Contents

Contributors viii
Foreword xi
Acknowledgements xiii
List of abbreviations xiv

Introduction 1
LYN FRENCH AND REVA KLEIN

PART I
Key psychoanalytic concepts as applied to work with children and adolescents 5

1 Theoretical framework 7
SUE KEGERREIS

2 Recognising defences, resistance and anxieties 19
DAVID TREVATT

3 Transference and counter-transference 28
HILARY ANN SALINGER

4 Observing and interpreting 36
JENNY DOVER

PART II
Working in schools: the context 51

5 The symbolic function of a school-based therapy service 53
LYN FRENCH
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Working in the primary school setting</td>
<td>REVA KLEIN</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Working in the secondary school setting</td>
<td>STEFANIA PUTZU-WILLIAMS</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART III</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practical approaches to the work</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Preparing the room</td>
<td>CAMILLA WALDBURG</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The referral process</td>
<td>CAMILLA WALDBURG</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The assessment process</td>
<td>STEFANIA PUTZU-WILLIAMS</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Meeting with parents or carers</td>
<td>REVA KLEIN</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Meeting with teachers and other school staff</td>
<td>ANGIE DORAN</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Informing the child or young person about</td>
<td>LYN FRENCH</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the first session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The first session</td>
<td>REVA KLEIN</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Working with difference</td>
<td>AKIN OJUMU</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Managing the therapeutic frame</td>
<td>REVA KLEIN</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Working with school staff</td>
<td>ANGIE DORAN</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18  The ending process
   LYN FRENCH

PART IV
Monitoring and evaluation  199

19  Writing case notes  201
   STEFANIA PUTZU-WILLIAMS

20  Identifying the impact of therapy services in schools  207
   LYN FRENCH

   Afterword  230
   LYN FRENCH AND REVA KLEIN

Index  233
Introduction

Lyn French and Reva Klein

All therapists working in the education sector have had to go through the experience of starting their first school-based role either as a qualified therapist new to the educational setting or else on placement as a trainee psychotherapist, counsellor, creative therapist (art, drama and music therapists) or play therapist. Writing and editing this book offered us the opportunity to look back on our first experiences of engaging in the complex and multifaceted business of working in primary and secondary schools. We remember very clearly how daunting the prospect was. We recall wondering how we could be taken seriously as professionals by head teachers, governors, staff and parents or carers – never mind pupils – when we ourselves were not only finding our feet as therapists but were also new to the school setting. Additionally, we’ve both had school-based posts where we were launching the service as sole practitioners linked to an external agency, with no co-workers on-site to check things out with or with whom to share impressions, anxieties and successes.

It is useful and even, perhaps, essential, to navigate one’s way through ‘start-up’ anxieties in order to test out and build one’s internal resources. By providing a detailed description of the tasks involved in taking up the role and suggesting guidelines for practice, we do not aim to do away with these anxieties. Instead, we think of it in a similar vein to that of a new mother who can use parenting manuals to help her reflect on her role and on what might be demanded of her without detracting from the complex and rich experience of interacting with her newborn. So too, we hope, will this book provide support for the trainee or qualified psychotherapist, counsellor or creative therapist new to working in schools, without detracting from the uniqueness of each new relationship entered into with clients and with the organisations in which they find themselves.

We all, no matter what our age, carry with us memories of our own school experiences – conscious and repressed, positive and negative. The mere whiff of chalk or chlorine can be enormously evocative, hurling us, rather like Proust and his madeleines, back to our primary school classroom on a warm spring day or a less than joyous school swimming lesson in the local pool. Many decades on, Sunday nights can still induce a sinking feeling at the memory of hastily finished homework and packing schoolbags in preparation for a new week.
As well as memories, we all – whether parents/carers, school staff, policy makers or therapists – will have conscious and unconscious assumptions, fantasies, associations and beliefs about what schools ‘should be’ or ‘should aspire to be’, often formed in reaction to our own experiences. For some, school days will have been the best years of their lives, while for others they will have been precisely the opposite. For some, the fact that we work in schools will reflect a desire for reparation: for ourselves and for children present and future.

Working in schools is rewarding, compelling, frustrating, challenging and so much more than working in a room with a child. It is about being aware of the desires, fears, anxieties, hopes, fantasies and projections that emanate from every person in the organisation: from the lunchtime supervisors to office staff to caretaker to support staff to teachers to senior management and to all the children who are not being referred for therapy as well as those who are. It is about developing an awareness of how we as therapists are perceived and interacted with in our everyday work. It is about developing an understanding of the conscious and unconscious forces at work in how the organisation functions. It is, in a nutshell, an endlessly fascinating microcosm in which to work.

Many school practitioners deliver a range of services in addition to individual work with children or adolescents, such as psycho-educational groups for selected pupils or, in whole-class settings, parent/carer support groups, and work discussion groups or consultation sessions for school staff. Qualified therapists may also give policy advice to management, contribute to safeguarding or child protection procedures and protocols, offer training sessions for staff, run peer support or buddy schemes for pupils, speak about emotional well-being at assemblies, and so forth. However, this book limits itself to a detailed exploration of the therapist’s defining role: that of offering one-to-one sessions on a weekly basis to referred pupils. This reflects the fact that our work with children and adolescents involves not only learning a therapeutic language but also making it accessible to younger clients. The practice-based chapters to follow cover all the related tasks including liaising with staff and parents/carers, informing the child or young person, conducting the initial assessment, thinking about the first session, working with difference and working through endings. Uniquely, most of these chapters includes vignettes that illustrate the kind of language one might use when talking to a teacher, parent/carer or young person. There are opportunities as well for readers to try to formulate their own response before looking at the suggested replies provided by chapter authors.

As therapists, the relationship we establish with our client is our primary tool. How clients perceive and interact with us provides vital information about their internal world and attachment patterns. A key developmental task for us all is learning to identify, contain and work with the primitive and everyday anxieties that are inevitably aroused by the very process of forming and sustaining relationships. This applies not only to our work with our clients but also to forming partnerships with the schools in which we provide services.

Whether or not a school therapist is taking up a role in a long-established service or introducing a new provision, acknowledging the anxieties inherent in
the task and trying to understand the unconscious forces at play is necessary. Fortunately, it is also tremendously stimulating. All therapeutic work triggers a range of anxieties. Most notably, at the start of our professional training it is likely that we will wonder whether or not we have sufficient internal resources to provide clients with a ‘good enough’ experience. Working with children and adolescents is particularly anxiety-provoking, as they are among society’s most vulnerable groups.

In addition, schools generate their own particular anxieties and institutional dynamics that need to be mindfully navigated. Schools may start by viewing their therapy service through the unconscious filter of a positive transference or, conversely, one that is more negative in quality. This will inevitably continue to shift over time in subtle or obvious ways, depending on the dominant preoccupations of the school at any given period.

All schools work under numerous – and often seemingly relentless – pressures arising from different sources. Teachers may bring to the job their own deeply felt commitment to make a difference and to enable pupils to fulfil their potential. This can be transformed from a motivating belief into a driving pressure to succeed when it is accompanied by, for example, an unconscious urge such as wishing to make up for what they feel they themselves missed out on or, conversely, had more than their fair share of. Head teachers will want their school to be one that everyone is proud of. A healthy need to achieve can become stressful when unconscious rivalry and competition enter the frame, perhaps fed by a government agenda that is seen to push targets ever higher. Rather than being stimulated by the challenge, school staff can feel persecuted by what may be experienced as over-ambitious demands and an unrealistic timeline.

Trainees placed in schools or therapists choosing to work in the educational sector are entering a complex field. The authors contributing to this book, each with extensive experience of working in the educational context, draw from their own learning experiences and from their work in schools, translating complicated realities and sophisticated analytic concepts into accessible language that clarifies rather than simplifies.

As will be evident, some of the themes covered move across more than one chapter. We hope that rather than being repetitive, revisiting some of the key ideas demonstrates how useful it is to review our practice from different perspectives and to think about how the external environment in which we work can shift along a spectrum, at times enabling, at others impeding therapeutic processes. As therapists, our work is enriched through the use of supervision, case discussion seminars and sounding things out with professional peers. These chapters reflect these processes, providing a range of voices and viewpoints, each offering its own ‘take’ on themes that necessarily overlap.

The expectation that public services will be both monitored and evidence-based has been filtering through to the field of psychoanalytically informed therapies. One of our aims is to show that the need to be more rigorous in how we think about our practice and its outcomes can sit comfortably alongside the actual work
we do with children and young people. In fact, writing reports, liaising with other professionals and creating a structure for evaluating our service will enhance and sharpen our thinking about what goes on in the consulting room rather than detract from or distract us from our central tasks.

By offering a framework and practical guidance designed to enable therapists to fulfil their roles as professionals working within schools, we aim to demystify aspects of our work. At the same time we have set out to illuminate the transfer-ence and many layers of meaning that staff, parents and our clients themselves bring to their understanding of who we are and what we do. It is only by defining more clearly the boundary and scope of our practice, as well as the complex context in which we work, that we can become better equipped to take up the authority invested in our role appropriately and sensitively.

If there’s nothing simple about working as therapists in schools, we have at least tried to simplify the terminology somewhat. The terms ‘therapist’ and ‘therapy’ are used throughout, rather than ‘counsellor’ and ‘counselling’, in order to cover the spectrum of trainees and professionals being addressed. Only when it aids understanding will the therapist or therapy be referred to by a specific discipline (e.g. art therapist or play therapist). Children and adolescents are assigned male gender for simpli-fi-cation and both are referred to as children unless the meaning of the text depends on differentiating between the two. Therapists are assigned a feminine gender, again for simplification, although this also reflects the general gender imbalance of school-based therapists. ‘Parents and carers’ are used in headings and subheadings but abbreviated in the body of the text to ‘parents’ for brevity’s sake.

The book is divided into four main sections. Part I covers key psychoanalytic concepts as they apply to work with children and adolescents. Through exploring the context of both the primary and secondary school sectors, Part II sets the scene for discussing school-based services. Part III comprises the ‘tool kit’, outlining in some detail practical approaches to the work. Part IV offers nuts and bolts guidance on record keeping, writing case notes and evaluating the service we provide. Throughout, study questions, study guides and vignettes are provided to aid learning, reflection and reviewing of one’s practice in general. The tools we suggest are not exhaustive: they are best viewed as a starting point for thinking about how the school therapist might approach the work. A key task for all trainees is to learn the language of therapy. This book sets out the ‘vocabulary’ and ‘basic grammar’ required to take up the role of school therapist with integrity, compassion and the desire to learn more.