

Can peer massage in schools help children with their emotional well-being?

This was a question posed by Jeremy Vine on BBC Radio 2. It sparked a lively debate with many listeners expressing their views both for and against.

In January 2015 three schools became part of a study to evaluate the impact of A Child2Child's'Kind and Caring Hands peer massage programme on improving social cohesion and readiness for learning.

The Theory behind the programme

Touch is vital to human development, both social and emotional. It is central to attachment theory which is about making children feel a sense of belonging and security within the classroom. (John Bowlby) This is supported by 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs', a theory of psychological health predicated on fulfilling innate human needs in priority, culminating in self-actualization. He suggested that learning could not easily happen unless all the circumstances affecting the individual were positive and timely. Daniel Goleman argues that our emotions play the major role in thought, decision making and individual success. Self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, motivation, empathy and social deftness are all qualities that mark people who excel. With new insights into the brain architecture underlying emotion and rationality, Goleman shows precisely how emotional intelligence can be nurtured and strengthened.

The latest research from Suzanne Zeedyk builds on these earlier ideas to confirm that touch is vital in the development of attachment and well-being. Such theory must influence the educational experience of all children.

These ideas are neatly summarised by two quotes found in an article by G. Bester: Social Isolation- a learning obstacle in the primary school.*

1) according to Rosenthal (1993:112), there is both an emotional and cognitive necessity for friendship in every child. He stresses that any child who, for whatever reasons, is friendless, is at "risk" both emotionally and educationally.

2) Jeremy (1987:22) concurs and states that the stress and trauma of being alone and separated from the mainstream of society can be devastating. Applying this statement to the school situation, there is an urgent need for school teachers to identify and eliminate the factors contributing to the development of isolation among school learners."

'Peer Touch' games, routines and activities as part of a Kind and Caring Hands Programme, regularly used in the curriculum, can help soothe and calm stressed children. It helps to build emotional and mental resilience, improve relationships, social cohesion and self-confidence, whilst preparing every participant in a readiness for learning.

It uses different approaches for the different ages of student. It is an optional activity which encourages children to choose and consider their own likes and dislikes. It provides opportunities to articulate feelings and brings respect for ones-self, one's body and those of others, into the classroom, in a fun way. It teaches children ownership and care of their own mind by routinely asking them to make choices around touch activities and routines.

It is an easy to learn, quickly adapted practice that can stand alone or be integrated into the introductions or summaries of different types of lessons.

It underpins the value systems for all educational settings and supports individuals and groups. The key aspects of this programme fit very well with the Key points made by the educational theorists referred to above.

The Cambridgeshire Project

The study was planned in the way outlined below, but as you will see it was amended as circumstances changed.

One School, we identify as School A, would have all staff (Teachers and Teaching Assistants) trained to deliver the programme, on a daily basis, to every class. A second school –School B, would deliver the programme to a Key Stage 2 class with a corresponding control group. A third, School C – would deliver the programme to a Key Stage 1 class and a second Key Stage 1 class would be a control group, and would not receive the programme.

However, although receiving training, School C withdrew from the study due to other commitments and changing circumstances.

School B actually delivered the programme to the control group as well.

Two sets of socio-gram questionnaires were completed per class, one before staff training was given and before the programme started, and the second after a month

of the programme running. The third and final questionnaire to be completed at the end of the school year did not take place because of the tight schedule of end of term commitments for the staff.

Despite the changes to the original plan, the survey results and feedback from staff, children and parents are still interesting and provide valid information about the impact of the programme.

Implementation of the Programme

The project began in January 2015. The first step was to give each child in the pilot a socio-gram questionnaire which asked them to identify the children within their class, with whom they 'always liked to play', 'sometimes liked to play' and those they 'never liked to play'.

Attachment is vital for children in their class to give them a sense of belonging, self – worth and esteem and the capacity to reach their academic potential. The socio-gram would give us a picture of the relationships within the class and we could measure whether the number of interactive relationships had increased after the delivery of the programme. Children who are isolated in school often become victims of bullying behaviours, have poor attendance and low academic achievement,

Then, training was given to the staff involved in the study over one and a half days. The context of the programme was explained, with an introduction to the theory of touch and the importance to children of attachment. A whole series of 'Touch Games and Activities' were introduced as a starter, helping to break down barriers, before the peer massage routines were demonstrated. Staff practised giving and receiving Hand and Back routines, rehearsing the scripts that are an essential part of the delivery. Staff took part in joint problem-solving activities to develop confidence and acknowledge some of the concerns and issues that staff might have about touch work.

The second day focused on staff delivering the daily routines to gain experience and confidence, emphasising the importance of individuals taking responsibility to develop good manners, assertiveness, and choice.

As part of the training, a video was shown about the programme. This was produced in January 2012 by an American colleague who visited nurseries and primary schools in the North of England. In the 35 minute film, pupils are shown delivering the programme and interviews record pupils, teachers and parents expressing their views

about the programme and its impact. The trailer to the film, just three minutes long, gives a flavour of the evaluation:

<https://vimeo.com/59108595>

The feedback, (Appendix 1) from the training days was very positive, some colleagues saying that they had not understood the importance of touch before the training. Many stated that they would use the training with their own children at home, prior to introducing it to their own classes.

The schools agreed that they would begin to introduce the touch work after February half-term.

Christine and I agreed that after one month we would return to each class and administer the same questionnaire to compare the results. This we did.

At the end of the third term, just prior to the end of the school year, we returned to the schools again to discuss the programme with the respective head teachers and obtain feedback about its impact. We hoped to have anecdotal evidence of impact and acceptance from many viewpoints to deliver alongside our analysis of the questionnaires.

Prior to the implementation of the study both schools informed parents of the study. Parents/ carers were invited to engage with the schools to clarify the process and delivery of the work with their children. They were reassured that the initiative was about children being asked to make a choice to participate in the activities each day and were reassured that the children would be able to opt out of anything with which they did not agree, during the session. The children were to be taught the rules of touch prior to each session and would be encouraged to remind each other of them each time there was a touch session or activity.

School A held a coffee morning so that parents / carers could listen to the reasons the school considered this intervention important for their children. The parents could see the routines and take part in them, if they wished. Their initial scepticism was quickly dispelled and by the end of the morning all parents were convinced of its value.

School B sent home letters and some parents needed reassurances about who would be touching their children. The teachers were very direct in their partnering of children to children so that each child had the opportunity to work with every other child-- this continued until the children knew the routine.

In School A children in each class performed the routines after lunch every day. The children were asked to choose whether to participate in the Hand or Back routine or sit quietly and reflect on the calmness.

Initially, School B had decided that there would be only one class participating in the study but very soon both children and staff were so impressed by the impact with the class, it was decided to roll-out the training with the Year 6 class demonstrating and coaching all the children in the school. When everyone was familiar and confident with the routine the Year 6 went back to their own practice in their classroom. Just the Hand routine was used.

Evaluation

The first and second questionnaires have now been analysed and the results form the basis of this evaluation, along with feedback from staff and children given to Christine and myself at the end of the year.

For the sake of the study the schools shall be referred to as School A and School B.

School A is a village school, in a rural setting close to Cambridge.

School B is also a village school, in an expanding area with a new estate and plans for more homes to be built.

The figures are derived from a comparison of the first questionnaire (January) and the second (March) with approximately one month of the programme being in operation.

School A	Number of pupils who <u>Sometimes / Always</u> like to play with other named children which show an <u>increase</u>	Number of pupils who name the <u>same</u> number of children who they <u>Sometimes/ Always</u> Like to play	Number of pupils who have <u>reduced</u> the number of pupils with whom they <u>Sometimes / Always</u> like to play
D class 26 pupils	17	2	7
O class 27 pupils	27	0	0
S class 25 pupils	19	3	3
L class 19 pupils	10	4	5
K class 29 pupils	16	7	6
H class 21 pupils	18	0	3
Kf class 24 pupils	9	6	9
B class 20 pupils	11	3	6
S class 25 pupils	20	2	3

The outcome after one month was striking. Every class shows an increase in the number of pupils who say they are playing with more children in March than in January. In one class all the children report wider social interaction. In another class the figure is 20/25. Overall In school A, 68% of pupils had improved their social interactions within their class, 12.5% remained constant with their friends and 19.5% reduced their contact.

School B	Number of pupils who Sometimes /Always like to play has increased	Number of children who stayed the same	Number of children who reduced their number of pupils with whom they Sometimes / Always like to play
Class 1 Number of pupils 26	18	4	4
Class 2 Number of pupils 29	17	5	7

Likewise in school B both classes show a considerable increase in the number of children who are playing with a wider circle of classmates. Overall 64% of pupils in the two classes have played with more children. 16% have maintained the number of pupils with whom they like to play. 20% of the pupils report that they are actually playing with fewer children.

Observation

The feedback from the questionnaires is similar to all others that have been done over time, from first delivering this training in 2002. The teacher initiates the partnering for the activities but once the children know the routines, individuals are encouraged to choose a way to partner up children randomly, which are often adds fun to the sessions.

There is very little difference in outcome from the whole school being taught the work via the teachers or via coaching from other children.

A small number of children, during our study, reduced their contact with their peers, according to their second questionnaire responses. This may have been attributed to a variety of reasons, e.g. if the children were absent from school because of illness, family trauma or interruption of their education moving homes, or districts. Touch work is a choice and if there are those who choose never to participate, then that will have an impact on them.

Overall, children feel better with greater social cohesion in class. With greater sense of belonging, a child's confidence grows and the child then is more likely to reach his or her academic potential, be creative and resilient.

hools, the staff was keen to record the benefits. The initial introduction had seen some children being unwilling to touch other children. The teachers said they noticed a lovely atmosphere. School B staff noted, at the start to the day, in school, the first ten minutes is calm and the session in the afternoon helps the children to focus on their learning.

In school A the music acts as a trigger for the children to bring stillness and calm throughout the school. The children from Y6 asked for the routines to be done just before the start of their SATs tests to help them all feel relaxed. They also performed the routines during Sports Day whilst waiting to take part in their individual events.

Staff noticed that the children learned the routines very quickly and needed no prompting to remember the strokes. Children with challenging behaviour have become calmer and more integrated within their class. Teachers reported that the running of the class is smoother. The teacher has time to think whilst the children are performing their routines.

School A provided Buddies for the younger children who had difficulties remembering and performing their routines. This helped to normalise the activities with Foundation Stage children.

There was an increased independence with all the children who quickly developed a capacity to organise themselves into partnerships and positions for the routines. Even children with additional needs became eager participants, They shared the responsibility of preparing for partnerships and readily interacted and responded appropriately, just like the others.

Children recalled information, participated responsibly, and developed the autonomy needed to fully engage in this work. As a result teachers in school B chose to extend the opportunity to practice twice a day and introduced it before afternoon school. This they intend to continue in the coming year.

Feedback from Teachers and Head teacher and Parents

We were interested to know how “aChild2Child” Kind and Caring Hands Programme had an impact on individual children. Analysing their socio-gram responses and feedback from teachers gives us a clearer picture of how they responded to the programme.

The names of the children have been changed to protect their identity.

Ann – attendance was 98%, she achieved 2b across the board in her SATS and was at the beginning of the year struggling. Her confidence grew during the (peer massage) sessions as did her friendship group. If she was anxious during teaching input, the teacher commented that, she often saw her do peer massage on her own

hand, almost as a calming mechanism. Her mum wrote one of the statements about peer massage. After one month her socio-gram score showed that she had increased her friendship group by 5 children.

Jay – achieved his good level of development at the end of the year in Reception. At the beginning of the year he was extremely lively and did not like to sit on the carpet or listen for periods of time. He was very active and loved to be outside on the bikes or in the sandpit or mud kitchen. At the beginning of peer massage he wriggled a lot and did not want to join in. After being paired up with a Y6 buddy to show him how to do it and how it helped, he started to really enjoy it, particularly when he got to work with one of his good friends. Other children who had been wary of him due to his liveliness started working with him and as time progressed he embraced peer massage, becoming a real expert. His attendance was 97%. His peer group of friends remained the same but more children accepted him.

Cassie – Her attendance was 89%. She is a pupil premium child, had social care involvement and ticks many boxes of the vulnerable groups. Cassie attained age appropriate levels at the end of Y5. She has had a complex background and has been through a lot in her life. She has a habit of talking over people, not listening and being very bossy. At the start people were very wary of working with her. It took a while for her to realise that people didn't want to work with her when she was being loud and 'in your face'. She started to adapt her tone making sure she was asking permission properly and calmly. With encouragement about her noise level and the pressure she was using during her massage, she became quite the expert, deciding that she would like to be a vet or a beautician to do massage when she is older. Other children, who at the start opted out of the session, if they were paired with her, realised that she actually was quite good and started to work with her. She also was heard to comment several times to people she no longer hated them now she had gotten to know them better. She increased her peer friendships by three within the month according to her socio-gram scores.

Fin – 97% attendance. Year 1, achieved the phonics test pass mark and was a 1b across the board at the end of the year. He didn't make his predicted level of development in FS so had been on catch up. He has mild speech and language issues and the other children at times found it hard to understand him. At the beginning he went at peer massage like a bull in a china shop, not realising his own strength or how his behaviour affected others. He was very immature, giggling all of the time and struggling to be sensible. He is an August birthday. His mum commented that he was trying bits of peer massage at home and he liked doing it just before bed. In school

his teacher and TA of the class spent time supporting him to be a 'perfect partner'. This paid dividends as he became very involved, always wanting to please his partner. Listening to him now he is very considerate of his peers and their feelings

and his friends seem to understand his speech far more. The outcome of his socio-gram, however, showed a reduction in friendships. He said that four fewer children were friends with whom he always liked to play. This seemed at variance with the teacher's comments about his improvement in his connection with other children. It would be interesting to survey after another term. The benefit of the programme for Fin, is that the script within the routines and the calm atmosphere has contributed to him becoming more respectful of his peers.

Cloe – Year 6, attendance 99%. Very hard worker, perfectionist, anxious. Use peer massage as a tool to calm her down. Particularly liked doing it with people in her friendship group, and at times opted out if she was with a boy she didn't like. Asked before every SAT test to do a peer massage session to help calm her down. In previous tests through the year she had been borderline 4a/5c, but her nerves tended to let her down. In the SATS she finished on level 5 for everything. I do believe the peer massage helped her.

Her socio-gram scores remained the same but she showed that she could use the peer massage to help her stay calm.

Jack – Y3, attendance 95%. Jack is highly autistic and has his own TA and 1:1 curriculum. He can without intention become isolated from his peers and the teacher in the class as he struggles to say more than 2 words together at a time and needs support 100% of the time. Peer massage has created times for Jack to join in with the class every day. We got permission from parents to have his TA support him and massage his hand at times, as he trusted her to touch him, but not the other children at the beginning. He loved the music and would repeat several hundred times 'peer time' when he heard it. There were many times where he wouldn't join in, but instead he would wander around the classroom listening to the music and 'stimming' his hands himself. The Occupational Therapist commented that it would be a good thing for him to do in school. He ended up working on rotation with a group of 3 children, as he got to know them and trust them. Jack is not assessed in school using levels, but his social and speech development and the way he is now trying to interact with others has noticeably improved. Jack's socio-gram scores remained constant but his improvement in speech and language and his working with three others within his class is a major step forward for this little boy.

Overall Impact

Peer massage within a daily regime has significance for the majority of children of all ages, within the primary setting. The improvement in social integration, children being able to take personal responsibility about their participation in the touch

sessions and their ability to articulate their feelings about the touch routines, with their partner, seems to build esteem and confidence for most children.

Children recognise the benefits for themselves and others and there is a definite atmosphere of calm within the classroom during the sessions.

The fact that the children requested sessions before their SATs tests shows that they recognise that they feel more focused and ready for learning.

The knock on effect is that it creates greater co-operation between children and makes a more responsive and respectful atmosphere throughout school.

To summarise, the results from both questionnaire analysis and feedback from teachers head teacher and parents confirm that peer massage routines and touch activities have a positive impact on social relationships in the classroom and pupil behaviour and learning.

Please take a minute or two to read the evaluations in the appendices below.

APPENDIX 1 Schools Evaluation for the Cambridgeshire pilot project

The teaching staff in school A were asked to discuss these questions - an evaluation of what have they noticed since introducing peer massage.

“What have they found useful from the tools and resources given out at training? What do they feel they need more help with between now and the end of term? What has caused them frustration? What could be improved about the peer massage support and training?”

Teachers comments–

This staff commented that the children are definitely calmer since beginning peer massage, particularly where it happens after break or lunchtime. It has stopped all of the continuation of low level arguments/disruptions that sometimes rumble on from the playground.

They have also noticed that for some children, additional friendships or mutual respect/understanding have occurred. Children communicate calmer with each other and speak to each other in a politer manner.

Year 6 children asked to do peer massage before every SAT test to help calm them down and relax them.

The children speak very highly of it, and moan if it is ever missed out

They have liked the books and training materials.

They feel they have been well supported by colleagues and the children.

Frustration – at times it has been trying to fit it in, but the usual daily routine has helped. There are the odd occasions we have had to miss it out in some classes, just due to the pure logistics.

They would like additional music to accompany the 'Power point'. They like that it links to the animals, which really helps the children, and find alternative music is harder to use as it does not fit the animals.

The Head teacher confirmation

I would agree with all of the above from the teachers. Having taught peer massage as part of a teaching commitment once a week, with Year 5/6 I have definitely noticed an improvement in their calmness and motivation.

To introduce to parents we sent home an informative letter we created, explaining the facts and myths. We then held a coffee morning in school for anyone interested to come along. After the technical bits, we then brought the children in of the people who had come and they did peer massage on their parents. By the end of the session we had won everyone who had been sceptical over.

Governors were fully informed along the way, and as we were really tackling this with a well being and mental health twist to it, they fully supported it. A monitoring visit with the governors to see it in action and they spoke with the children too, they were delighted with what they saw.

We noticed that children who had never socialised or rarely interacted definitely started to do so. There was a very calm atmosphere around school, particularly in KS2 after lunch. You would walk up the corridor and hear the music playing across the classes and there would be a lovely lull.

Children commented they had time to think and clear their heads. It was their time, not the teachers. Lots of children in Y5/6 started talking openly about mental health issues they had heard on the news and that the peer massage was about looking after yourself.

We did have a few children say it was a waste of time and their parents said they should be learning. However, no parent ever said this to me nor asked for their child to be withdrawn.

It has been a really big hit with my parents, many of whom are doctors, lawyers, scientists, many who were sceptical at the start, but have been convinced

Will we continue...Yes! Will we do it when Ofsted visit...Yes! Are there noticeable differences in the children's behaviour and focus after lunch...Yes! Was I sceptical at the start....Yes, but not anymore.

The project led to media interest. This can be viewed by following the the links below

Press info on our project:

<http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Cambridgeshire-primary-school/story-26502552-detail/story.html>

<http://www.haverhillecho.co.uk/news/latest-news/peer-massage-helps-stressed-pupils-at-balsham-meadow-primary-school-1-6742179>

<http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Balsham-West-Wickham-West-Wrattling-Weston/story-25991348-detail/story.html> scroll down on this link for our bit.

<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-414126947.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3081907/Primary-school-rated-inadequate-Ofsted-just-two-years-ago-pulls-special-measures-teaching-pupils-young-four-massage-other.html>

APPENDIX 2

Letters from Parents

I was really pleased when the school announced that they had been chosen to trial peer massage; I felt it was a progressive move, and I am particularly happy about how much the school obviously cares about the children's emotional welling and e.i. The daily massage sessions seem to calm the children, which must make it easier to teach and learn effectively in class - we have even used it at home to calm our son at bed time. It's also very valuable for promoting friendships as the children change massage partners every day. The connection made during massage, albeit brief, can encourage new friendships, or at the very least break down barriers. This must help with communication between children and between friendship groups, and no doubt helps resolve issues. I think massage enhances a sense of well-being, it expresses care, and I hope it helps children feel worthy and valued, which is great for self esteem. It also teaches the children about mutual respect.

The children do seem to enjoy it - my son says that he likes it because he gets to make up his own moves, and that it really calms him down. And he enjoys giving it as well because it makes him "feel generous and happy". His favourite move is the 'combine harvester' which is one that he made up. He also thinks it is beneficial to the class as it helps him get to know people better. Parent of boy in Year 3

My daughter has loved peer massage from day 1. To tell the truth I didn't know what to make of it at first, I knew I would personally like it but I wasn't too sure my daughter

would be keen on other children (outside her friendship circle) massaging her... but to my surprise she does not have any issues with this, and better, she absolutely loves it!

She says it calms her down and relaxes her, but the benefits are beyond her words. At home she is always very keen to teach us how to do it, then she asks for us to practice on her, and by the end of a session we're all happy, calm and relaxed. She has been practicing peer massage at school for around a year now, and if she identifies someone feeling a bit tense or under the weather, she will happily volunteer her wisdom with 10 minutes of peer massage – and I must say it does wonders for us all! Parent of girl in Y2

Appendix 3

Evaluation of the training January 2015

Things I will Take home :-

The moves to use with my family +7

Don't know if it will work on the dog?

Games and new ideas to explore

Ideas to calm down my grandchildren

Help children to help themselves+2

Ways to introduce it to my class +4

Calmness +3

Adults and children need positive touch every day Remember to "ASK PERMISSION AND THANK!" after touch

Practices to use for SATs

Different strokes

Lots of skills involved in the programme

How relaxed I felt

Things I have Loved:-

Visualisation using animals

The games that got everyone involved and was a good ice-breaker+3

Opportunity to share ideas+2

Movements described as animals

Learning the massage strokes+5

How relaxed it made people feel+2

The Penguin stroke on the back+2

The elephant stroke

How easy it was to work +2

How beneficial for children and for us

How touch can break down barriers

Chances to practice with music

Interaction with colleagues

Activities for the younger children

I thought I would Hate it but I loved it

Best training ever

The CD and music will help me with my Y6 class

The extra learning about emotional education which put the concept into perspective

Things I have Learned:-

We need to give and receive positive touch every day+2

To teach children the script to say NO to unwanted touch

A calm classroom can be achieved through massage routines+3

Touch can break down barriers+2

School can be a relaxed place for children and staff+3

How to deliver peer massage and Colour Breathing+6

The relaxed feelings and atmosphere created during the sessions

Something that will work for our Y4 children

Boundaries are easily overcome

It was a Positive end

Although the people I met were new to me, I did not feel uncomfortable at all

Why peer massage is important

I felt confident giving and receiving massage

I no longer feel that I am the only one who thinks touch is important for children and adults

What an impact touch can make, especially if started early in a child's life

Brain development and the effect touch has on connections

Asking permission and Thanking is important when doing touch work

Benefits of "aChild2Child" Kind and Caring Hands Peer Massage

Studies and observations have shown that:-

- Children become calmer and have improved concentration.
- Children have more confidence and increased self esteem
- It teaches children to respect others and leads to social inclusion
- There is a reduction in bullying and aggression
- Emotional and mental health improves
- It helps children recognise 'good' and 'bad' touch
- Children show improved motor skills
- It encourages visualisation and kinaesthetic learning
- Children are encouraged to make choices
- Cooperation improves as children work in pairs and in groups
- There is a calmer classroom environment
- Children are taught techniques to help keep them calm at stressful times such as SATs

Research into the physiological effects of massage has shown that oxytocin is released during massage. Oxytocin brings a calming effect to the body. According to Swedish researcher Kerstin Uvnas Moberg, people

who receive massage have lower blood pressure, lower pulse rate, and lower levels of stress hormones resulting in less anxiety – effects that promote good health. Kerstin goes on to report that children become calmer, more socially mature, less aggressive and have fewer physical complaints when receiving massage. Hugs, cuddles and even a foot rub can bring the positive effects of oxytocin release. In addition, according to research undertaken in Scotland, children can, after massage, have improved concentration of up to thirty minutes, which can have a positive impact on working and learning (*Woolfson and Woolfson, 2005*).

The child2child massage program benefits children in many settings. Primary schools, special schools, children's centres, nurseries, Montessori schools and nurture groups use it. It is also being used by, Sure Start, Barnardo's, the National Pyramid Trust and other organisations.

Early indications in our school already show that the Y5/6 children who have been learning the routines for the past two weeks are enjoying it, that it has a positive effect on the classroom and that there is a transfer of skills and manners etc around the school. Children are already asking their teachers if after completing a long piece of focussed writing they can take a break and massage their hands to stop them aching, but also to take a few minutes out, before starting the next learning task. As the Y5/6 children have come into the sessions they have nearly all, commented on the excitement and enjoyment of the peer massage. There is a notable difference to their behaviour and learning attitude after lunch following a peer massage session.

What happens if my child does not wish to participate?

Every day the teacher will ask the children if they wish to participate. No child will ever be made to join in. If they wish to sit out, they will be encouraged to sit quietly, listen to the music and take a few minutes to think about something happy and positive to them. A child can withdraw at any point during the session too. If **you** wish for your child to not participate, I would ask you to come and speak to me so I can talk through your concerns. Requests should also be put in writing, so they can be kept on file.

I appreciate you may be a little bit sceptical, have more questions than I have answered or just a curiosity to see it in action. We are therefore planning on running a coffee morning on Wednesday 11th February 9-9.45am and an evening session on the same day, but from 6-6.45pm. Please fill in the slip below to indicate if you are attending, and which session as we will be asking your children to join us for the morning session so they can show you what it is all about, and please do bring them to the evening session if you are attending that one.

This is an exciting time for us. Peer massage is happening in hundreds of schools across the country, and the benefits to the children participating are vast. It is our opportunity to focus on the whole child and not just the academic side. If you have any questions or queries in the meantime please do contact me via the school office or on the playground.