



Case Study

Dr. Pippa Hugo



A REAL AND LASTING DIFFERENCE FOR EVERYONE WE SUPPORT

Suzie is a 13 year old girl who has always been a very popular and academic student. She suffered a bereavement in the family and her father has been seriously unwell since she was 12. Suzie began to feel that she should make sure she became healthier and stopped eating “rubbish”. This led to restricting carbohydrates and gradually extended to all foods.

Suzie became very anxious about her academic work and spent excessive amounts of time on her school and home work. This was unwittingly reinforced by school as she consequently achieved very good grades and praise.

Unfortunately because her family were preoccupied with other issues they initially did not notice that she was losing weight and had stopped eating. She became withdrawn and her friends became concerned about her and approached the teachers.

- Might she have a mental illness or disorder?
- Could early signs have been detected?
- What conversations could have been had with parents/professionals?
- What can the school do at this stage?

Suzie required admission to hospital and remained in hospital for 5 months. Suzie was highly perfectionist about her work and became extremely anxious about not being able to keep up with the work sent from school.

This made the return to school a challenge. She was also very anxious about what to say to her friends when she returned, particularly as she was making a graded return to school.

What could the school do during her hospital stay?

What do you think the school could do to help her reintegration?