

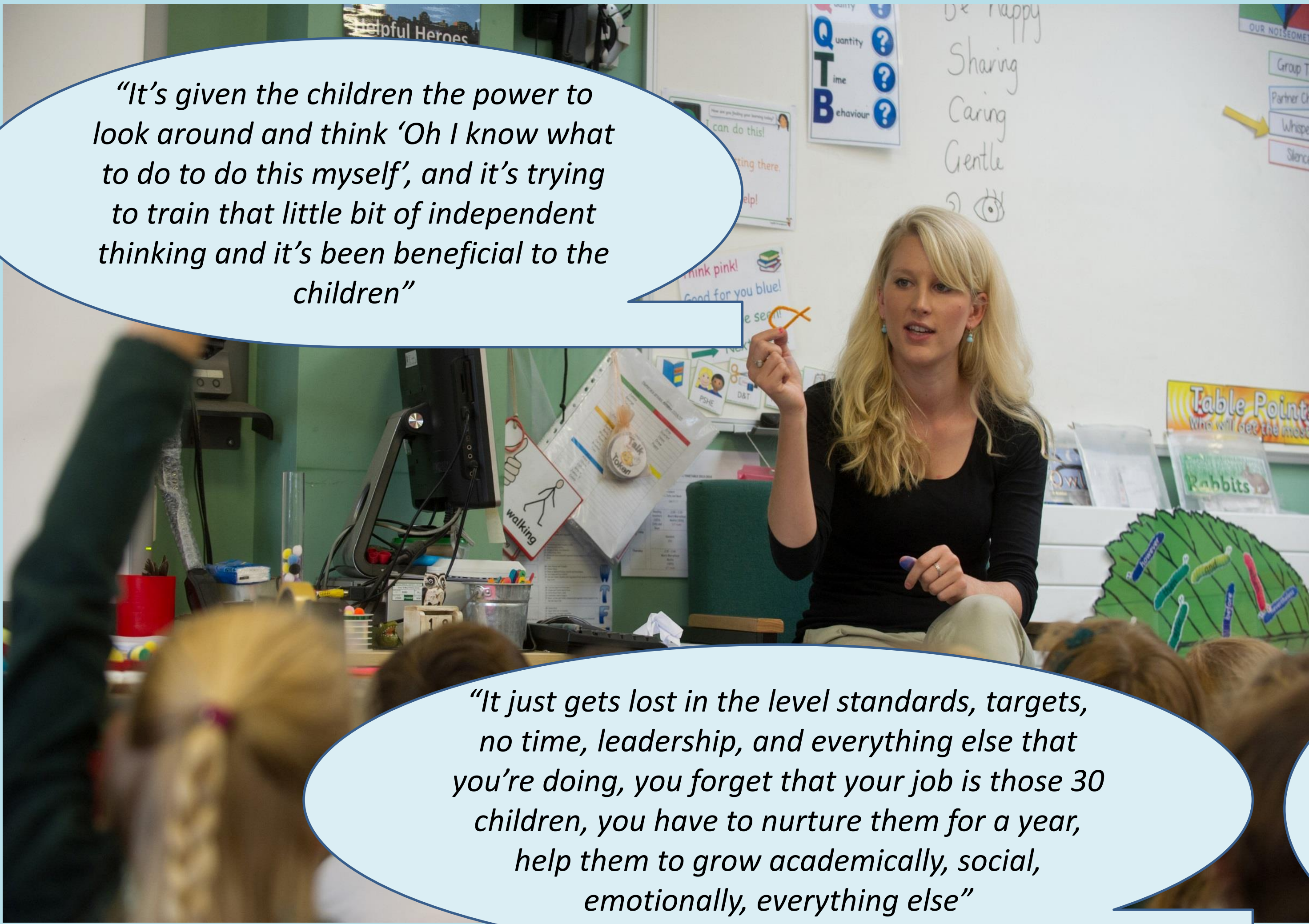
- TCM draws on the work of Patterson, Bandura, Piaget and Bowlby
- The focus is on improving teacher’s classroom management strategies to build positive relationships with pupils
- TCM was delivered to teachers in six whole-day sessions, spread over six months

“I have noticed in my class, that those children that mess around and don’t do very much work or whatever, are actually now producing an awful lot more work because they want the attention and I have withdrawn the attention from them which was ‘why haven’t you got that done yet, you are always in trouble’ and I have given it to these other ones ... It seems so obvious but that kind of turnaround has been really nice to see”

Results

These results are currently under review so cannot be shared, but these are our general findings:

- We found a small positive effect on children’s wellbeing
- This effect was larger for those who struggled the most
- The effects diminished when children moved to a class without TCM trained teacher
- TCM was cost-effective in the short to medium term

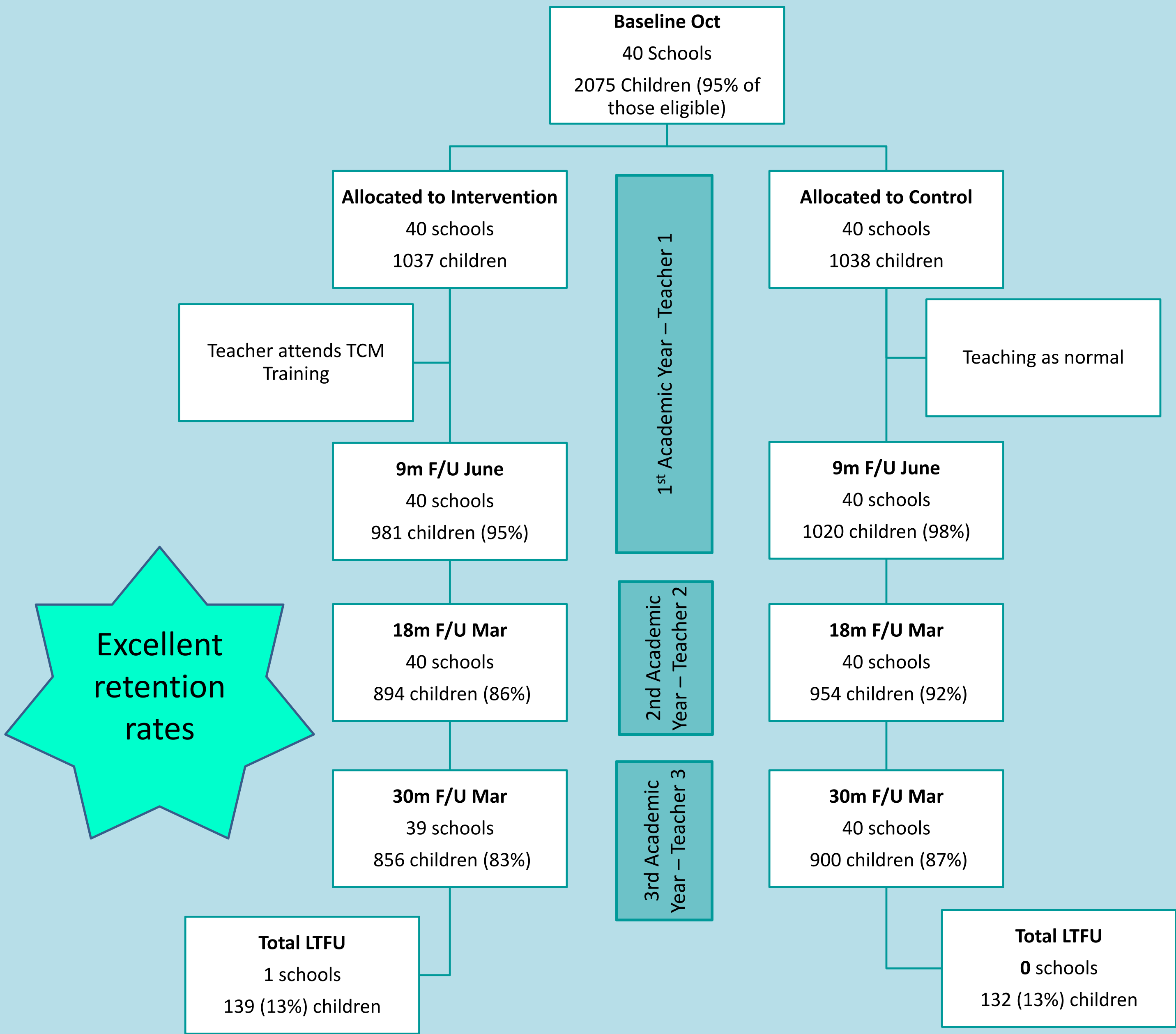


“It’s given the children the power to look around and think ‘Oh I know what to do to do this myself’, and it’s trying to train that little bit of independent thinking and it’s been beneficial to the children”

“It just gets lost in the level standards, targets, no time, leadership, and everything else that you’re doing, you forget that your job is those 30 children, you have to nurture them for a year, help them to grow academically, social, emotionally, everything else”

Methods

- Schools were randomised to TCM (intervention) or Teaching As Usual (control)
- The primary outcome was teacher-reported Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score
- Children followed-up for 30 months
- Results analysed taking account of school level clustering
- We compared the health economics of both arms of the trial



Qualitative results

Focus groups and interviews were conducted with teachers who had attended TCM

- Teachers felt the course improved their practice by
 - Having more confidence
 - Validating their existing skills
 - Greater reflection
 - Feeling calmer and more in control in the classroom
- Teachers valued the group element and recommended the training to others
- Teachers felt the course helped the children they teach by
 - Decreasing disruptive behaviour in the classroom
 - Making school a happier environment
 - Enabling them to come into the classroom ready to learn



Conclusions

- TCM is an effective universal child mental health intervention in the short term
- It is most effective for primary school children who teachers identify as struggling behavioural and/or emotionally
- We achieved excellent recruitment and retention in this large RCT
- Future research should explore TCM as a whole school approach

“It’s made me realise again that... we teach people, they are little people and they’re going through difficult things just like we are and actually sometimes as a teacher it doesn’t matter how their writing is coming along and how this that and the other, that they might just actually need you in another way.... Because they can’t learn can they? If they’re in a poor place emotionally”



STARS
Supporting Teachers And childRen in Schools