

Front Foot Coaching - Sports Therapy Intervention Case Study

This case study evaluates the impact of a Sports Therapy Intervention Programme designed to support pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs through structured physical activity. The programme was delivered in two formats: four pupils received eight weeks of 1-1 sessions, while two separate groups of pupils completed six weeks of paired (2:1) sessions.

The intervention targeted pupils identified through low attendance, behavioural concerns, teacher referral or SEMH needs. Using sport as a therapeutic tool, the programme aimed to improve emotional wellbeing, confidence, social interaction, behaviour and engagement in school.

Each session is centred around sports based activities chosen by the pupil, creating an enjoyable environment where they feel comfortable and engaged. Throughout the sessions, consistent communication is encouraged through open questioning, helping pupils build confidence, express their thoughts and develop positive relationships.

In 1:1 sessions, pupils benefit from individual support and the opportunity to build a trusting relationship with a consistent adult, enabling them to speak openly in a safe, supportive environment. 2:1 sessions provide the same trusted adult support while also promoting communication, teamwork, turn taking and positive peer relationships through shared activities.

Overall Weekly Wellbeing Check-in

Across the eight interventions, six pupils either improved or maintained high wellbeing scores throughout the programme. Four pupils demonstrated measurable improvements, while two pupils maintained the maximum score from the beginning of the intervention. Two pupils showed a reduction in their final scores, highlighting that while sports therapy can have a positive impact for many pupils, outcomes are influenced by wider factors affecting children both in and outside of school.

- **Improved:** 4 pupils
- **Maintained maximum score:** 2 pupils
- **Reduced score:** 2 pupils

Pupil	Week 1	Final
Pupil 1	20	25
Pupil 2	24	20
Pupil 3	21	25
Pupil 4	23	25
Pupil 5	25	25
Pupil 6	25	25
Pupil 7	23	19
Pupil 8	24	25

Social, Emotional & Physical Outcomes

The social, emotional and physical observations reflected similar trends to the pupil wellbeing check-ins. Six of the eight pupils either improved or maintained consistently high scores throughout the intervention. The greatest improvements were seen in pupils who began the programme with lower baseline scores, suggesting the intervention was particularly beneficial for those requiring additional support. Pupils who began with maximum scores maintained these positive outcomes throughout the programme. While two pupils showed a slight reduction in their final scores, staff observations indicated that these changes were influenced by wider circumstances beyond the sessions themselves.

Pupil	Week 1	Final
Pupil 1	25	25
Pupil 2	23	22
Pupil 3	20	25
Pupil 4	24	24
Pupil 5	25	25
Pupil 6	25	25
Pupil 7	24	22
Pupil 8	21	25

Comparing Wellbeing and Session Outcomes

When comparing both assessment tools, similar patterns emerged. Pupils who reported improvements in their weekly wellbeing check ins generally also demonstrated improvements in their social, emotional and physical session scores. Those who maintained high wellbeing also sustained high engagement and participation during sessions. This consistency across both measures increases confidence that the programme had a positive impact on pupils' overall wellbeing and engagement.

Case Study 1 – 1:1 Sports Therapy Intervention

Background

Pupil 1, was referred to the Sports Therapy Programme due to low self esteem, emotional dysregulation during friendship conflicts and being significantly below peers academically. School staff reported that the pupil often became upset during lunchtime disagreements and found it difficult to cope with losing games. Despite these challenges, they recognised that positive adult engagement had a calming effect and that the pupil responded well to encouragement and structured support.

Baseline

At the start of the programme, the pupil's wellbeing score was **20/25**, indicating reduced confidence and emotional wellbeing. Teachers described the pupil as withdrawn before sessions but noted a clear change in mood afterwards, returning to the classroom more

engaged, happier and ready to learn. Behaviour incidents were generally low-level, but emotional responses to conflict remained a concern.

Intervention

The pupil attended weekly **1:1 Sports Therapy sessions** over six weeks. Each session was based around sports and activities chosen by the pupil, creating a positive and enjoyable environment in which they felt comfortable. Alongside physical activity, consistent conversations and reflective questioning encouraged the pupil to express their thoughts, develop emotional awareness and build confidence. Over time, a strong, trusting relationship was established with the practitioner, providing the pupil with a safe space to talk openly while developing resilience through sport.

Outcomes

The intervention resulted in a significant improvement in the pupil's overall wellbeing.

- **Weekly Wellbeing Check-In: 20/25 → 25/25**
- **Social, Emotional & Physical Score: 25/25 → 25/25**

The increase in wellbeing reflects improvements in the pupil's confidence, enjoyment of school and emotional regulation. Although the pupil began the programme with maximum scores for social, emotional and physical engagement within sessions, these high standards were consistently maintained throughout, demonstrating sustained positive participation and engagement.

Staff Feedback

School staff observed positive changes throughout the programme. The Headteacher reported that the intervention had excited the pupil and enabled them to develop skills across a variety of sports. Teachers consistently noted that after each session the pupil returned to class calmer, more engaged in learning and noticeably happier.

At the conclusion of the programme, feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Staff commented that the pupil had loved attending every session, engaged exceptionally well and thoroughly enjoyed spending dedicated 1-1 time with a trusted adult while participating in activities they genuinely enjoyed. The class teacher also noted that the pupil would welcome further sessions due to the positive impact they had experienced.

Pupil Voice

The pupil described the programme positively, stating that they had **enjoyed the sessions and felt excited to attend each week**, reflecting the positive relationship developed throughout the intervention.

Impact Summary

This case study demonstrates the value of combining pupil led sporting activities with consistent adult support. The pupil showed a measurable improvement in wellbeing, increasing from **20/25 to the maximum score of 25/25** over six weeks. Alongside the quantitative improvements, staff observed increased classroom engagement, improved emotional regulation, greater enthusiasm for school and enhanced confidence. The combination of positive outcome data, staff observations and pupil feedback provides strong evidence that the intervention had a meaningful and lasting impact on the pupil's wellbeing and school experience.

Case Study 2 – 1:1 Sports Therapy Intervention (8 Weeks)

Background

Pupil 8 was referred to the Sports Therapy Programme to provide additional support with friendships and emotional wellbeing. Although described as a bubbly, enthusiastic learner who enjoys all aspects of school life, staff recognised that difficulties with peer relationships and behaviour concerns outside of school had the potential to impact her confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Baseline

At the beginning of the programme, the pupil's overall wellbeing score was **24/25**, demonstrating generally positive wellbeing with opportunities to further strengthen confidence and emotional regulation. Her Social, Emotional and Physical score was **21/25**, indicating that additional support within these areas could help improve resilience and peer interactions.

Attendance during the previous two terms was **88.9%**, with no recorded behaviour incidents in school. Staff described the pupil as enthusiastic, engaged and keen to learn, providing a strong foundation for the intervention.

Intervention

The pupil attended weekly **1:1 Sports Therapy sessions** over eight weeks. Each session was centred around sports and physical activities chosen by the pupil, creating a relaxed and enjoyable environment in which she felt comfortable expressing herself. Consistent conversations alongside activity encouraged reflection, emotional awareness and confidence building while providing dedicated time with a trusted adult.

The intervention focused on developing positive relationships, emotional regulation and resilience through enjoyable sporting activities, allowing the pupil to discuss experiences openly while building confidence in a supportive setting.

Outcomes

The programme resulted in improvements across both assessment measures.

- **Weekly Wellbeing Check-In: 24/25 → 25/25**
- **Social, Emotional & Physical Score: 21/25 → 25/25**

Although the pupil entered the programme with high wellbeing, she achieved the maximum possible wellbeing score by the end of the intervention. The most significant progress was seen within the Social, Emotional and Physical assessment, improving by four points to the maximum score, reflecting increased confidence, emotional awareness and positive engagement throughout the programme.

Staff Feedback

School staff reported that the pupil consistently returned from sessions ready to learn and had thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the programme. They noted that she engaged positively throughout and benefited from having dedicated time to participate in activities she enjoyed while talking with a trusted adult.

Pupil Voice

The pupil shared:

“I have really enjoyed it, going outside and doing sports. It helps me to release energy and makes me feel calm.”

This feedback highlights the positive impact the sessions had on both emotional regulation and overall wellbeing, demonstrating how physical activity supported her ability to feel calmer and more settled.

Impact Summary

This case study demonstrates how Sports Therapy can enhance the wellbeing of pupils who are already engaged in school but require additional support with friendships and emotional resilience. Through eight weeks of consistent 1:1 sessions, the pupil increased her wellbeing to the maximum score while making significant gains in social, emotional and physical wellbeing (**21/25 to 25/25**). Combined with positive staff observations and the pupil’s own reflections, the evidence suggests the intervention strengthened confidence, supported emotional regulation and contributed to a more positive school experience.

Case Study 3 – 1:1 Sports Therapy Intervention (8 Weeks)

Background

Pupil 4 was referred to the Sports Therapy Programme following significant changes at home which had begun to affect his behaviour and engagement in school. Staff reported that he frequently struggled to regulate his emotions, often leaving the classroom when work or

friendships did not go his way. Behaviour incidents were common and could present physically or verbally, impacting both his learning and relationships with others.

Baseline

At the start of the programme, the pupil's wellbeing score was **23/25**, while his Social, Emotional and Physical score was **24/25**. Although these scores suggested generally positive wellbeing, staff observations highlighted that the pupil's emotional regulation and behaviour did not always reflect this. His behaviour within the classroom was inconsistent, and external circumstances were significantly influencing his presentation in school.

Intervention

The pupil attended weekly **1:1 Sports Therapy sessions** over eight weeks. Sessions were centred around football and other sports selected by the pupil, creating an environment where he felt motivated and comfortable. Alongside physical activity, regular conversations encouraged him to reflect on his emotions, discuss challenges and develop strategies for managing frustration. Building a consistent relationship with the same practitioner became a key part of the intervention, providing stability during a period of change.

Outcomes

Unlike some pupils, progress was not immediate.

The pupil's weekly wellbeing scores fluctuated during the first five weeks before showing a sustained improvement during the second half of the programme.

Weekly Wellbeing Check-In

- Week 1: **23/25**
- Week 2: **22/25**
- Week 3: **23/25**
- Week 4: **22/25**
- Week 5: **22/25**
- Week 6: **25/25**
- Week 7: **25/25**
- Week 8: **25/25**

This pattern suggests that meaningful change occurred once the pupil had established trust in the intervention and developed confidence within the sessions.

The Social, Emotional and Physical scores followed a similar trend.

- Week 1: **24/25**
- Week 2: **22/25**
- Week 3: **21/25**
- Week 4: **21/25**
- Week 5: **22/25**

- Week 6: **24/25**
- Week 7: **25/25**
- Week 8: **24/25**

Although there were fluctuations early in the programme, the pupil finished with consistently higher scores than during the middle stages, demonstrating improved engagement, confidence and emotional regulation.

Staff Feedback

School staff reported significant changes in the pupil's attitude towards school and the intervention. He regularly looked forward to his sessions and frequently asked whether it was his Sports Therapy day. Staff observed that he had developed a positive relationship with the practitioner, which transferred into improved behaviour during PE lessons and greater engagement throughout the school day.

Following sessions, teachers consistently described the pupil as returning to class in high spirits, ready to learn and able to participate more positively in classroom activities.

Pupil Voice

The pupil shared:

"I like playing football. I love doing sports because it's my favourite thing to do. X has helped and supported me with my football and he's funny."

This feedback reflects not only the enjoyment of the sessions but also the importance of the positive relationship built with the practitioner.

Impact Summary

This case study highlights that progress is not always linear for pupils experiencing significant emotional and behavioural challenges. While early assessment scores fluctuated, the consistency of weekly sessions, trusted adult support and pupil led activities resulted in sustained improvements during the latter half of the programme. By the end of the intervention, the pupil demonstrated greater emotional regulation, stronger engagement in school, improved behaviour during PE and a more positive attitude towards learning. Staff observations and pupil feedback indicate that the intervention had a meaningful impact both inside and beyond the Sports Therapy sessions.

Comparison Between Delivery Models

Delivery Models

Model	Pupils	Session Length
1:1 Intervention	Pupils 1–4	30 minutes
2:1 Intervention	Pupils 5–6	30 minutes
2:1 Intervention	Pupils 7–8	30 minutes

The Sports Therapy Programme was delivered through both individual and paired interventions. While both approaches demonstrated positive outcomes, each model supported pupils in different ways depending on their needs.

Wellbeing Outcomes

1:1 Sessions (Pupils 1–4)

Pupil	Start	Finish	Change
1	20	25	+5
2	24	20	-4
3	21	25	+4
4	23	25	+2

Average

Week 1 = **22**

Final = **23.75**

Average Improvement = +1.75 points

2:1 Sessions (Pupils 5–8)

Pupil	Start	Finish	Change
5	25	25	0
6	25	25	0
7	23	19	-4
8	24	25	+1

Average

Week 1 = **24.25**

Final = **23.5**

Average Change = -0.75 points

However...

Two pupils entered the programme already scoring **25/25**, meaning no measurable improvement was possible.

If Pupils 5 and 6 are excluded because they were already at the maximum score, the remaining paired intervention pupils changed from:

23.5 → 22

which reflects the influence of one pupil (Pupil 7) experiencing external factors that affected their wellbeing.

Social, Emotional & Physical Outcomes

1:1

Average Week 1

23

Average Final

24

Average improvement = +1 point

2:1

Average Week 1

23.75

Average Final

24.25

Average improvement = +0.5 points

Discussion

The **1:1 intervention** appeared particularly effective for pupils presenting with more complex emotional and behavioural needs. Three of the four pupils demonstrated measurable improvements in wellbeing, with one pupil improving by five points over the course of the programme. Staff consistently reported improved confidence, stronger relationships with adults and increased classroom engagement following sessions.

The **2:1 intervention** provided different strengths. Pupils benefited from opportunities to communicate, cooperate and develop positive peer relationships while still receiving consistent adult support. Two pupils maintained maximum wellbeing scores throughout the intervention, indicating that the programme successfully sustained already high levels of wellbeing. One pupil demonstrated improved wellbeing and social emotional functioning, while one pupil experienced a decline in wellbeing that coincided with wider circumstances outside the intervention.

Across both delivery models, staff consistently reported improvements in engagement, enjoyment and readiness to learn following sessions. Regardless of whether pupils attended individually or in pairs, the programme fostered trusting relationships, encouraged open communication and provided a positive environment for developing confidence and resilience.

Key Findings

Outcome	1:1	2:1
Emotional support	★★★★★	★★★★☆
Confidence building	★★★★★	★★★★☆
Relationship with adult	★★★★★	★★★★★
Peer communication	★★★★☆☆	★★★★★
Teamwork	★★★★☆☆	★★★★★
Social interaction	★★★★☆☆	★★★★★
Overall engagement	★★★★★	★★★★★

Conclusion

The Sports Therapy Programme has demonstrated a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing, engagement and emotional development across both 1:1 and 2:1 interventions. Delivered over six and eight week programmes, the intervention provided pupils with a consistent, trusted adult alongside engaging, pupil-led sporting activities that created opportunities for meaningful conversations, confidence building and emotional regulation.

Across the eight case studies, **six pupils either improved or maintained maximum wellbeing scores**, with several pupils showing significant increases in both their weekly wellbeing check-ins and their social, emotional and physical outcomes. While not every pupil followed a linear pattern of progress, the data showed that sustained improvements often occurred once trusting relationships had been established. This reinforces the importance of consistency and allowing sufficient time for interventions to have a lasting impact.

Teacher observations consistently supported the quantitative data. Staff reported pupils returning to class calmer, happier and more engaged in learning following sessions. Pupils demonstrated improved emotional regulation, increased confidence, stronger relationships with adults and peers, and greater participation both within lessons and during physical education. Several pupils who previously struggled with behaviour and emotional regulation developed more positive coping strategies and showed improved readiness to learn.

Pupil voice was overwhelmingly positive throughout the programme. Pupils described the sessions as enjoyable, exciting and something they actively looked forward to each week. Many highlighted that the sessions helped them feel calmer, release energy, develop

confidence and build positive relationships with the practitioner. The consistently positive feedback reflects the value pupils placed on having dedicated time with a trusted adult in a supportive, non judgemental environment.

The programme also demonstrated that different delivery models can successfully meet different needs. Individual 1:1 sessions proved particularly effective for pupils requiring intensive emotional support, confidence building and trusted adult relationships. Paired 2:1 sessions successfully promoted communication, teamwork and peer relationships while maintaining the same supportive environment. This flexibility enables schools to tailor provision according to the needs of individual pupils.

Recommendation

Based on the evidence gathered, Front Foot Coaching recommends that schools consider Sports Therapy as part of their wider SEMH and wellbeing provision. The programme provides a flexible, evidence informed intervention that can be tailored to meet individual pupil needs while supporting key school priorities, including behaviour, attendance, emotional wellbeing, personal development and readiness to learn.

Whether delivered through 1:1 or 2:1 sessions, the intervention offers pupils a unique opportunity to build confidence, develop resilience and strengthen positive relationships through purposeful physical activity and trusted adult support.

For any further information please email: Admin@frontfootcoaching2.co.uk