

Developing a Culture of Supervision

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Developing a culture of supervision

The concept of supervision means different things to different people, and in particular, professionals in different agencies. Often known as clinical supervision, it is a key part of health and social care, and in some other services. However, in education, it has been relatively recently introduced, and can now be found in a number of settings, especially in those where there are many pupils affected by safeguarding and child protection concerns.

For professionals who do not have a tradition of supervision, like teachers, there can be many misconceptions. A common misunderstanding is that supervision is a part of line management, but in fact it is quite different. Others think that supervision is solely about emotional support and may feel that it is unnecessary for them for that reason.

Many people feel that supervision should be carried out by either someone from outside the school; or at least not by the supervisee's line manager in order to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Whilst perhaps desirable, funding or other operational constraints may mean that this is not possible. For supervision to be most effective, it must become a natural element of the school's culture.

Often, school leaders say supervision is there when it's needed, 'people just have to ask'. Unfortunately, by the time it is really needed, staff invariably don't ask, as they have become so stressed by their situation; and this also misses the point. The culture of the school should understand that supervision fits into the wellbeing and good mental health of staff and helps them to be more effective in their role. Whilst developing a culture of supervision is important, it will be much easier for schools with a tradition of reflective practice or a coaching style of leadership. It is particularly in the context of safeguarding and child protection that supervision is most well-known.

Several key guidance documents refer to the need for supervision.

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (HM Government, 2018) says, "Practitioners should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision, and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities." (See page 56).
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education** (DfE, 2019). "[DSLs] should be given the time, funding, training, resources, and support to carry out their role" (see Annex B).
- **The Early Years Framework** (DFE, 2017) says, "Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families...Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork, and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues." (See paragraph 3.21)
- **Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years, Education and Skills Settings** (Ofsted, 2019) says that a sign of successful safeguarding arrangements is that "Staff and other adults receive regular supervision and support if they are working directly and regularly with children whose safety and welfare is at risk" (page 10).

Developing a culture of supervision contd.

The government guidance now emphasises supervision more strongly than before. Serious case reviews often underline the importance of supervision. One report said that schools should "ensure that staff receive the emotional support and supervision necessary to assist them in working with pupils who've been abused or at risk of harm." (See Southbank International School [Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster LSCB, 2016]).

An article published in the journal *Primary Health Care* looked at the literature around supervision and noted, "Themes showed that effective leadership and safeguarding supervision is needed to provide a high-quality, child-focused service in which the emotional wellbeing of staff is addressed" (*Primary Health Care*, Volume 27 issue 10, page 7).

Although the need for effective supervision has been recognised more and more, it is a relatively new process in schools, and is therefore not always easy to implement. Supervision is often thought to be all about emotional support, but that is only one aspect; it isn't simply 'off-loading'.

Morrison's 4x4x4 Model of Supervision

There are a number of models of supervision, but it is beyond the scope of this document to identify those and set out the merits of each one. A frequently used supervision methodology was developed by Tony Morrison, who defined supervision as:

"A process by which one worker is given responsibility by the organisation to work with another worker(s) in order to meet certain organisational, professional, and personal objectives, which together promote the best outcomes, which together promote the best outcomes for service users." (Morrison T., 2005, *Staff Supervision in Social Care*).

Morrison's model is known as the 4x4x4 model of supervision. The four key functions of supervision and the four elements of the supervisory cycle can be seen below.

Stakeholders	Functions of supervision	Supervisory Cycle
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils• Staff• School• Other Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Management• Development• Mediation• Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience• Reflection• Analysis• Action

Functions of Supervision

- **Management:** Focus on the interests of pupils and quality of practice
- **Development:** Focus on self-evaluation and building professional capacity
- **Mediation:** Focus on role clarity and effective partnership working
- **Support:** Focus on emotional impact and any resulting stress

Developing a culture of supervision contd.

The Supervisory Cycle

Morrison uses the four elements of the learning cycle for adults as theorised by David Kolb in 1984. For best effect, the four elements of the learning cycle should be discussed in the following order:

1. **Experience:** accurate and detailed recall
2. **Reflection:** feelings, attitudes, skills, and knowledge
3. **Analysis:** drawing out meaning, identifying what is known and what is not know
4. **Action:** creating plans, actions, and success criteria.

Although the 4x4x4 model has many different elements, it is important that its integrated approach is recognised. Each supervision session may consider only one incident or event. It is important that it is seen from each of the various perspectives.

The goal of supervision is not to tell people what to do, but by using a structured approach with open-ended questions, the purpose of the session is to help the supervisee reach their own conclusions and actions. Having said that, the supervisor will use their skill and expertise to guide, with a gentle hand the experienced, and perhaps give stronger prompts with less experienced staff. The supervisor's approach could range between non-directive and directive and the supervision session itself will fall on the continuum between informal and formal. Meetings could be planned or happen on a more ad-hoc basis. The right approach will vary by setting, frequency and intensity of issues, and the needs of the supervisee.

Developing a culture of supervision needs a strong commitment from school leaders, to ensure that this can be setup and flourish.

An effective safeguarding system has five key areas:

- Recognise
- Respond
- Refer
- Record
- Reflect

Reflection is an important part of the school's safeguarding system, but yet is a strand that is often missing.

To be effective, supervision should be a collaborative, mutually respectful activity. To ensure that this is the case, a contract should be agreed. This will establish a joint understanding of the supervision session, the timeframe of the meeting itself, and the frequency of the meetings, the aim of the meeting, and what to do should any side feel unhappy about any aspect of supervision.

Developing a culture of supervision contd.

Records should be kept of supervision sessions, and it should be clear what the purpose of the records are, and who can have access to them. The issue of confidentiality needs to be included in the supervision contract. The supervision session will include discussions of and planning for the children and young people that the supervisee is working with. Actions about these children should be entered onto their own pupil file in an appropriate level of detail, and would not, for example, include notes about any emotional impact that the pupil has on the member of staff. Record-keeping of the supervision does not need to record every moment or comment of the discussion, but should serve as a future prompt as to what was discussed, what actions this led to, if any, whether the actions were carried out, and how effective they were when reflected upon in the following session.

The plan for implementing a supervision approach should be clear, ensure everyone understands the motivation for such an approach, and is undertaken in a spirit of mutual understanding. Implementing supervision is not a quick fix, nor is it a panacea for all ills. Staff must be involved in the process to ensure they have ownership of the development process.

The implementation plan will include:

- Creating an agreement of aims and expectations.
- Writing a policy document.
- Setting out the agenda for each meeting.
- Clarifying the frequency of meetings and their location.

It is useful to identify any barriers to successful implementation of supervision before they occur, so that a plan can be created to solve them. When planning for supervision, an important decision is to be made about who the supervisors will be. While supervision could be led well by internal staff, there can be an advantage in buying in external support where budgets allow.

Group Supervision

Generally speaking, supervision is a one-to-one process, but sometimes, group supervision can be useful. When considering pupil needs, especially those with higher-level safeguarding or child protection concerns, or for children who have a profound impact on staff, a group supervision can be powerful. Such sessions are often concerned with moving forward a stuck case.

In group sessions, everyone that is associated with a young person meets together to share their feelings and concerns in a structured meeting. The discussion will follow the supervision process set out earlier for one-to-one meetings. The difference in group supervision is that each person is allocated a role and will view the child's situation from that perspective. For example, one person will describe an experience they have had of the child. The second asks questions to encourage people to reflect on what this could mean. The third person prompts ideas about what is known and asks questions about what is not known. The fourth person collects the actions suggested, and others play the roles of management, development, mediation, and support.

Further Reading

Kolb, D A (1988) *Experiential Learning: Experience is the Source of learning and development*. London: Pearson Education.

Morrison T (2005) *Staff supervision in Social Care (3rd Edition)*. Brighton: Pavilion Publishing & Media Ltd.

Sturt P and Rowe J (2018) *Using Supervision in Schools*. Brighton: Pavilion Publishing & Media Ltd.

Wonnacott J (2014) *Developing and supporting effective staff supervision*. Brighton: Pavilion Publishing & Media Ltd.

Wonnacott J (2012) *Mastering Social Work Supervision*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Wonnacott J, Fisher J and Shaw H (2018) *After Savile: Implications for Educational Settings*. In M Erooga (Ed.) *Protecting Children and Adults from abuse after Savile: What organisations and institutions need to do*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Definition of Supervision

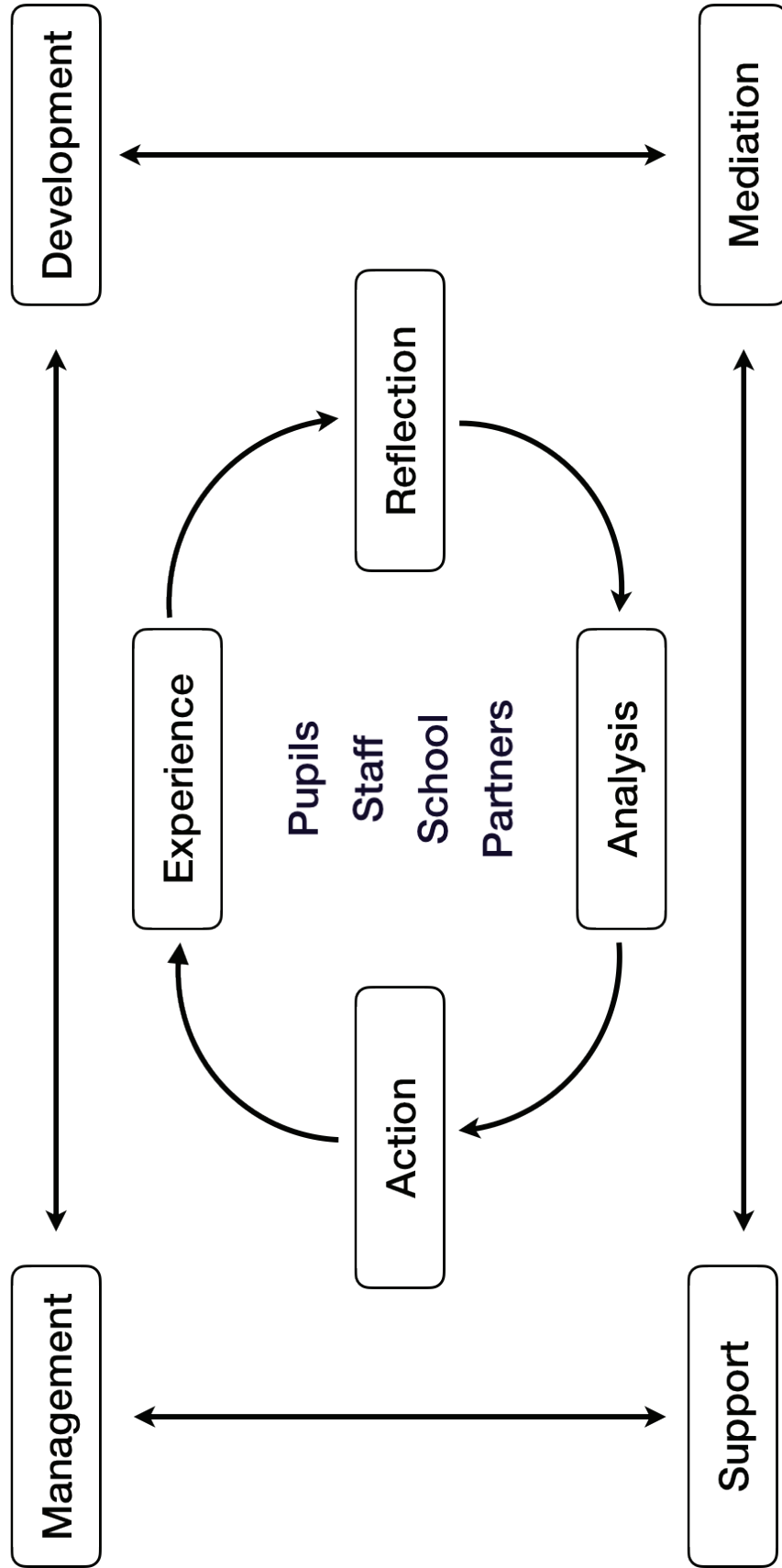
‘A process in which one worker is given professional responsibility to work with another in order to meet certain organisational, professional and personal objectives. These are competent, accountable performance, continuing professional development and personal support.’

Tony Morrison 1993

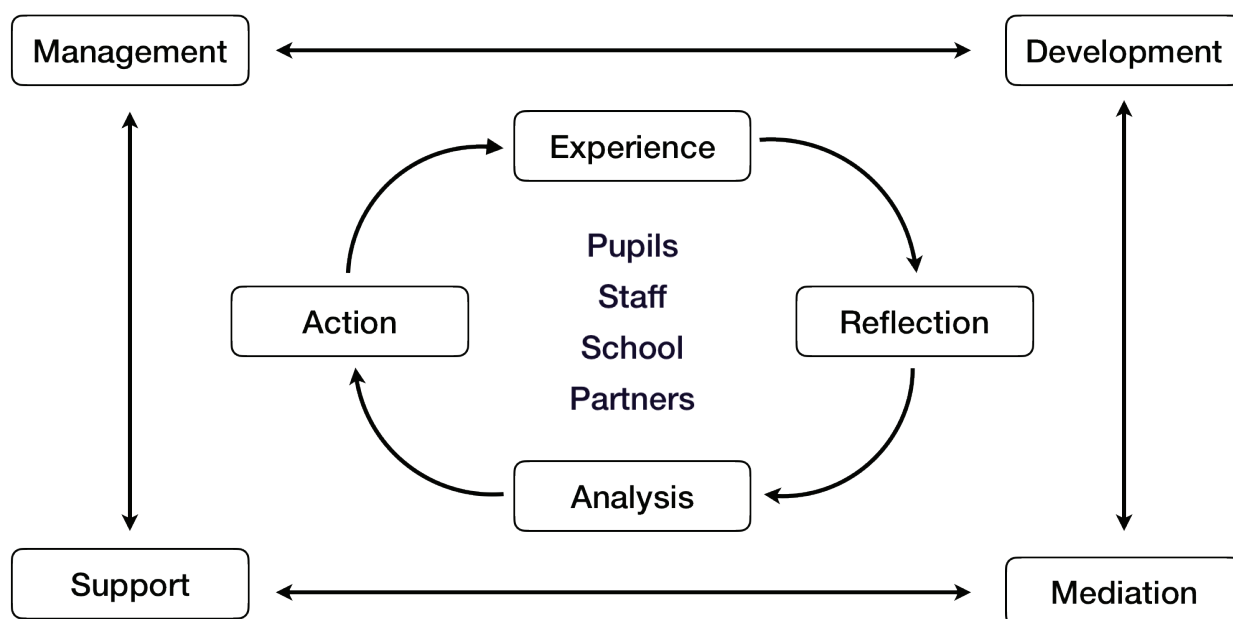
Why is a culture of supervision important?

Morrison's 4x4x4 Model of Supervision

Morrison's 4x4x4 Model of Supervision



Morrison's 4x4x4 Model of Supervision



Morrison	
Management	
Development	
Mediation	
Support	

Kolb's Learning Cycle	
Experience	
Reflection	
Analysis	
Action & Plans	

Starting the supervision session

Possible starting points could be:

Welcome

How have things been?

What's on your mind?

What challenges have there been?

Which of those would you like to look at today?

Question ideas for each phase of supervision

EXPERIENCE

Questions that encourage accurate and detailed recall of events

Question ideas for each phase of supervision

REFLECTION

Questions that draw out feelings, attitudes, skills and knowledge

Question ideas for each phase of supervision

ANALYSIS

Questions that look for meaning, identifying what is known/not know

Question ideas for each phase of supervision

ACTION & PLANS

Questions that help to create specific actions and understanding outcomes

Learning from Practice

Experience

Reflection

Analysis

Action

Group Supervision

Implementation Plan

DOCUMENTATION

Policy, Working Agreement, Agenda

METHODOLOGY

Frequency, Duration, Location

RECORDING

Supervision record; Pupil case notes

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Time, Attitudes, 'Buy-in'

CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

Supervision Policy: Points to consider

Should the definition of supervision be included

Why supervision is important

Why supervision is used in this school

Important to link this to safeguarding and Keeping Children Safe in Education

How the supervision policy fits in with other policies

What is the role of the supervisor

What is the role of the supervisee

What boundaries and clarity is there about the supervisee's personal issues

How will disagreements be solved

What support is there for the supervisor

Where will supervision take place and how frequently

What happens if issues emerge between sessions

How will the supervision session be recorded

How will any case management discussions be recorded

Who will have access to the supervision records

How will the balance be confidentiality and privacy be struck

How will the policy be monitored and reviewed

Possible supervision recording format

	Experience	Reflection	Analysis	Actions
Issues related to Management				
Issues related to Professional Development				
Issues related to Emotional Support				
Issues related to Emotional Support				

Remember that not every area has to contain notes; and that it does not have to be in this format.

Action Planning

Further Notes

Further Notes

Further Notes

