Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education

Did you know?

Ofqual have written a useful blog series* to support children with exam anxiety. It is something that has become an increasing problem in recent years. It can lead to absence, feelings of panic, feeling overwhelmed or sitting through a test but not writing anything!

As exams approach, schools will be having lots of exam practice in class - so how can we help pupils who are not achieving as they should because they feel unable to cope?

*https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2019/03/15/what-can-schools-do-about-examination-and-test-anxiety/

① Teach technique

Teaching specific exam and revision techniques can build confidence and self-efficacy and therefore reduce levels of anxiety. Depending on need, this can be done on a whole class level, in small groups or 1:1. It can include strategies for how to approach certain papers, what the paper will look like, the first, second and third things the pupil should do when they begin, what they should do when their mind goes blank (treat this as a normal experience and consider strategies for moving past it).

② Challenge thoughts

Help pupils to identify the thoughts about exams that make them feel anxious or panicky. They can then be supported to challenge them by:

- Listing evidence that disproves the thought - e.g. 'I don't know anything' might be challenged by listing things the pupil has said/done/written in class.
- Balancing each negative thought with a positive one - e.g. if a child writes 'I'm stupid' this can be balanced by 'I'm learning new things every day.'

③ Manage symptoms

Help pupils to manage the physical symptoms of anxiety before, during and after their exam. For example: teaching regulation strategies such as breathing techniques or guided muscle relaxation.

Practising being in exam conditions and using these techniques when it's not an actual test can also help.

Finally, helping pupils come up with an action plan, so that if they feel X they will do Y can empower them and increase confidence.