

VOLUME 2: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORTS

by

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Submitted to

The University of Birmingham

**in part fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology and
Child Psychology**

School of Education

The University of Birmingham

June 2010

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This comprises volume two a thesis submitted in part fulfilment of a three year Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. The programme requires that students secure a position as a Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEP) within a Local Authority (LA) during years two and three of the course. Two volumes of thesis are required where volume one comprises a substantial piece of original research commissioned by the employing LA. Volume two of the thesis (this volume) comprises Professional Practice Reports (PPRs) that relate to areas of supervised professional practice. TEPs can select from a range of professional practice experiences that are thought to be integral to the training experience.

This volume comprises four PPRs relating to my professional experience during year two and three of the course as an employee within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) situated in the West Midlands. The EPS provided link Educational Psychologists (EPs) to all schools and educational settings (e.g. Pupil Referral Units, Speech and Language Resources bases) within the LA, who were responsible for providing assessment and intervention for pupils identified by the setting as requiring support for Special Educational Needs (SEN). Much of the EP core work comprised casework within educational settings although systemic level work could also be negotiated.

However, cuts to LA budgets in 2011 (in response to the national debt) means that many EPSs have reduced funding for what was considered to be their core work. Consistent with the reported likely impact of the cuts (see the Times Education Supplement report by Maddern, April 8th 2011) EPSs such as the one that I work in, are offering the services that were once delivered through LA funding, on a 'buy in'

basis to schools and other child supporting institutions. Recent changes as a result of the budget cuts to the LA meant that the EPS is funded (as of April 2011) by the LA to fulfil the statutory duties regarding the assessment of, and provision for, children and young people with SEN (as set out in the Department for Education and Skills' Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, 2001) as well as some work in specialist areas such as Autism and responding to critical incidents. Non-statutory work is now delivered through a traded service and this appeared to have led to more opportunities for EPS to work that include school systems level work and therapeutic working.

The PPRs presented here were written within the context prior to moving to traded services. It is anticipated that there will be further changes to the EP role and training route following the review stemming from the Department for Education, Green Paper - *Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Need and Disability*, published (DfE, 2011). The paper invites consultation of a new framework for assessment of SENs and proposes to improve/update the Code of Practice that may include incorporating it into other guidance. The paper also invites consultation relating to a number of questions, one of which is:

“In addition to their role in the assessment process, what are the innovative ways in which educational psychologists are deployed locally to support children and young people with SEN who are disabled and their families?” (DfE, 2011; P106).

The DfE (2011) paper also recognises that EPs can help promote the skills of professionals working with children with SEN and encourages EPs to work in a more flexible manner.

Whilst the EP role covers a wide variety of work, the pressures of undertaking statutory duties including the statutory duty to undertake assessments of SEN that

arose from legislation in the 1980s (Mackay, 2007) has been considered to have narrowed the contribution that EPs might make (Boxer et al. 1998). In particular, these pressures are thought to have impacted on EPs ability to undertake therapeutic interventions (MacKay, 2002). A review of the functions and contributions of EPs (Farrell et al, 2006) highlighted a need for EPs to take on a therapeutic role. Mackay (2007) argued that the place of therapy in EPs' role is being 'revisited' and Rait et al (2010) recognised an increase in the amount of "therapeutic" training delivered to EPs entering the profession.

In my second year as TEP I had benefited from a slightly reduced workload compared to qualified EPs in my service which meant that I had more opportunity to explore and apply skills that I had learnt in my training such as undertaking therapeutic interventions. Consequently two of my PPRs relate to therapeutic interventions. Chapter 3 relates to a Cognitive Behaviour Therapeutic intervention that I undertook with a pupil in a secondary that had been referred to me through one of my link schools. Chapter 4 critically explores the theory behind a 'Therapeutic Story Writing' intervention developed by Waters (2004) that I co-facilitated with a colleague. The Therapeutic Story Writing model is purported to be aligned with a psychoanalytic approach.

As well as core statutory work with schools, the EPS in which I worked also covered a range of other work activities such as undertaking work funded by other agencies such as the Children's Centre Network and LA disability teams (e.g. visual or auditory impairment, speech and language difficulties, physical disabilities etc). Work is also commissioned at an LA level relating to LA obligations. An example is the responsibility that LAs have to promote the academic achievement of vulnerable children and this includes a specific duty for LA's to promote the educational

achievement of 'looked after children' (LAC) (see Section 52 of the Children Act; 2004) that came into effect in July 2005. One of my PPRs (see chapter 2) critically explored the steps taken in my LA to raise the achievement of LAC who have been identified as achieving less well academically compared to their peers (e.g. Boreland et al, 1998; Fletcher-Campbell, 1997). The PPR also considered the role of the EP in supporting LAC. Information was gathered through semi-structured interviews with an EP who had a specialist role regarding LAC and an officer working within The Education of Looked After Children (TELAC) Service. A questionnaire was also completed by a Virtual Head Teacher.

My final PPR (see chapter 5) critically explored an evaluation study that I was involved in, that assessed the impact of an intervention undertaken within an LA school to develop pupils' Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). The intervention and evaluation was funded at an authority level. The evaluation gathered data through questionnaires administered to school staff and pupils and also through focus groups with pupils.

The work presented within these four PPRs therefore covers work at an LA level, school level and two different therapeutic interventions.

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CHAPTER TWO: A LOCAL AUTHORITIES STEPS TO RAISE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF 'LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'

2.1 Introduction

This report explores the steps taken in a Local Authority (LA) in which the author works as a Trainee Educational Psychologist to raise the achievement of Looked after Children (LAC)¹. It should be noted that achievement can be measured in many ways according to subjective judgements regarding targets and aspirations.

However, this report focuses on raising the academic achievement of LAC as it is later argued that academic achievement is a resilience factor that is associated with positive outcomes for children and young people. This is done by first discussing the potential barriers to learning experienced by LAC and then describing the guidance set out for LAs to raise the achievement of LAC. The report then explores the actual practice in the LA including the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in raising the achievement of LAC.

A Department for Children Schools and Family (DCSF) report in 2009 states that there are around 60,000 LAC at any one time. They make up less than 1% of the school population (Jackson & McParlin, 2006) but the number of children who are looked after is likely to rise as the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service reported (Oct 2009) a 47% rise in care applications to England's courts in the three months leading up to September. This has been attributed to social workers taking a more cautious approach following the death of 'Baby Peter' and the subsequent Laming enquiry (2009).

Research has shown that LAC achieve less well academically compared to their peers of the same age who are not looked after (e.g. Boreland et al, 1998; Fletcher-

¹ The term 'looked after children' is taken here to include all children and young people who are in public care who are subject to care orders as in the Children Act 1989.

Campbell, 1997) and the DCSF (2009) reported that the average attainment for LAC is comparably worse than their peers:

“At Key Stage 2, they are significantly less likely to reach level 4 or above in English or Maths. In 2008 only 46% of LAC achieved levels 4 in English and 44% achieved level 4 in Maths. By contrast, 81% of all children obtained this level in English and 79% obtained this level in Maths”.

“The gap between this group and their peers increases by the end of Key Stage 4. In 2008 just 14% of LAC achieved at least 5A* - C grade GCSEs, compared with 65% of all children” (DCSF,2009; Paragraphs 2.4 & 2.5).

Furthermore, over 50% of LAC leave school with no qualifications (DfES, 2005) and are at least 10 times more likely to be excluded from schools compared to their peers (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Children who grow up in care are thought to experience a number of negative life experiences in later life including being more likely to require support for mental health, to spend time in prison and to become homeless (Jackson and Simon 2005). Jackson and McParlin (2006), argue that...

“the generally poor outcomes for people who have spent time in care as children can be confidently linked to educational failure, and that the care and educational systems must bear a heavy responsibility for this.” (Jackson & McParlin, 2006; P90).

Thus, the negative outcomes experienced by people who had been looked after is, at least in part, attributed to their experiences within the educational system. Indeed research has identified educational success as a predominant protective factor for positive outcomes for children. Dent and Cameron (2003) for example, highlight a number of protective factors including, a supportive teacher, having a family member with a reasonable level of education and they suggested that good educational attainment should be promoted particularly early reading skills. But what are the barriers to the academic achievement of LAC?

2.2 Barriers to educational achievement experienced by LAC

The DCSF (2009) report highlights three causal factors for the underachievement of LAC:

1. The emotional wellbeing of LAC;
2. Movement between schools and
3. The schools system.

Each of these factors is discussed below with reference to evidence from research.

2.2.1 The emotional wellbeing of LAC

The DCSF (2009) reports that children enter care for many reasons but around 63% enter because of neglect or abuse and may suffer mental health problems as a result. Others enter because their parents are suffering from a disability or stress. These children are taken into care for their own protection and well-being.

Early research claimed that poor academic achievement (and problematic behaviour) could be attributed to the fact that many of the children had experienced abuse and/or neglect before being placed in care (Heath et al, 1989). However, Jackson and McParlin (2006) argued that there is no evidence that early adversity was the *main reason* for the underachievement of LAC, as we would expect to see children who entered care at an early age do better than those who entered later. They argued that despite adverse life experiences some LAC go on to become successful.

This is supported by Jackson et al (2005) who undertook a longitudinal study of 129 university students who had been in care at the age of 16 (many of whom had been in care for 5 years or more). The young peoples' birth families had a high proportion

of single parent families, unemployment and around 60% of the young people were placed in care as a result of severe neglect or abuse. The study tracked the students through their degree and interviewed them at regular intervals. They found that the main factor that differentiated these students from other LAC was that their foster placements placed a high value and importance on education that was expressed in practical ways including offering encouragement, liaison between carers and school teachers, supervising homework, celebrating achievement and having good conditions for study. Similarly, Jackson and Martin (1998) followed 105 young people who were successful despite having been a looked after and identified a number of protective factors associated with better outcomes including, having an internal locus of control, having someone who takes an interest in their education and having an environment where education is valued. The young people themselves reported that educational success was very important to their later success in life.

The importance of an environment that is conducive to academic achievement is supported by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) who reviewed the research literature on parental involvement and achievement of young people and found that...

“parental involvement in the form of ‘at-home good parenting’ has a significant positive effect on children’s achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation”. (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; P4).

The impact of parental involvement was seen as a bigger contributor to attainment than differences associated with the quality of schools. It is thought that this is due to parenting shaping the child’s self-concept as a learner and through setting high aspirations (Desforges & Abouchaar 2003).

Griffiths (2005) argued that LAC may suffer from a lack of an adult who would act as an educational advocate in the way that a parent normally would and lack of facilities

(e.g. books and homework space). Fletcher and Campbell (1997) found that the main factors that undermine academic achievement of LAC include lack of access to books, environments that aren't conducive to study and a poor education level of carers. Similarly, other research has shown (e.g. Berridge & Brodie, 1989; Rees, 2001) that residential placements do not always provide basic resources for education such as study areas and books and that LAC do not get sufficient help if they fall behind and carers are not expected or equipped to provide the necessary support and encouragement for learning at home (The Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Thus, while it is likely that emotional difficulties contribute to the under achievement of LAC, the research presented above indicates that home environments that are conducive to learning are a significant protective factor associated with educational achievement and positive outcomes in later life and this led Jackson and McParlin (2006) to conclude that...

“high quality educationally oriented care can compensate at least to some extent for early adversity” (Jackson & McParlin, 2006; P91).

2.2.2 Movement between schools

Schooling can be disrupted by experiences of the care system such as movement between placements. The Social Exclusion Unit (2003) found that, as well as separation from significant others, time out of school due to frequent moves can impede the education of LAC. The DCSF (2009) report states that 28% of LAC have statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) compared to 3% of all children and that on average pupils who move schools during Key Stage 4 obtain 75 points lower in their GCSEs (paragraph 4.15).

Furthermore, Comfort (2004) argued that teachers often are not aware of the child's history and are not trained sufficiently to understand the care system or how to

manage the behaviour of LAC. Jackson and McParlin (2006) argued that rather than addressing the underlying causes of behavioural difficulties, schools often resort to exclusion or transference to special provision. They highlight that EPs may be the only people who are fully aware of a child's history and circumstances and are well placed to explain how behavioural difficulties may be a normal reaction to adverse experiences and to advise appropriate strategies. However, they cite McParlin (2001) who found that on average, LAC with a Statement of SEN have attended 6 or 7 schools and may have seen 4 or 5 different psychologists because many psychologists are linked to schools rather than to cases.

As well as the responses to behaviour difficulties, schools may be inadvertently creating barriers to the achievement of LAC through low expectations of them.

Fletcher and Campbell (1997) found that the main factors of the care system that undermine academic achievement include disrupted schooling due to changes in placements and secondly the teachers' and social workers' low expectations of LAC. This is supported by Jackson and Sachdev (2001), and McParlin (2001) who found that young people complained about the low expectations of teachers and social workers. Furthermore, the Who Cares? Trust (2004) commissioned psychologists in Kent to report on a group of LAC and found that some of the children had been allocated remedial classes on entering a new school despite having reading ages of 16+ and Gordon et al (2004) found that LAC are five times more likely to be allocated to special schools even when their difficulties are less serious than their peers in mainstream schools.

Thus, frequent changes to schooling (and placements) is thought to impact negatively on achievement as teachers and social workers may be unaware of a child's history, may underestimate the child's capabilities and be unaware of

strategies to support emotional needs. It is important therefore, to ensure as far as possible, continuity in schooling. However, there is evidence that continuity of schooling is not always sufficiently prioritised when making care placement decisions (Office for Standards in Education, 2002) and that social workers, carers and teachers do not give the educational progress of LAC sufficient priority (Social Services Inspectorate/Office for Standards in Education, 1995). Fletcher-Campbell and Hall (1990) and Francis (2000) argued that the educational needs of LAC were prioritised lower than issues regarding placements, maintaining family relationships and dealing with emotional and physical needs.

2.2.3 The school system

The DCSF (2009) report states that the school system does not do enough to help LAC to catch up and keep up either because they do not know what can be done or because they do not know that the child is looked after. It reports that LAC, more than their peers, value personal support and require understanding of the issues the child is facing and high expectations. It states that:

“Feeling valued and supported by an adult is a key to promoting attainment among this group of children” (DCSF, 2009; Paragraph 5.1).

Furthermore, the report argues that LAC might particularly benefit from the use of academic study support that includes activities such as homework and book clubs, mentoring or catch up sessions etc.

2.3 Requirements on Local Authorities

It is clear that LAC are a vulnerable group who are at risk of not achieving their academic potential and experiencing negative outcomes later in life as a result and

there is a clear need for LAs to work toward raising the academic achievement of LAC. In 2000 the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) issued guidance on the education of children in public care. Since then, LAC have been highlighted in government reports and legislation such as the DoH report on 'Guidance on Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked after Children' (2009), Every Child Matters (2004) and the DfES SEN Code of Practice (2001) as a priority vulnerable group. Section 52 of the Children Act (2004) includes a specific duty for LAs to promote the educational achievement of LAC that came into effect in July 2005. This means that LAs must pay attention to the educational implications of any decisions regarding the welfare of LAC.

The DCSF (2009) report states that reversing the widening of the gap between LAC and their peers is now an 'urgent necessity' (paragraph 2.9) and building on 'The Care Matters White Paper' (2007) it sets out fundamental elements that LAs should provide in order to transform the learning and achievement LAC. It proposes that every LA should have a "virtual school head" (VSH) with responsibility for improving the attainment of all LAC, ensuring their education is seen as a priority by everyone who works with them, ensuring that schools put in appropriate targeted intervention and track the location, attendance and educational progress of every LAC. The VSH should also aim to ensure continuity of schooling for every LAC even when stability of placement cannot be achieved by using appropriate admissions powers (the School Admissions Code of Practice requires LAs to give LAC priority in over subscription criteria) and school transport where necessary. Evidence of the effectiveness of VSH is provided by a pilot study that was undertaken in Liverpool and reported by the DCSF (2009). The study found that a year after the VSH was

introduced, the number of LAC who gained one or more GCSEs rose from 33% to 54%.

Other duties to promote the educational achievement of LAC were published by the DfES (2005) and include guidance on designing an effective Personal Educational Plan (PEP). PEPs should record achievement and be linked to other education plans such as Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and Statements of SEN. The PEP should contain short and long term developmental and educational needs (e.g. regarding skills, knowledge etc), long term plans and educational targets (e.g. aspirations, further education, career plans). This may help alleviate the low expectations held by teachers and social workers for LAC as identified in the research mentioned above (e.g. Fletcher & Campbell, 1997; Jackson & Sachdev, 2001; McPalin, 2001).

From September 2009 all schools have a statutory requirement to have a Designated Teacher who is responsible for coordinating support to raise the attainment of LAC including providing one-to-one tuition where appropriate and, in conjunction with the child's social worker, develop high quality PEPs. Furthermore, A Personal Educational Allowance (PEA) of £500 per year is available for each LAC at risk of not reaching their expected level of attainment. The PEA can be used for activities that parents would normally provide including buying books, and educational trips. This is consistent with the research mentioned above that highlighted the importance of resources such as books (e.g. Fletcher & Campbell 1997; Griffiths 2005).

LAs are assessed against how well they are raising the achievement of LAC. In September 2003 a national target was set to substantially narrow the gap between the educational attainment of LAC and their peers by 2006. In April 2008 a set of

National Indicators relating to LAC was introduced that include the emotional and behaviour health of LAC, care leavers in education, employment or training and indicators and timeliness of placements.

The above shows that the profile of LAC has been raised in recent years and that there are many requirements on LAs to actively work to reduce the educational gap between LAC and their peers. The requirements appear to be consistent with research that highlights the importance of consistency in schooling, having high expectations of LAC and the provision of resources. However, research has indicated that the educational needs of LAC were prioritised lower than other issues including placement decisions and dealing with emotional needs. Clearly placement and emotional needs are important factors that need attention but research has shown that educational achievement is a protective factor associated with positive outcomes in later life and that a home environment that places an emphasis on academic study is a significant contributor to academic achievement. There was little mention in the guidance above with regards to LAs role in ensuring that the placement environment of LAC is conducive to educational achievement.

2.4 What is being done in the Local Authority

Information regarding what is being done to raise the academic achievement of LAC in the LA was gathered from a number of sources including:

- A semi-structured interview with an EP with a specialist role regarding LAC (see Appendix I for the interview questions);
- A semi-structured interview with an officer working within The Education of Looked After Children (TELAC) Service (see Appendix II for the interview questions) and

- A questionnaire given to the Virtual Head Teacher (The questionnaire can be seen in Appendix III).

The interviews were conducted informally with interview questions being used as prompts to ensure pertinent areas were covered. Interviewees were told the purpose of the interview was to collect information regarding what the LA is doing with regards to raising the achievement of LAC and were asked for their consent regarding the use of the information gathered in this report. Interviewees were also informed that their identity would remain anonymous. Notes were taken during the interviews that summarised the main points covered. This approach may be criticised for the potential of misrepresenting the information gathered although the main points were checked with the interviewee for their accuracy before being written down. Recording the interview would have ensured that all information was recorded comprehensively and accurately. Furthermore, not all the questions were asked as information gathered during the process of the interview rendered some of them inappropriate.

Due to limited opportunity to meet with the Virtual Head-Teacher (VH), a questionnaire was developed and emailed to her. The VH was asked for consent regarding the use of this information in this report and informed that her identity would remain anonymous. The VH returned the populated questionnaire by email. Information was also gathered from the LA website and public leaflets relating to LAC and LA internal reports including:

- The LAs 'Corporate Parenting Policy, Strategy and Service Development Plan';
- Evaluation reports relating to specific interventions;

- Data regarding the academic achievement of LAC within year groups (presented Table 1).

No references are provided for these resources as this would allow the LA to be identified.

The LAs actions are discussed below with reference to the research findings mentioned above.

2.5 Background Information

Information on the LA website indicated that there are currently between 300-400 LAC in the LA. The LA 'Corporate Parenting Policy, Strategy and Service Development Plan' reports that the LA worked with children and young people in 2008 to develop a pledge to LAC that was launched in April 2009. The LA pledge to children and young people in care is to:

- care for you and about you and have the same hopes and aspirations and expectations of you that we have for our own children;
- recognise the impact of change in your lives and commit to minimising further disruption and change;
- ensure that we really listen to you;
- stick with you and continue to do what we think is right for you even when you do not agree with us.

The pledge is consistent with research (e.g. Fletcher & Campbell, 1997; Jackson & Sachdev, 2001) that recognises the importance of stability and having high expectations and aspirations of LAC.

2.6 The role of the Virtual Head-Teacher

Information regarding the role of the VH was gathered from the LA website and the interviews and questionnaire with the VH. This information indicates that the LA was one of eleven LAs chosen to pilot a Virtual Head-Teacher (VH). The VH sits within the Educational Partnerships and School Development Branch of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. There are a number of purposes to this branch including:

- monitoring standards in schools;
- promoting collaboration between schools;
- sustaining and building capacity within schools in order to raise attainment and achievement, enhance learning opportunities and promote inclusion and to deliver a range of services to pupils and their families.

These purposes contribute to the 'Engaging and Achieving' Every Child Matters Outcome.

The VH explains her role as:

“To lead on improving the achievements and outcomes of Children in Care through strategic work within the authority, partnership support and challenge with schools and wider partnership work with all those working with this group.”

Thus, the role of the VH includes collaborative working towards achievements and outcomes.

2.7 The role of The Education of Looked After Children (TELAC) service officer

Information regarding the role of TELAC was gathered from the LA website and the interview with the EP and TELAC officer. This information indicates that the LA has

had TELAC service since Sept 2003. TELAC service until recently (November 09), were situated in a branch of the Children Young People and Families Directorate known as 'Children in Need'. The purposes of the branch include the provision of:

- an integrated service to children, young people and families that require intensive and or urgent support and intervention to protect them from harm;
- a comprehensive range of services to LAC and
- an education social work service to schools to maximise attendance and raise attainment.

These purposes contribute to the 'Staying Safe' ECM outcome and have a very different emphasis compared to that of the branch in which the VH sits.

The service consists of TELAC officers (who are qualified teachers and are attached to geographical areas) and administrative assistants. According to the information presented on the LA website, TELAC officers have 3 main areas of work:

1. To work with schools, including providing support and information to Designated Teachers, guidance for completing PEPs, monitoring the progress and attendance of LAC and work to minimise disruption in education through co-ordination of alternative provision.
2. To work with young people and their carers', including providing support and advice, setting appropriate targets and monitoring attainment and achievement, finding school places, ensuring everything can be done to overcome barriers to learning and providing tuition to supplement other interventions if necessary.
3. To work with other agencies including liaison with social workers, Connexions and securing the active intervention of other support services.

These areas of work are consistent with research that highlights the importance of consistency of educational setting and having aspirations and expectations (e.g. through developing PEPs). However, a barrier to raising the achievement of LAC is that caseloads are linked to a geographical patch not to individual children. Thus, if a LAC is placed in a school to which the officer does not cover, the TELAC officer assigned to the LAC would change. This has implications in terms of consistency and is contrary to the LAs pledge to “commit to minimising further disruption and change”.

TELAC officers hold around seventy cases and this high caseload limits their capacity for individual one-to-one intervention with LAC and means that officers generally work as an advisory service through providing information, attending meetings, supporting schools, providing training, helping with PEPs and providing input to individual case work. However, more direct intervention with LAC may be accessed through TELAC service subscription to the LA’s Early Intervention Service (EIS) that comprises specialist teachers and provides time limited support for learning and behaviour for all children whose progress is of concern.

TELAC officers aim to meet with Designated Teachers every half term to facilitate discussions of issues, share information and plan interventions for individual children. It is through these meetings that officers monitor attendance and attainment albeit on an informal basis. However, the TELAC officer described her role predominantly in terms of working to improve the emotional wellbeing of the LAC and felt that this served as a foundation before progression towards academic achievement can be made. Indeed the TELAC officer said that:

“Raising attainment is often about raising awareness of their psychological needs”.

The main aim of the TELAC officers' role was described in terms of generating an understanding of the emotional needs of LAC by dissemination of psychological knowledge at meetings and/or through training in schools. This appears to overlap with the role of EPs who also facilitate understanding of a child's emotional and learning needs. The role of the TELAC officer described here is consistent with research that indicates that the academic achievement of LAC was prioritised lower than decisions regarding placements and dealing with emotional needs (e.g. Fletcher-Campbell & Hall 1990 & Francis 2000). However, caution should be given with regards to generalising this information due to the limited data. Furthermore, the LA has TELAC teams based in different localities that may operate differently.

2.8 The role of the Educational Psychologist

Information regarding the role of the Educational Psychologists (EPs) was gathered during the interview with the EP. The information provided indicated that EPs in the LA are expected to recognise the importance of prioritising support for LAC. Letters of introduction go out to all schools at the start of the academic year that inform the school who their link EP will be and the priorities of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The letter highlights LAC as a priority group and EPs are expected to discuss the progress of LAC in planning their work with schools. However, like TELAC officers, EPs are linked to schools and continuity of provision will be lost if a child moves to a school that is not covered by the EP.

Although all EPs are expected to prioritise LAC in their work, the EPS also has an EP with a specialist role regarding LAC. The role of this EP has recently changed but was previously contracted to provide support to the TELAC team for a day a week. This was reduced to half a day a week and in April 09 the contract came to an end

partly because of inconsistencies regarding expectations of the EP's role and questions regarding whether the EP's time was being put to best use. The difficulty in terms of roles was further exacerbated because the TELAC service, the VH and the EPS were situated in different branches of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate which meant that they had different purposes.

In relation to LAC, agencies are expected to work together as a 'corporate parent'.

Harker et al (2004a) state that:

"Corporate parenting requires local authorities to develop systems, policies and practices to ensure that all relevant departments and agencies work together to provide the best possible care for looked after children. It involves effective collaboration between different departments and professionals to ensure that an adequate overview of a young person's developmental progress is maintained and their rights are championed." (Harker et al, 2004a; P5).

However, in order for agencies to work effectively together it is recognised that they have to share common purposes. Harker et al (2004a) described a corporate parenting approach in terms of the development of systems, policies and practices to ensure a collaborative approach. The LAs services to LAC are currently changing and the resultant structure and roles are evolving. In November 2009, TELAC service integrated with the Virtual School under the leadership of the VH and are now working towards common targets:

- Raising the profile of the needs of LAC;
- Encouraging 'corporate parenting';
- Challenging schools to support LAC the best way that is possible and
- Improving educational outcomes.

The EP states that she currently works within the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAHMS-LAC) comprising clinical psychologist, social workers and other agencies as appropriate. The team provides a variety of services including support to adults around the child and training. The EP has developed and jointly delivered training packages regarding psychological theory relating to LAC including attachment theory.

2.9 Specific interventions to raise academic achievement

The above provides examples of indirect support that the LA undertakes to raise the academic achievement of LAC. There are however, two examples of interventions designed to specifically impact on the academic achievement of LAC. These are a private tutoring scheme and the Letterbox Club project that are discussed below.

Information regarding these interventions was gathered from the LA website, leaflets, information gathered through the interviews and evaluation reports.

2.9.1 Private tutoring scheme

The LA was one of four LAs chosen for a two-year HSBC funded pilot of private tutoring for LAC. The scheme offered LAC around ten weeks of private tuition that was generally delivered through a commercial private tuition company. Tuition could relate to any subject area at primary or secondary level but mostly focused on English and Maths at Key stages 1, 2 and 3 and also included Science and IT, Childcare, Geography, Spanish, and Physics at Key stage 4.

The tutoring is available for all LAC but priorities were given to:

- Children in Yr2/6/9/10 and 11;
- Children who have English as additional language;
- Children identified by the school as underachieving;

- Children who have had a serious disruption to their past education;
- Children with a specific talent.

The impact of the tuition was monitored and through final reports submitted to the VH that included progress against targets, analysis of progress reports from PEPs and LAC reviews, comments made by LAC, social workers and schools and the number of children who reengaged with learning following tuition. The private tuition scheme was recognised by the VH as one of the best interventions for LAC in the LA. Private tuition was reported to be associated with achievements in GCSE grades and also to raise confidence, self-esteem and help to re-engage LAC with education - although success is attributed to a combination of factors rather than a single intervention.

2.9.2 The Letterbox Club project

The LA participated in a pilot of the 'Letterbox Club' project in 2008 – a project that was first set up between Leicester University and Leicester City Council in 2003. The Letterbox Club project aimed to improve LACs attitude and attainment in literacy and numeracy and increase foster carer's confidence in helping the child at home (Griffiths 2005). Consistent with the project set up in 2003, LAC in this LA were sent parcels every month for six months that contained resources such as stationary, books and activities that varied according to the age of the child and level of attainment. An evaluation of the 2003 project (Griffiths 2005) reported data from nine out of twenty children and found benefits including:

- increased frequency with which carers read to the child,
- many of the children had a more positive outlook on school work and

- the testing of the children's reading and numeracy skills could be usefully shared with teachers, social workers, carers and the children themselves.

There were also reported to be worthwhile gains in terms of attainment in reading and numeracy. However, the study used a small amount of data and is therefore limited in its generalisability. More robust data was gathered through an evaluation of a LetterBox club pilot project funded by the (DCSF) and conducted in partnership with the Booktrust and the University of Leicester in 2007 and 2008. The pilot involved LAs (including the LA here) in every government region in England and over 1500 children including data from 316 children and 16 LAs from the 2007 cohort. The evaluation collected the views of carers and children (through questionnaires), measures of reading ability (using Neale Analysis assessments), and non standardised, number skills assessments (using a specifically designed maths test). The Booktrust (2008) reported positive benefits including that children are more involved in their own learning, gains in reading and numeracy and increased involvement of carers. The National Curriculum Levels for maths for example, indicated that a higher proportion of children than would have been expected in the non LAC population had made average progress over the intervention period. Caution should be made when interpreting the results because not all of the gains could be attributed to the Letterbox club as many of the children also attended school. However, the Letterbox Club findings are consistent with research that highlights the importance of a home environment that is conducive to learning (e.g. Fletcher & Campbell, 1997; Berridge & Brodie, 1989).

2.10 Improvements in academic achievement in the LA

Information gathered through the interviews and questionnaire indicate that the Letterbox Club project and tutoring scheme are thought to be associated with improvements in academic achievement in the LA. However, in the absence a suitable control, it is unlikely that research would be able to delineate the unique contribution of these interventions in raising academic achievement from other factors such as an increased awareness of LACs needs and interventions aimed at promoting the emotional wellbeing of LAC.

But, is there any evidence that the LA is raising academic achievement?. The table below shows data relating to the GCSE grades for LAC in the LA that was obtained from the TELAC service. The table shows the percentage of LAC who achieved 1-5 A-C or A-G GCSE grades for the last 4 running academic years. GCSE grades rather than National Curriculum levels were chosen as these have implications in terms of eligibility to jobs and further education courses and therefore can have a significant impact on life chances and success in later life.

| Academic year | 05/06 | | 06/07 | | 07/08 | | 08/09 | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | No. of LAC | %age of LAC | No. of LAC | %age of LAC | No. of LAC | %age of LAC | No. of LAC | %age of LAC |
| 1 GCSE at Grade A-G | 17 out of 25 ² | 68 | 17 out of 26 | 65 | 39 out of 51 | 76 | 40 out of 50 | 80 |
| 5 GCSE at Grade A-G | 13 out of 25 | 52 | 13 out of 26 | 50 | 28 out of 51 | 55 | 25 out of 50 | 50 |
| 5 GCSE at Grade A-C | 1 out of 25 | 4 | 4 out of 26 | 15 | 8 out of 51 | 16 | 11 out of 50 | 22 |

Table 1. The number and percentage of LAC who achieved 1 or 5 GCSEs at grade A-G and 5 GCSE grades A-C for the last 4 academic years.

² These figures shows the number of LAC who achieved the GCSE grades out of the number of children who were eligible for GCSE/GNVQ.

The data show an increase in the percentage of LAC who achieved one grade A-C in the 08/09 and 07/08 academic years. However, caution should be applied in interpreting the data due to the relatively small number of data available particularly for the 05/06 and 06/07 academic years. There also appears to be an increase in the percentage of children who achieved five GCSE grades A-C but the percentage of children who achieved five GCSE grades A-G appears unchanged.

2.11 Discussion

Children who are looked after are more likely to have negative outcomes in later life. However, the research indicates that academic achievement is a protective factor associated with positive outcomes and success in later life. The DCSF report (2009) highlighted three causal factors for the underachievement of LAC - emotional wellbeing, movement between schools and the school system. Research presented in this report also found that the home/placement environment that is conducive to academic study is also a significant protective factor for academic achievement.

This report set out to explore what is being done in a LA to raise the academic achievement of LAC. Although, it is clearly important to promote the emotional wellbeing of LAC, research has shown that it is also important for interventions to relate directly to impacting on academic achievement. There are examples of two such interventions; the Letterbox Club project and the private tutoring scheme that are regarded by the LA as contributors to raising academic achievement. However, in the absence of a control group, it is unlikely that research could delineate the unique contribution of these interventions in raising academic achievement from the less direct interventions that the LA undertakes such as raising the awareness of LAC emotional needs.

There is evidence obtained from interviews with the TELAC officer and the EP that academic achievement of LAC was prioritised lower than decisions regarding placements and dealing with emotional and physical needs and this is consistent with research (e.g. Fletcher-Campbell & Hall, 1990 & Francis, 2000). There was also evidence that an effective corporate parenting approach is evolving through the integration of TELAC service with the Virtual School. It is expected that the sharing of common purposes and targets will aid effective collaborative working. This is consistent with Harker et al (2004a) who described an effective approach in terms of the development of systems, policies and practices to ensure a collaborative approach.

Furthermore, evidence gathered through interviews with an EP and TELAC officer indicated that there may be overlap in terms of their roles promoting the emotional wellbeing of LAC. This prompts the question of the unique role of the EP in working with LAC. Bradbury (2006) conducted semi-structured interviews with three EPs who had a dedicated role regarding LAC in order to examine the distinctive contribution of EPs and their potential role in corporate parenting. The interviews were designed to explore what the EPs were currently doing, what they would like to be doing, the psychological contribution they made to areas of their work and/or whether non-psychologists could fulfil parts of their work. The interviews were transcribed and the data was subject to thematic analysis (Banister 1994).

Bradbury found that the EPs differed in respect to how much time they had allotted to the specialist role (full time, half time and six days per year) and this impacted on the quantity of work that they could offer. However, all EPs made a significant input to training including training for designated teachers, trainee EPs, residential social workers and foster carers to increase the knowledge of the education system and

how to best enhance educational success of the child in care. Other work that all the EPs undertook included casework (for complex cases – otherwise the patch EP would take the case), attending meetings that included casework and multiagency meetings with a focus on funding, resources and placements. However, Bradbury found that two of the EPs did not clearly articulate their distinctive contribution to LAC and felt that their role could be fulfilled by non-psychologists. In conclusion Bradbury states...

“a picture is emerging of a very valuable corporate parenting role for educational psychologists, who are well placed to use their psychological knowledge and skills to work with individual children in care, with carers and professionals who have a more direct parenting role and in multi-agency teams to facilitate more joined-up care and education for one of the most vulnerable groups of children and young people in our modern society.” (Bradbury, 2006; P157).

Thus, the main contribution of specialist EPs appears to be regarding training and facilitating collaborative working.

This report focused on raising the academic achievement of LAC. No attempt was made to further specify what this is. Academic achievement is often described in terms of National Curriculum Levels or GCSE results in Maths and English.

However, achievement is a subjective quantity and can be measured in other ways such as progress in non core academic subjects or vocational qualifications. These achievements were not explored in this report and it is an area that requires further research.

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Appendix I: Interview questions for the Educational Psychologist

What does your role with regards to LAC entail?

How is psychology applied to LAC?/What is the unique contribution of EPs?

How much time do you have allocated to LAC and how is this generally used (i.e. training, casework, meetings etc)?

Do you link frequently with Designated Teachers?

Do you have much contact with the Virtual Head, TELAC?

Do you have much contact with social workers? In what way?

How is achievement tracked?

How much involvement do you have with writing Personal Education Plans?

What is the LA doing well with respect to raising the achievement of LAC?

Is there anything more you think could be done to raise achievement, meet with current legislation?

Is there anything you/county/EPs do preventatively with raising achievement of LAC?

Do you get chance to use research/evidence base to support LAC?

What are the barriers to achievement of LAC?

What do you think are the main factors that contribute to raising the achievement of LAC?

Appendix II: Interview questions for the ‘Education of Looked After Children Service’ Officer

- ***What are their main duties?***
- ***TELAC officers qualified teachers?***

Tracking and reporting

- How is location, attendance, educational attainment tracked?
- Is it held on a data base?
- What are the targets that you work towards and how are you progressing towards these?
- How is it reported – to whom?

Schools

- How do schools use the additional funding attached to LAC? What sort of interventions are put in place?
- What do they think of schools awareness of who is LAC and what support strategies they can put in place?
- How often are PEPs reviewed?/ Have they made a difference in terms of raising expectations?

Placements

- How do you ensure placement stability?
- Who lets you know if a child is to move placements?
- Do you have input into placement panels?

Tutoring Scheme

- How many children benefitted from the tutoring scheme?
- Who provides the tutoring?

What are the Barriers to raising the achievement of LAC?

What works well?

Appendix III: Questionnaire for Virtual Head-Teacher

What is the role of the Head of the Virtual School?

To lead on improving the achievements and outcomes of Children in Care through strategic work within the authority, partnership support and challenge with schools and wider partnership work with all those working with this group. The Virtual school staff includes all colleagues who have an impact on the education of children in care.

Raising the awareness of improving outcomes for CiC

What is the Virtual School? Its targets?

It is a community of learners who have something in common - in this case- being in care. The Virtual School is a team within the School Performance Section of The Children Young People & Families Directorate. It has recently integrated with TELAC under the leadership of the headteacher. Its targets are to:

- Raise the profile of the needs of Children in Care
- Encourage the 'Corporate Parenting' role
- Challenge schools to support students in care in the best possible way
- Improve educational outcomes – no of level 4s at KS2, %A*-C including English and maths at KS4 as well as attendance, reducing exclusions etc.
-

What are the latest academic attainment figures for Looked After Children?

2009 – KS4 16% 5 A*-C including English and maths compared with 2% last year.
22% 5 A*-C compared with 16% last year – above the national target for 2010

How are these figures collected and tracked?

The Virtual School Area Leads monitor the performance of pupils through regular meetings, PEPs, LAC reviews. School improvement partners (SIPs) collect data at their first meeting each year and the Head of VS sends for annual reports.

Is attainment improving?

Yes – more LAC achieved 5 GCSEs this year than ever previously- see above

Why do you think that is?

- Private tuition
- PEPs

How does Virtual School/TELAC work with other agencies? EPs? Social workers?

Social workers are key to the worker as the direct corporate parents. Colleagues meet at reviews and at children's panels

Regular contact with EPs – they are based at XXXXXX which is the main base for the VS workers

What is communication like with other agencies?

Good and wide ranging, the Virtual School must communicate with other agencies in order to link the services offered to LAC

Do you think social workers understand and promote academic achievement?

They would say no, but those who have been through the English system should be able to support their students well. The Virtual School Area Leads are always

available to give support. Certainly they are taking education into account more than before.

Is stability improving for LAC in XXXXX?

It is fairly stable – difficult to assess fully

How does your service support carers? Homework?

- Foster carers Conference
- Training
- Advice
- Provision of laptops
- SAM learning
- Tuition

How is LAC mental health supported?

CAMHS LAC through the social worker. Counselling and play therapy paid for by Virtual School.

How does your service work with Designated Teachers?

Of course, the service delivers training and works with EPs to deliver training on attachments issues etc.

Who completes Personal Education Plans? Do all LAC have one? Do they work well?

Time of change - at moment the Area Leads support these meetings in the authority but just piloting the idea of DTs doing these with social workers in low tariff cases. Area Leads will always be involved in high tariff cases and children new to care.

How is your service involved in CAMHS/LAC?

Attends meetings but referrals are done by social workers

Can you tell me about?

Private tuition?

HSBC 2 year pilot ended in September 2009. Very successful but has to be for through PEAs now.

Personal Education Allowances?

Guidance is attached – priorities this year – private tuition, support for schools, laptops for students placed out of authority

Children in Care Council and the Pledge?

Contact XXXXXXXX about this

How are these three evaluated? Are there reports available?

National evaluation of VSH report attached- includes aspects of private tuition

Final report of private tuition pilot attached

PEA – not evaluated as such but I provide report on the spending to the Care Matters Implementation funding group

How are the achievements of LAC celebrated?

- Newsletter
- Congratulations letter from Head
- Gifts

How does the service collect children's voices?

- Newsletter – competitions etc.
- Feedback forms (tuition)
- Young person rep on Governors
- Barnardos Education advocacy
- PEPs

CHAPTER THREE: THE AQUISITION AND APPLICATION OF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION SKILLS IN THE CONTECT OF THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY ROLE

3.1 Introduction

This report examines my own development and application of therapeutic skills in the context of my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. In doing so, the report describes a therapeutic intervention which I planned and implemented, and my development and application of skills relating to the process of a systemic approach to case formulation. The intervention was undertaken as part of a requirement of the Doctoral Programme in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham and was implemented in order to support a child with emotional difficulties as part of my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist within my employing local authority.

3.2 Background

The aim of the therapeutic intervention, a requirement for Year Two of the training programme, is to promote positive change for a child, whilst also providing an opportunity for Trainee Educational Psychologists to undertake a therapeutic intervention that conforms to a particular approach. Each trainee identified a child who might benefit from the intervention in his/her employing local authority. I identified a child who might benefit from a Cognitive Behavioural Therapeutic approach.

I hold a certificate for attendance at a three day training course that covers Key Knowledge and Skills relating to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) at the Association for Psychological Therapies in 2008 and have previously had opportunity to undertake a CBT approach in my roles as Assistant and Trainee Educational

Psychologist with individual children. This report describes my acquisition and application of skills relating to a systemic approach to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and the challenges faced in using the approach to support a child who will be called Alan (a pseudonym). A pen portrait relating to the case work with Alan is presented below.

3.3 Pen Portrait of casework

Alan is a 14 year old boy who was referred to the Educational Psychology Service for concerns regarding his behaviour and in particular, his vulnerability with regards to his peers. Initial assessments included consultation with school staff, staff from other agencies, Alan's mother and individual work with Alan. Alan had experienced a complex family history and been witness to some potentially distressing events early on in his life.

At the time of my involvement, Alan was in the early stages of being assessed by the specialist Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Permission was sought and gained from Alan's mother to share information with the caseworker at CAMHS. Alan was also the subject of a Common Assessment Framework (DfES, 2004) - a government initiative that provides multi-agency support to families. Alan was attending a Learning Unit within his mainstream school for a number of morning classes and had a Pastoral Support Programme that comprised targets and focused on Alan's reintegration to classes with his tutor group.

Initial screening data were gathered using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) that was completed by a member of school staff who knew Alan well, Alan's mother and Alan. The Beck Youth Inventory (Beck, 2001) was also used to collect information to inform hypotheses regarding Alan

(initial screening data can be seen in Appendix I). The information generated through the initial assessment was used both as a set of baseline measures against which progress could be judged, and to inform a problem formulation from which evidence-based decisions about optimal intervention strategies could be derived. I decided that a therapeutic intervention might be appropriate as Alan had said that he might like help with controlling his anger when he becomes embarrassed; a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approach was decided upon, as this appeared to fit with Alan's aims of therapy.

The Educational Psychology Service in which I worked does not work on a time allocation basis for schools. Instead, work is negotiated in accordance with need, through regular planning meetings with each school. The work discussed at the planning meetings for the school that Alan attended had been met and I was therefore in a position to offer a course of therapy to support Alan. I explained that the therapeutic intervention would be conducted as part of the requirement of the Doctoral programme. During the course of the intervention, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator acknowledged the amount of time that was being spent in delivering the therapeutic sessions and I suspected that he might have preferred therapeutic intervention to be provided through another agency (e.g. specialist CAMHS) so that the scarce Educational Psychology (EP) time could be utilised in other ways (e.g. more assessment). Indeed, I felt privileged in my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, with a reduced workload compared to qualified EPs, that permitted time to undertake the intervention. I believe changes to service delivery would be required in order for EPs to be able routinely to offer interventions of this scale.

Indeed, Rait et al (2010) argue that there are other providers who offer more cost-effective therapeutic services and suggest a debate regarding EPs adopting a 'more therapeutic role' (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008). Rait et al (2010) also argue that:

“Due to limited resources and time constraints, it is highly unlikely that educational psychologists will be in a position to offer regular intensive direct CBT to individual children.....” (Rait et al, 2010; P113).

This raises questions regarding the appropriateness of delivering therapeutic intervention as part of the EP role.

3.4 Therapeutic intervention in Educational Psychology

MacKay (2007) argued that therapeutic intervention was once considered to be part of the EP role up until around the 1990s. MacKay outlined four reasons why EPs stopped identifying themselves as therapists:

- A reconstruction of educational psychology in the 1980s (as seen by EP literature regarding an agenda for change e.g. Gillham, 1978; Acklaw, 1990; Jensen et al, 2002; Stobie, 2002a, 2002b), with a move away from individual case work, which had been criticised for lack of efficiency, equity and efficacy and for operating under a 'medical model' with a focus on 'within child' factors. Instead, the EP role moved towards working more consultatively to bring about change at a systemic level through the adoption of ecological and interactionist perspectives.

However, it could be argued that undertaking direct individual casework is not necessarily inconsistent with an ecological perspective. The CBT approach adopted here for instance, involves direct individual case work with a child, which aimed to adopt an ecological/systemic perspective. Furthermore, whilst Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000) argue that the prevalence of mental health problems in children might suggest a need for a systemic preventative approach, Mackay (2007) advocated that

there will always be a need for individual work and that there are sometimes 'within child' factors that cannot be adequately addressed by indirect work on behalf of the child (Mackay, 2000).

- An increased demarcation of professional boundaries, such as the development of a greater distinction between the educational and clinical psychology professions, in which therapeutic intervention is viewed more within the realm of clinical or counselling psychology. This leaves EPs vulnerable to questions regarding their qualified status relating to therapeutic interventions.

Mackay (2007) considers the time now ripe for the place of therapy in EPs' role to be 'revisited', due to a number of reasons including a rise in mental health problems in children (e.g. reported by Rutter and Smith, 1995) and the re-examination of the role boundaries of applied psychologists. Meltzer (2000) reported that as many as 20% of children in Great Britain may be described as having mental health difficulties, while Davis et al (2000) reported that only between 10-21% of children with disorders receive help, due to inadequate resources.

Mackay (2007) argues that the climate of integrated children's services along with a 'political imperative' on public agencies to address mental health needs has provided an opportunity for EPs to make a contribution that includes therapy. This is consistent with Rait et al (2010) who cite the findings of a review of the functions and contributions of EPs (Farrell et al, 2006) which reported that about two percent of EP time was spent on one-to-one therapy and that there was potential to broaden EPs' work in this area. The review highlighted a need for EPs to take on a therapeutic role.

Greig (2007) also reported that there are widespread problems with children's mental health that affects their 'social, emotional and behavioural functioning in schools'.

Greig argued that:

"Given the time children spend at school and its familiarity to children and parents alike, schools are in a good position to facilitate and sustain therapeutic inputs and such school-based interventions may offer great potential for helping these children." (Greig, 2007; P19).

Similarly, Rait et al (2010) noted an increase in the prevalence of social-emotional difficulties in children over the past four decades that has lead to a growing interest in therapeutic approaches and that:

"Legislation within the UK is clear that the identification and management of the psychological well-being of children and young people is no longer solely the remit of the Health Services, and that mental health is "everybody's business". (Rait et al, 2010; P105).

Rait et al (2010) argued that school staff are well placed to recognise these difficulties and to monitor and track intervention programmes. This is said to impact on the nature of the 'input and support that schools may seek from Educational Psychologists'.

McKay (2007) gives other reasons that EPs stopped identifying themselves as therapists as:

- Educational psychology practice became more narrowly focused as can be seen as its move away from a broad application of child psychology to a focus on school psychology and an emphasis on the curriculum. This came about for a number of reasons, including...

"a major political imperative for schools to increase their focus on promoting basic educational competences in core subjects of the curriculum." (Mackay, 2007; P12).

- The Impact of legislation including the statutory duty to undertake assessments of Special Educational Needs that arose from legislation in the 1980s. This is thought to have depleted the EPs' professional resources and narrowed the contribution that EPs might make (Boxer et al. 1998). Increased workloads 'threatened the quality and impact' of EP work (Boxer et al, 1998) and EPs' clinical and therapeutic skills 'atrophied' (MacKay, 2002).

Mackay (2007) argues that there are signs of renewed interest by EPs in undertaking therapeutic intervention that is reflected in literature (e.g. Greig, 2004a, 2004b and Greig & Mackay, 2005). Furthermore, he argues that targeted therapeutic interventions provided by EPs have not only been effective, but have made positive contributions, such as enabling vulnerable children's attendance at school.

Similarly, Greig (2007) advocates the importance of EPs' role in recognising and supporting the mental health of children and that EPs are well placed to undertake direct therapeutic intervention with children, schools and families. Greig points out that postgraduate training courses seek to provide training in therapies such as CBT and that practitioners are expressing the need to have time for this type of work.

Greig (2007) states that:

"The treatment of choice for the majority of mental health problems is cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and with the emerging evidence base of its successful application in the child and adolescent population it appears to be set to become an integral part of the Educational Psychologist's repertoire." (Greig, 2007; P19).

MacKay (2007) suggests that issues that arise in the 'rehabilitation' of therapy in EP practice include the re-building of therapeutic skills within the profession. Thus, the development and application of therapeutic intervention skills as part of EP training appears to be appropriate and prudent. This report provides an example of these developments in educational psychology training and application.

Mackay (2007) concludes that:

“The effective development of therapeutic services has implications for postgraduate training courses, for continuing professional development and for service organisation.” (Mackay, 2007; P16).

Indeed, Rait et al (2010) recognise an increase in the amount of “therapeutic” training delivered to EPs entering the profession and they ask practising EPs to consider the ‘pre-requisite’ skills/ training they would require to deliver Cognitive Behaviour Therapy as part of their practice and to consider whether CBT should be a specialism or a generic approach. A brief description of CBT is given below.

3.5 What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)?

This report assumes that the reader has an elementary understanding of CBT.

Therefore, only a brief description of the main points regarding CBT is given here.

Greig (2007) described the core principle of CBT as the notion that people are disturbed by their perceptions of themselves and the world, rather than events themselves. CBT therefore focuses on maladaptive thoughts as the sources of distress. Furthermore, feelings and behaviours are considered as products of thoughts and ‘can become maladaptive as a result of errors in thinking processes’.

Beck (1976) argued that changes in thinking can bring about changes in feelings and behaviour, and interventions therefore aim to bring about changes in the way that people think about events. CBT from this perspective therefore, is an intervention that focuses on the present. However, there is recognition that early experiences can contribute to the beliefs that people hold about themselves that impact on their perceptions, interpretations and thinking about experiences and events in the present.

Stallard's (2002) explanation of how maladaptive thoughts develop over time and impact on emotional, behavioural and somatic responses is shown in Figure 1 below.

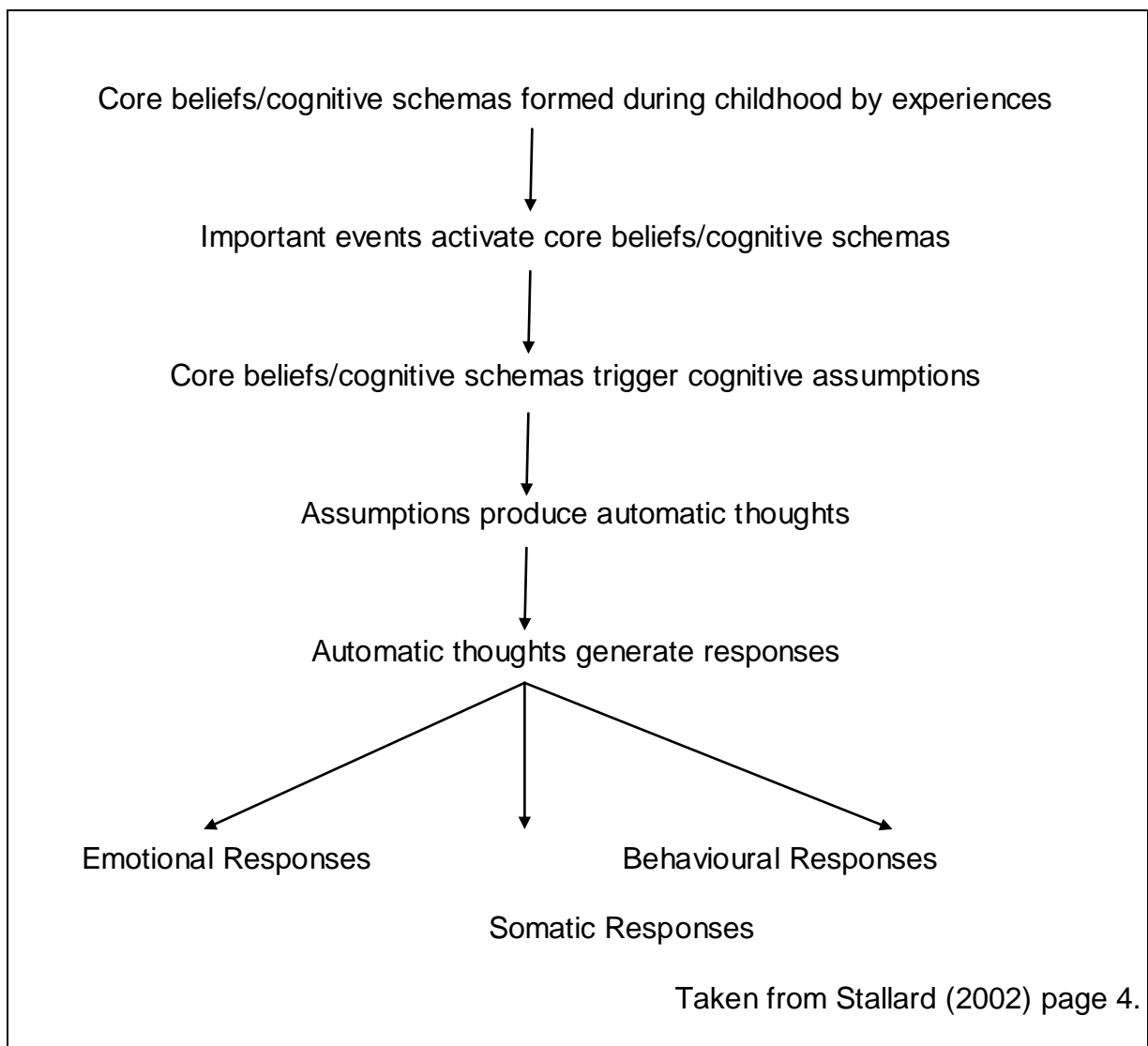


Figure 1: Stallard's cognitive model of the development of maladaptive thoughts

Stallard therefore describes the purpose of CBT as to...

“increase self-awareness, facilitate better self-understanding, and improve self-control by developing more appropriate cognitive and behavioural skills. CBT helps to identify dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs that are predominantly negative, biased and self-critical”. (Stallard, 2002; P7).

Stallard states that CBT uses processes such as self-monitoring and educational experiments to replace dysfunctional thoughts with more balanced, positive and

functional thoughts. In this way, new cognitive skills and ways of behaving emerge, as does an understanding of the reasons underlying unpleasant feelings that can be replaced with more pleasant emotions.

Similarly, Greig (2007) describes processes adopted in CBT as...

“guided self-discovery, experimentation and the learning of alternative patterns and skills of behaviour and thinking.” (Greig, 2007; P25).

Socratic questioning that challenges the child’s automatic thoughts and assumptions through testing the evidence is used as a tool for guided self discovery. Other techniques include the self-monitoring of thoughts, feelings and behaviour with the use of a diary, and the testing of beliefs through behaviour experiments (Greig, 2007).

Greig described the elements of CBT practice as being:

- “engagement with the client;
- assessment of symptoms, personality, relationships and lifestyle;
- cognitive behavioural formulations, diagnosis, and functional analysis of core schemas;
- treatment: psycho-education, formulation feedback and therapeutic plan;
- an agreed number of therapy sessions of chosen intervention;
- review of progress, and if none, reformulation; and
- transparency of procedure at all times.” (Greig, 2007; P25).

CBT is therefore an ongoing process in which formulation and psycho-education strategies are adapted in collaboration with the ‘client’, according to information learnt throughout the therapeutic process. The aim of the therapist therefore, is to use their skills to guide the ‘client’ through the process of self-discovery. Therefore, CBT requires of both the therapist and client the ability to be reflective and that the context of the sessions be adapted to accommodate the developmental abilities of the ‘client’. Some of the challenges inherent in CBT with children are discussed below.

3.6 Cognitive behavioural therapy with children

Greig (2007) highlights difficulties that might be encountered in the application of CBT with children. One of these relates to assessment and case formulation, as children may give unreliable reports of their difficulties, particularly in relation to externalising behaviours. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the accuracy of information provided by others such as teacher and parents regarding the child's behaviour. This was highlighted in the intervention which I put in place, where there was low correspondence between the baseline data given by the school staff, Alan's mother and Alan's own scores.

In relation to the scores generated through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997), the school staff member and parent scores indicated areas of difficulty relating to emotional symptoms, conduct problems and peer relationships, whilst Alan's self rating scores indicated normal functioning in all areas with the exception of peer relationships, in which his scores indicated 'borderline' functioning (see Appendix 1 for SDQ scores).

It appeared that Alan might have been providing responses in relation to how he may wish to be seen at a cost to accuracy. Also, oral reports on how well Alan was doing differed. Whilst some school staff reported that Alan appeared to be experiencing considerable difficulties, others reported a noticeable reduction in difficulties. This supports Greig's (2007) note of caution regarding the reliability of the data gathered. Furthermore, Greig acknowledges that a child's difficulties might be caused or maintained by external influences such as teaching and parenting styles, and argues that it may therefore be appropriate to work indirectly with these influential others, rather than engaging in direct intervention with the child. The CBT approach has been extended in recognition of the environmental influences that contribute to

mental health difficulties. Graham (2004, 2005) for instance, recognised the importance of involving school staff, parents and families in CBT with children. This can be seen in the systemic cognitive behavioural template (Dummett, 2006) that was developed as a tool for case formulation, which allows influences relating to external factors such as the family and school to be incorporated in the conceptualisation of the difficulties experienced by the child. This systemic approach also aims to involve significant others (e.g. family members) where appropriate. Indeed, research suggests (e.g. Sofronoff et al, 2005; Spence et al, 2000) that the involvement of others in CBT leads to better outcomes than therapy focused on the individual child alone.

Case formulations may therefore take into account the external influences on a child's presentation. Case formulation is discussed below, along with the challenges experienced in applying this approach with Alan.

3.7 Case Formulation

Kuyken et al (2008) argue that case conceptualisation (also known as case formulation – the term that will be adopted in this report) is an important aspect of CBT as the unique description of a 'clients' presentation' informs intervention and is described as "the heart of evidence-based practice" (Bieling & Kuyken, 2003; p.53.). Case formulation evolves over time and develops from a descriptive account of a 'client's' experiences to include 'longitudinal explanation' of the influences of the pre-disposing and protective factors relevant to the problem. Thus, the formulation, according to Kuyken et al, becomes more sophisticated as information is gained through collaborative exploration, and includes the 'client's' strengths as well as well as difficulties. The incorporation of a 'client's' strengths in the formulation is thought

help build resilience (Kuyken, et al, 2008b) and make it less likely that they will become overwhelmed and distressed regarding the formulation. Collaboration in case formulation is seen as important because...

“clients are more likely to provide checks and balances to therapists’ reasoning errors, feel ownership of the emerging conceptualization, and perceive a compelling rationale for treatment.” (Kuyken et al, 2008; P764).

A collaborative approach therefore, is believed to enhance the reliability of the formulation, promote engagement with the therapy and inform choice regarding treatment options.

Kuyken et al (2008a) proposed ten functions of case formulation in CBT that are presented in the table below.

Ten 10 Functions of CBT case formulation

- Synthesises client experience, CBT theory and research
- Normalises presenting issues and is validated
- Promotes client engagement
- Makes numerous, complex problems more manageable
- Guides the selection, focus, and sequence of interventions
- Identifies client strengths and suggests ways to build client resilience
- Suggests the simplest and most cost-efficient interventions
- Anticipates and addresses problems in therapy
- Helps understand non-response in therapy and suggests alternative routes for change
- Enables high quality supervision

Table 1. The 10 Functions of CBT case formulation taken from Kuyken et al (2008a; P759).

Kuyken et al (2008a) distinguish between formulation models that are based on disorder-specific presentations (such as those based on depression or substance misuse) and generic models that are based on ‘higher level cognitive theory of emotional disorders’ that are appropriate for clients who present with co-morbid or complex presentations (Beck, 2005; Padesky & Greenberger, 1995; Persons, 1989). Generic models provide a framework for the identification of the core beliefs,

behavioural strategies and underlying assumptions that contribute to difficulties and are linked to the developmental history. However, both models require the development of specific targeted interventions that reflect the unique needs of the individual, although interventions relating to disorder-specific formulations will be adaptations to evidence based 'manualised' treatment plans to include information specific to the client. The functions of case formulation described above are likely to be particularly useful to a novice therapist as the formulation can suggest selection of the simplest and test supported interventions and guides the selection, focus and sequence of intervention.

Kuyken et al argue that whilst most CBT therapists would consider case formulation to be a core competency, there are differing views of how formulations should be used in practice (Flitcroft et al, 2007), and research has indicated that therapists are likely to develop different case formulations to understand the same case (Kuyken et al, 2005). This raises questions regarding the reliability of formulation and highlights the importance of undertaking a collaborative approach that allows for checking and adaptation in partnership with the 'client' according to knowledge gained through the psycho-educational process.

Indeed, according to Dummett (2006), the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies Child Special Interest Group (2002) re-emphasised that therapy should be based on case formulation that is derived in collaboration with the client. Failure to do so has led to a range of interventions that have been labelled CBT for children, but which are not securely grounded in an evidence-based formulation relevant to each child's needs and circumstances (Graham, 1998). Thus, Dummett (2006) argued that formulation-based CBT practice with children, young

people and families ensures that interventions are based on 'underlying causative and maintaining processes'.

Dummett (2006) argued that it is important to incorporate systemic factors such as development, attachment and family influences into the formulation. She argued that this systemic case formulation is simple enough to derive collaboratively with the client and can inform work with individuals and their wider support systems such as families. A systemic approach to case formulation is in keeping with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of child development that recognises the reciprocal influences between a child and the setting in which s/he lives and engages.

Dummett developed a template for a cognitive-behavioural systemic case formulation that is appropriate for use in a range of presentations in children and that provides a structure for training. The template allows the therapist and client(s) to tailor an intervention to suit the child client in the context of his/her family and wider support system. The template is consistent with a "five areas" approach (Williams, 2001) as it incorporates factors associated with cognitive, affective, behavioural, physiological and systemic (e.g. family, interpersonal relations) factors. The formulation template utilises a genogram centred around the child that depicts family members. The child is asked to describe the positioning of key family relationships to provide an indication of proximity. Cultural factors are also incorporated if appropriate and a chronological time-line of life events is drawn up. The systemic CBT approach also allows for wider systems to be explored, such as the school, friendship group and the network of professionals who are involved. I considered that this approach might be appropriate in my work with Alan.

In common with other systemic therapies, Dummett's approach examines how the family functions as a system but assumes that the family and/or wider systems need to change, rather than only the individual. However, Dummett also argues that this systemic CBT approach is distinguishable from other systemic therapies on the grounds that it is explicitly based on the cognitive-behavioural formulation and use of cognitive behavioural processes involved in the 'empirical self-reflections and guided discovery' (Dummett, 2006). As noted previously, the case formulation is adapted in accordance with information derived through Socratic dialogue with the child and/or parent/s on their own, or with joint family sessions.

I used Dummett's framework for systemic case formulation in the intervention. However, difficulties were encountered. In particular, my initial discussion with Alan's mother and my subsequent conversations with other professionals involved in supporting Alan had informed me that Alan had been witness to some potentially distressing events within his family. This information was used to inform hypotheses relating to Alan's presentation and I had hoped to incorporate this information into the case formulation that was being developed in collaboration with Alan. However, Alan himself did not reveal these events during individual sessions. I was also aware that this information may have been given by Alan's mother in confidence to the professionals, and was not sure whether Alan was aware that his mother had provided this information. A meeting with Alan's mother was therefore requested where this could be discussed and joint sessions were planned with Alan and his mother to explore these events and further to develop the case formulation (Alan said that he was happy to share the formulation with his mum). However, due to unforeseen circumstances, Alan's mother was unable to attend planned joint

sessions. This raised the dilemma as the appropriateness of asking Alan about these events (See Appendix 1 for a record of my CBT intervention).

However, Dummett argues that the case formulation need not be comprehensive; rather it requires that there is **sufficient** information that would allow positive change to take place. She suggests this will usually be through the identification of the most significant maintaining processes and pragmatic considerations. Thus, it could be argued that therapy could be effective without focused exploration of information relating to historic significant events and how these impact on core beliefs. Thus, one might question whether it is necessary to generate self-awareness of the impact of significant past experiences on current core beliefs and functioning or whether CBT might be effective if delivered in a more traditional way that does not focus on historic events.

The potential benefit of helping Alan process information given by his mother and its inclusion in the case formulation was weighed against the likelihood of generating positive change through guided discovery derived from enhanced awareness of current negative thoughts and beliefs alongside strategies to generate more helpful ways of thinking about things. Indeed, I had reservations about probing Alan's significant life events in the school environment given the possibility of this evoking distress, when, following my sessions with him, Alan would return to classroom. This raises questions regarding the appropriate setting for interventions. Perhaps a traditional CBT approach is more appropriate within the school environment, whereas a more comprehensive approach that includes exploration of potentially distressing events is more appropriate in a clinical or community setting, where emotions may be better contained.

Furthermore, Alan's ability to perceive and to reflect on the significance of potentially distressing historical events on his current difficulties was considered. I also considered the possibility that bringing attention to wider systemic factors associated with Alan's early memories of family life may have changed his relationship with the respective family members in a negative way without the opportunity for supported joint sessions to address feelings that may have surfaced. Thus, without opportunity to engage fully with Alan's family, I considered individual therapy would better be focused on the interdependence of feelings, behaviour and thoughts (Graham, 2005) and development of more balanced thoughts and contingent positive feelings and behaviours. Indeed, Alan appeared to engage better with this approach than to earlier sessions regarding feelings relating to his family and past events.

Consent regarding what information could be shared with his mother and other professionals had always been sought and Alan had always indicated that he was happy for me and other professionals to share information about him. However, it is possible that Alan may have chosen not to provide too much detail regarding his family as he was sensitive to them knowing about his feelings. This is supported by him reporting that one of his strengths was that he is good at hiding his emotions. Thus, there appears to be some potential disadvantages of adopting a systemic approach and collaborating with others in the intervention. Whilst the collaborative approach appears to have advantages in terms of checking reliability, promoting engagement, and influencing the social context which children need to navigate in their daily lives, the transparency of the approach, in particular with regards to revealing a person's innermost thoughts to significant others might act as an inhibitor to full engagement.

It therefore appeared that a non-systemic approach was more appropriate for working with Alan. However, Dummett states that there is an extensive evidence base regarding...

“the efficacy of child and adolescent mental health interventions addressing systemic factors in general and particularly for the efficacy of systemic interventions in augmenting benefits of individual CBT in this age range.” (Dummett, 2006; P180).

CBT incorporating systemic factors has, to date only been reported in response to limited presentation factors such as eating disorders, and thus far there is only anecdotal evidence for its claimed efficacy. Dummett (2006) therefore argues that large-scale randomised comparison studies are needed that take into account the skills of the therapist.

It is possible that wider experience of delivering a systemic CBT might have enhanced my skills in delivering systemic approach to CBT. Measures that can be used to assess and support the development of therapeutic skills and competencies are described below.

3.8 Therapeutic skills and competencies

Bennett-Levy (2006) pointed out that:

“As yet, no conclusive study linking the training of therapists to increases in competence and enhanced therapeutic outcomes with patients has been carried out”. (Bennett-Levy, 2006; P58).

Bennett-Levy argues that one of the reasons that there has been a lack of research into the outcomes of training in therapeutic skills relates to an absence of theoretical frameworks to guide the research. Bennett-Levy (2006) proposed a cognitive model of therapeutic skills acquisition that is known as the DPR model to represent the three principal systems of skill acquisition: declarative, procedural and reflection. The

DPR model can be used as a tool to guide trainers and to provide answers to a number of questions including what are the mechanisms that aid novices and more advanced therapists in their learning, and which skills are trainable?

The model features reflection as central to the development of declarative knowledge and procedural skills. However, Bennett-Levy makes the distinction between the mechanisms of learning between novice and more experienced therapists. For the novice learner, skills are developed through mechanisms such as didactic learning, modelling and repetition that is augmented with feedback. The more experienced therapist may use reflection as the principal mechanism of skill development to aid the application and development of their existing knowledge to new situations. Bennett-Levy states:

“Essentially, self-reflection is a metacognitive skill, which encompasses the observation, interpretation and evaluation of one’s own thoughts, emotions and actions, and their outcomes.” (Bennett-Levy, 2006; P60).

Bennett-Levy also highlights the need for therapists to develop a balance between their self schema and self-as-therapist schema, as in the initial stages of training, a focus on the technical aspects of therapy might result in a cost to the application of authentic interpersonal skills. Through reflection and practice, competencies convert from ‘tacit procedural skills into declarative principles’.

I have developed declarative knowledge through attendance at an accredited Cognitive Behaviour Therapy course and input through the Doctoral programme, and have also had opportunity to develop my procedural knowledge through application of CBT approaches with individual children in my roles as assistant and trainee EP. However, I have had little practice with a systemic CBT approach and felt that a desire to apply the approach according to the ‘technical’ aspects of Dummett’s (2006) framework for case formulation resulted in a cost to fluency in applying

existing therapeutic skills in the initial sessions. Therefore, further practice and reflection under supervision is required in order further to develop the fluent application of therapeutic skills that can be assimilated into a wider range of contexts. This would be contingent on the Educational Psychology Service having the available resources to support EPs in working therapeutically, including the provision of appropriate supervision and a service delivery model that permits time for EPs to engage in therapeutic interventions.

Another tool used to support a therapist's developing skills is the session feedback form developed by Friedberg et al. (2004). The form can be used to gain a child's reaction to individual and/or group therapy and to inform supervision and develop skills. There are two versions of the form - one for 8-11 year olds and another for 12-16 year olds. The items for the 12-16 year old questionnaire comprise questions that require responses using Likert-scales: the child is asked to rate different aspects of the session such as how useful or how much fun the session was, as well as questions relating to how the child engaged with the session (e.g. how much they felt that they attended to the session or how much they remembered from the session). There are also three questions that invite the child to say how they might use the new skills that they have developed. The questionnaire is designed to be used as a graduated approach to eliciting feedback, to complement oral feedback.

I used the Friedberg et al (2004) feedback form (see Appendix 2) to gain Alan's feedback after each session. Additionally, throughout each session, informal feedback was sought that I often found to be more informative in shaping subsequent sessions. An example of this included my asking why Alan might not appear to be engaging: when Alan's response indicated that he found the session 'boring' (See Appendix 1), subsequent sessions were designed to be more

interactive with the use of more creative and engaging tasks. Scores on the feedback forms and Alan's general behaviour throughout the subsequent session indicated that he was more engaged. Another example is that when Alan was asked if he felt comfortable about talking about his family, he said that he had already given this information to professionals within the specialist CAMHS and he did not want to repeat himself. Although there had been liaison between myself and the caseworker at specialist CAMHS, this highlights the need for closer liaison and that there may be overlap between the role of the educational psychologist and clinical health workers. This supports the need for clarity in terms of role boundaries and information sharing between agencies.

3.9 Discussion

Mackay (2007) argues that therapeutic intervention was once considered to be part of the EP role but has been largely absent from EPs practice due to a move away from individual casework to a more consultative approach, demarcation between clinical psychology and educational psychology professional boundaries, a narrowing focus of EP work to a focus on curriculum, and reduced capacity, given the pressures associated with statutory duties. It appears as though some changes in Educational Psychology Service delivery are required in order for EPs to be able routinely to offer therapeutic intervention.

However, Mackay (2007) argues that a changing landscape has provided the opportunity to revisit the role that EPs can play in delivering therapeutic intervention to children. Greig (2007) argues that EPs are well placed to undertake therapeutic interventions with children and further acknowledges the role that EPs can take in systemic therapeutic approaches that include schools and families.

The approach adopted here used Dummett's (2006) framework for a systemic CBT approach. However, difficulties encountered in this approach (e.g. Alan's mother being unable attend joint sessions and the perceived reluctance of Alan to talk about his family) led to a 'traditional' CBT approach being considered more appropriate. There were also considerations regarding surfacing potentially distressing memories within the school setting, given that Alan would have to return to the classroom on the one hand, and the potential to alter family dynamics negatively without joint family sessions, on the other.

It is possible that the systemic CBT approach has the potential to bring about a more positive change in appropriate circumstances (e.g. with family involvement and when the child has the ability and/or desire to reflect and explore the significance of early life experiences in an appropriate setting) compared to approaches that do not focus on historical events and/or where work is centred predominantly on the child alone. However, I found the framework useful in conceptualising my own development of 'technical' skills in accordance with the DPR model (Bennett-Levy, 2006) but felt that further practice and supervision are required to support my attainment of fluency in application of skills relating to systemic therapeutic intervention in different contexts. In conclusion, I believe that the experience of undertaking therapeutic intervention with Alan has highlighted that EPs can contribute to developing children's wellbeing through therapeutic intervention where the Educational Psychology Service delivery makes provisions for this to happen. This includes the provision of appropriate supervision, given that EP's skills may have 'atrophied' and that EPs might be vulnerable to their qualified status and competence to deliver therapeutic interventions being challenged (Mackay, 2007). There are therefore implications for rebuilding EPs' therapeutic skills through support for the continuing professional

development of practising EPs, and Educational Psychology Services as organisations, to compliment developments in postgraduate professional training programmes.

My example of the development of therapeutic intervention skills within the context of my own role as a trainee EP provides anecdotal, situation-specific evidence of the challenges I faced in the adoption of a systemic CBT approach. In particular, I would like to highlight the need for intervention to be targeted at the most appropriate level that takes into consideration the potential for generating beneficial outcomes through the involvement of significant others and use of information relating to historic events, and also the desire and ability of the child to recognise the significance of historic events. I also recognise that further supervised practice is required in order to support accurate assimilation and application of therapeutic skills across a number of contexts and to reach a level of fluency (Bennett-Levy, 2006).

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Appendix I: Summary record of CBT intervention

Session 1

Work undertaken:

- Identification and clarification of difficulties that Alan would like support with;
- Discussion of what therapeutic intervention is and what approach might be most helpful;
- Administer the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire to use as baseline data.

I met with Alan to discuss what support I could offer. I explained therapeutic interventions and mentioned that there are different approaches that could be taken:

- Brief Solution Focused Therapy;
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy;
- Personal Construct Psychology.

We explored what difficulties Alan felt he was having and what he would like help with. He said that he would most like help with controlling anger when he becomes embarrassed.

I explained that the therapeutic intervention forms part of my studies and would be written up in a thesis that would be held in the University library but that no one would be able to identify him from the report. I explained how information is held about him in a psychology file and copies of reports may go to his parents and to the school that will include his name.

I introduced the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and explained that it would be used as pre and post measure of how the sessions went. I explained that I would be asking a member of staff from school and his mother to complete the questionnaire.

Alan gave his consent to partake in therapeutic intervention and to signify that was happy for me to write the report that would form part of my thesis.

The scores for each subtest of the SDQ for Alan, his mother and a member of the school staff are given below:

| Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire | Scores and banding (with range of score for that banding) Completed by Alan, his mother and a member of school staff | | |
|---|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| Subtest | Alan | Mother | School Staff |
| Emotional distress | 4 Normal (0-5) | 7 Abnormal (5-10) | 9 Abnormal (6-10) |
| Behaviour | 3 Normal (0-30) | 6 Abnormal (4-10) | 4 Abnormal (4-10) |
| Hyperactivity and attention | 3 Normal (0-5) | 8 Abnormal (7-10) | 6 Normal (6) |
| Getting along with peers | 5 Borderline (4-5) | 6 Abnormal (4-10) | 9 Abnormal (5-10) |
| Kind and helpful behaviour | 7 Normal (6-10) | 6 Abnormal (6-10) | 5 Normal (5) |

The scores obtained by Alan, his mother and a member of the school staff for each subtest of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

Session 2

Work undertaken:

- Beck Youth Inventory;
- Genogram;
- Memories of significant events;
- Completion of feedback form.

I had hypothesised that Alan may have a low self concept as Alan appeared to become embarrassed regularly and to be sensitive to comments made by others about him. I therefore wanted to explore his self-concept and to gather more baseline measures relating to his wellbeing. I decided to administer the Beck Youth Inventory - the scores of which are given below.

| Measure | T Score | Category |
|--------------|---------|----------|
| Self-concept | 52 | Average |
| Anxiety | 40 | Average |
| Depression | 37 | Average |
| Anger | 46 | Average |
| Behaviour | 42 | Average |

I believed that Alan might not be responding as he really feels, but rather, how he would like to portray himself. This is supported by the ratings he gave for the SDQ in which he scored in the normal range for all scales except for 'Peer Problems' for which his score was borderline. In contrast, the scores given by school and parent indicated difficulties in functioning relating to all measures with the exception of 'Pro-social Behaviour'.

Developing the formulation using Dummett's framework.

I aimed to create a genogram with Alan in order inform my formulation. Alan told me the names and ages of his family members but chose not to expand on this information. I also aimed to draw up a time line of significant events with him and he gave limited information, mostly relating to trivial matters.

Alan appeared reluctant to speak about his feelings and when he did, he often interspersed this conversation with unrelated trivial topics of conversation. However, of note, was that he did not mention the potentially distressing events that his mother reported that he had witnessed as a young child.

Alan appeared not to engage well in conversations that I had hoped would explore his early life experiences. When I asked him why he did not want to speak about this topic he said that he was bored and that he had completed a 'time line' of significant life events with the case worker at CAHMS. He said that it was OK for me to speak with her to find out what he had told her. We decided that the next session would be more interactive.

I was unsure whether Alan was reluctant to engage in conversations regarding his feelings and past events, or, whether he was unaware of his feelings and had not reflected on the significance of previous events. I explained to Alan that learning about significant experiences in his life might help to change unhelpful things (such

as the way we think about things). In order to illustrate this point, I asked him to think about past experiences that might have led to him to learn his positive skills. I told Alan that I would use all the information that I had gathered about him, from himself and the other people (his mother had told me that Alan had witnessed some potentially distressing events within his family in the past) and that I would think about how he might have learned some of his behaviours and feelings. I asked Alan to also think about how he might have learnt some of his behaviour and ways of thinking and that we could talk about this in the next session. I considered whether confronting Alan with what I know about his early experiences would be helpful. There may have been reasons why Alan had not mentioned significant events in his life including:

- The avoidance of evoking strong emotions;
- Alan not having explicit memory of such events or perceiving them having little significance;
- Alan potentially feeling like he is being disloyal in speaking with others about family experiences;
- Alan's may not have developed the skills to reflect on and articulate previous events.

Confronting Alan directly with knowledge about his previous experiences therefore had certain risks. One such risk is the possibility that surfacing emotions linked to potentially distressing events that could not easily be contained in the session. This risk has to be considered in light of the fact that Alan was to return to the classroom following the session. This raises questions regarding appropriate settings for therapeutic interventions that would explore profound memories.

Furthermore, there was a dilemma in terms of whether his mother had told Alan that she had shared this information with me and other professionals.

I hypothesised that Alan might feel more secure in talking about his family with his mother present and that Alan might better engage in exploration of deep emotions. I therefore considered that a joint session with Alan and his mother would be beneficial and I asked Alan if he would be happy with this. Alan said that he was OK with a joint session and that he was happy to share the emergent formulation with her.

Session 3


Work Undertaken:

- Discussion about how things have been since the last session;
- Interactive activity to introduce the CBT approach;
- Population of the formulation chart;
- Completion of the feedback form.

Introduction to the CBT approach

I introduced the CBT approach that included an exercise to highlight the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour and explained how previous experiences and biology (such as health) can impact on feelings and behaviours.

I presented a basic framework or a formulation shown in Figure 2 below.



Ideas of how some people learn thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Experiences-Major Events | Biology | |
| | Thinking | Feeling |
| | | |
| What you do/What happens | | |

Draw arrows to things that link together and add anything that is missing.

Case formulation chart

I explained to Alan that we would populate the formulation chart with what we learned through the sessions and that we would draw arrows between the information to show the links between things.

Salient information that was generated through the session included that Alan reports to be good at not showing his emotions.

I also introduced the notion of how thoughts can be accurate and inaccurate and how it can be usefulness to explore thoughts to see if there is a more balanced way of thinking about things.

Session 4

I had planned a joint session with Alan and his mother, but due to unforeseen circumstances, Alan's mother was unable to attend. I therefore undertook an individual session with Alan.

Work Undertaken:

- Discussion of how things had been since the last session;
- Exploration of the triggers and consequences associated with Alan becoming angry;
- Ways of recognising anger and information regarding the physiology of anger;
- Discussion about the importance of calming down at the point of recognising anger building up (using the volcano metaphor from Think Good – Feel Good by Stallard, 2002) and the knowledge relating to the physiology of anger;
- Exploration of calming down techniques that Alan could try;
- Explanation of the usefulness of exploring thoughts when Alan becomes embarrassed and/or angry and to look test out the accuracy of these. The setting of homework- diary of thoughts and actions when he becomes angry and/or embarrassed;
- Discussion of adaptations to the formulation in light in information learnt during the session;
- Completion of the feedback form.

Session 5

Alan's mother was invited to join the session but was unable to attend. I therefore conducted an individual session with Alan.

Work undertaken:

- Discussion of how things had been since the last session;
- Discussion to as to why Alan might not want to show his emotions and how he might like to present an image of himself where everything is fine (with reference to the SDQ and Beck scores);
- Discussion regarding what could be done so that Alan would find it easier to complete the thought diary;
- Interactive activity relating to different types of thinking errors;
- Setting of homework - to use the thoughts that he records in his diary to identify potential thinking errors that could be explored in the next session. We could then look at ways of testing them for accuracy or whether other thoughts might be more balanced and helpful;
- Discussion of adaptations to the formulation in light in information learnt through the session;
- Completion of the feedback form.

Session 6

Work undertaken:

- Discussion regarding how things had been since the previous session;
- Discussion regarding some of Alan's thoughts and how they could be tested for accuracy;
- Identification of strategies that could be used to test thoughts that formed the basis of the homework set;
- Discussion of adaptations to the formulation in light in information learnt through this session;
- Completion of the feedback form.

Session 7

Work undertaken:

- Discussion of how things had been since the last session;
- Further exploration of thinking errors and how to look for evidence pertinent to Alan's experiences;
- Identification of evidence to the contrary of unhelpful thoughts and the development of a more balanced view of things using Socratic questioning;
- Discussion of adaptations to the formulation in light of information learnt through the session;
- Completion of the feedback form.

Alan reported to be better able to control his anger and he gave an example of an incident that happened recently where he was able to keep calm.

Session 8

A joint session with Alan and his mother was planned at their home address as this was outside of term time. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Alan's mother was unable to attend. Session 8 therefore was an individual session with Alan in the school setting the following week.

Work Undertaken:

- Discussion of how things have been since the last session;
- Further exploration of thinking errors and how to look for evidence pertinent to Alan's experiences;
- Identification of evidence to the contrary of unhelpful and helpful thoughts and the development of a more balanced view of things using Socratic questioning;
- Discussion of adaptations to the formulation in light of information learnt through this session;
- Completion of the feedback form.

Alan was reminded that the next session was to be the last. Alan appeared to engage less well in this session (e.g. his conversation fluctuated between topics more than in previous sessions and he appeared to employ controlling behaviour).

Session 9

Work undertaken:

- Discussion about how things had been since the last session;
- Plenary of what had been covered during the sessions;
- Discussion as to what Alan found most helpful and what new skills he may continue to use;
- Completion of the SDQ and feedback form. However, Alan appeared to put little thought into his responses and he did not want to put his name to them.

Appendix II: Feedback form developed by Freidberg et al (2004)

1) How much did today's session help you?

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---------|---|---|------------|
| A Lot | | | Kind of | | | Not at all |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

2) How much fun did you have today?

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---------|---|---|------------|
| A Lot | | | Kind of | | | Not at all |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

3) How much do you think you shared your thoughts and feelings in today's meeting?

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---------|---|---|------------|
| A Lot | | | Kind of | | | Not at all |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

4) How much do you think you took part in today's meeting?

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---------|---|---|------------|
| A Lot | | | Kind of | | | Not at all |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

5) How much do you think you paid attention in the meeting?

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---------|---|---|------------|
| A Lot | | | Kind of | | | Not at all |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

6) How much do you remember about today's meeting?

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---------|---|---|------------|
| A Lot | | | Kind of | | | Not at all |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

7) I will use my new skill in school when I ..

8) I will use my new skill in home when I ..

9) I will use my new skill to cope with.. feelings

Name:

Date:

CHAPTER FOUR: AN EXPLORATION OF A THERAPEUTIC STORY WRITING INTERVENTION

Abstract

This report describes a group intervention based on Waters' (2004a) Therapeutic Story Writing (TSW) model. The report describes the TSW model and provides a critique of the model's claims and its theoretical underpinnings before describing a TSW intervention undertaken with four children in a primary school in the West Midlands. The evidence base for the TSW model is also explored and anecdotal evidence emanating from the TSW intervention is given. The report then concludes with implications regarding the use of aspects of the model in future practice.

4.1 Background

I was invited by my line manager in the Educational Psychology Service where I work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, to participate in training relating to 'Therapeutic Story Writing' (TSW). Specifically, the training was based on a 'therapeutic storywriting' model developed by Trisha Waters as outlined in her book - *Therapeutic Story Writing: A Practical Guide to Developing Emotional Literacy in Primary Schools* (Waters, 2004a).

Waters worked as teacher in a 'psychodynamic therapeutic community' for boys with Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties (EBD) before working for ten years as a primary teacher. Waters then trained as a therapist/counsellor and worked part-time as a teacher before working as a SENCO in a junior school where she developed the TSW model (Waters, 2001). The book is written for school staff members such as SENCOs' and SEN support teachers as well as Educational Psychologists and outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the model whilst also serving as a training manual.

TSW has been applied to support individual children as well as small groups of children (see Waters 2001, 2004, 2008; and Pomerantz, 2007). Implementation of a group intervention is a requirement of the Doctoral Programme in Applied

Educational and Child Psychology. I therefore accepted my line manager's invitation to participate in the training.

This paper describes a TSW intervention undertaken with a small group of children in a primary school in the West Midlands, which I co-facilitated with a colleague. The paper describes what the TSW model is, the prospective changes that it claims to make, and how it purports to bring about positive changes in children. The following sections explore the claims of the TSW model and the processes that are considered to enable positive change to take place. I then describe the evidence relating to the TSW and critically examine the theoretical underpinnings of the model before describing the intervention that I co-facilitated.

4.1.1 What is the TSW Model?

The TSW model is an approach in which both the child and the facilitator³ may author stories. Stories are considered to be a platform to enable a child to process difficult emotions and to develop emotionally. Waters (2004a) claims that TSW promotes emotional literacy (e.g. Goleman, 1996) that is defined by Waters as the "ability to recognise, understand and appropriately express our emotions FEEL.org, 2003)". Waters (2001) argued that:

"By projecting feelings onto story characters the child may be able to begin to identify and name emotions in the safety of the imaginary. By taking the role of narrator they are in a position to explore how the characters will react in different situations. By supporting children in this process through modelling and mirroring the stories, the teacher may be able to extend the child's language and meaning associated with the emotional dilemmas of the story. In this way the child's emotional literacy can be developed." (Waters, 2001; P63).

³ I will refer to a person who runs a therapeutic intervention as a facilitator throughout this report.

As well as TSW providing opportunity to explore and name emotions in the emotional safety of a story, techniques are used by the facilitator to promote emotional development. These include the use of questioning regarding the emotional (e.g. asking questions such as, I wonder how that character must be feeling?) or situational content of the stories (e.g. by asking I wonder what this character might do to make the situation better?) and setting up dilemmas (based on information relating to the needs of individual children) to resolve.

During the TSW sessions, the facilitators, as well as the child/ren write stories. The facilitators may author stories that they feel relate to the particular needs of a child, although the relevance of the story is not made explicit. Stories can also be co-constructed with a child or group of children (see Waters, 2001, 2004, 2008; and Pomerantz, 2007). A good understanding of the child's needs and their circumstances is therefore considered helpful, so that information of personal relevance to the child can be incorporated into a story in order to provide a platform for the child to explore emotions or dilemmas that are a source of difficulty for them. Thus, Waters argues stories can be tailored to the needs of an individual child, whilst being delivered in a group intervention to promote more general development. Pomerantz (2007) and Waters (2001, 2004ab, 2008) used metaphors to incorporate knowledge about a child and their circumstances into their stories. This is supported by Freidberg and McClure (2002), clinical psychologists' who advocate the use of 'storytelling' within a cognitive behavioural therapeutic approach. In order to enhance a child's engagement with a story they recommend...

"creating a conflict that parallels that of the child's story but where characters are successful in overcoming or meeting their challenges (Callow & Benson, 1990). Thus your choice of characters will depend on the individual child, the problem, and the surrounding circumstances or context." (Freidberg & McClure, 2002; P148).

The use of information pertaining to the child's presentation and circumstances is also advocated by Nelson (2001) who argues that not all stories will develop self-understanding. Stories that are co-constructed with children or those that have been authored using an empathetic approach and written with the presenting difficulties in mind are more likely to have therapeutic potential (Pomerantz, 2007). Pomerantz (2007) argues that...

"not all therapeutic stories will have an effect. This may be because the story is not sufficiently connected to the to the child's real experience." (Pomerantz, 2007; P55).

This is consistent with Gardner and Harper (2007) who claim...

"that through the use of metaphor and imagery in therapeutic stories, children can begin to find ways of understanding and managing anxiety. The context and characters, while imaginary, need to be of interest to the child. Also, to enable the child to identify with the feelings and events, these need to mirror aspects of the child's behaviour so to achieve this, adults writing the story need to demonstrate an empathetic awareness of the child's social and emotional world." (Pomerantz, 2007; P48).

However, the TSW model never encourages children to write on the basis of personal experience, but they may choose to do so. This appears to be a potential area of difficulty with the TSW model for two reasons. Firstly, the above indicates that a story may have to relate directly to personal experience for it to facilitate change, and secondly, Waters (2004a) argues that interpretation of a child's story is an integral part of the 'therapeutic' process as it helps develop 'insights into the child's anxieties'. Waters, (2004a; P18) describes interpretation as 'the linking of a child's metaphor with the child's unconscious feelings relating to associated events in their lives'. This is based on perceiving a link between of the content of a child's story to their actual lives as represented within metaphor. The TSW model is therefore a psychodynamic approach that assumes that the material produced in a

story reflects unconscious influences (The theoretical underpinnings of the model are discussed in the section 'Theoretical underpinnings of the TSW model'). The psychodynamic approach focuses on the resolution of unconscious influences/conflicts and differs from a cognitive behaviour approach, which focuses on psycho-education, a process that brings explicit awareness to unhelpful ways of thinking and/or behaving at a more conscious level.

In the TSW model, psychodynamic-style interpretation is used to guide reflective comments regarding the child's story, and actions (Waters, 2001) and facilitate the development of an empathetic attitude towards the child (Waters, 2004a).

It could be argued that the techniques mentioned above to develop emotional literacy can be used without the need to interpret the child's story. One might ask what the facilitator does differently in responding to a story after having interpreted its relevance to the child's personal circumstance, compared to not interpreting it, as prompts to facilitate the development of emotional literacy such as 'I wonder how that character may feel' or 'I wonder what might this character do to.....' can be made without the need for information regarding the child and their experiences.

Indeed, Waters (2001) argues that because no direct interpretation was made explicit...

"children were not developing emotional literacy in the sense that their reflections were not consciously about themselves but about their characters." (Waters, 2001; P57).

Thus, TSW loosely uses the concept of emotional literacy to explain the mechanism behind emotional development purported to take place through the intervention.

Furthermore, given that TSW intervention is reported to be aligned to a psychodynamic approach, which aims to address unconscious influences, it is not clear whether emotional development is thought to be predominantly promoted

through an explicit approach to promoting emotional literacy (similar to a cognitive behavioural approach) or whether the TSW process is thought to be indirectly cathartic in supporting the resolution of unhelpful influences not within conscious awareness.

There is some question then, whether the TSW model aims to develop emotional literacy skills generally, or whether it aims to provide a platform for a child to explore and process emotions at an unconscious level that have specific relevance to a child. However, the theoretical underpinnings of the model relate to the psychoanalytic approach, which suggests that the content of stories reflects some aspect of a child's psyche, regardless of whether there is conscious awareness of relevance. Indeed, Waters (2001) warns against communicating interpretations to the child and advocates that the facilitator 'stay within the metaphor' (Waters, 2004a).

Waters (2001) argues that 'externalising a problem' allows for a more careful examination of the problem in relative emotional safety (Waters, 2001, 2004, 2008), and that TSW...

"works through metaphor, both within children's own storywriting and within stories written by the teacher, in order to address issues that may be too emotionally overwhelming for children to talk about directly." (Waters, 2004a; P4).

Similarly, Pomerantz (2007) argues that although therapeutic stories should be selected 'on the basis that they will validate the child's negative emotions' (e.g. feelings of worthlessness):

"Importantly, the story does not at any point make reference to the child for whom the adult reader has chosen it and the adult must maintain this position throughout. This guiding principle allows the child to reflect on the disturbing and painful ideas the story presents from a safe distance." (Pomerantz, 2007; P47).

Furthermore, the value of communicating an interpretation of a child's story has been questioned. Gardner (1971) for example, asserts...

“that it is a relatively unusual child who is interested in arriving at a conscious understanding of his/her unconscious process, leaving aside the secondary issue of using such insights therapeutically.” (Brandell, 1984; P56).

Indeed, Waters (2004a) argues that learning takes place through ‘osmosis’ rather than through explicit acknowledgement of interpretation and she cites Ricoeur (1991) who states that...

“the very act of structuring the unconscious through narrative leads to a greater availability of feeling and expression, albeit in the metaphor. Thus, the act of writing or sharing unconscious images allows some sort of integration within the psyche of these unconscious elements, independently of whether they have been interpreted or not.” (Waters, 2004a; P19).

Thus, the TSW model is purported to provide a platform both for the facilitator to author stories thought to have some therapeutic function for a child, as well as allowing the child to explore and work through personal emotions in their stories, which they find otherwise too distressing to process explicitly. There is however a lack of clarity with regards to whether all children's stories reflect content of significant personal relevance to them and therefore whether interpretation of a child's story is appropriate. However, it has been noted that a safe environment is a pre-requisite for the child to feel able to explore difficult emotions. Waters (2001) writes that:

“Probably the most important aspect of developing storywriting as a therapeutic tool is that the child can feel secure in their relationship with the teacher.” (Waters, 2001; P64).

A dependable and containing environment in which children feel secure and safe enough to explore their ‘inner worlds’ (Winnicott, 1971), that contains anxiety so that thinking can take place (Bion, 1993) is also promoted.

Waters (2008) writes that TSW for groups...

“provides an emotionally containing environment in which pupils are encouraged to write stories in which they can project their own worries and concerns onto story characters. By working through the emotional safety of story metaphor, pupils are able to discuss and process feelings that might otherwise be overwhelming or inappropriate to share in an educational setting.” (Waters, 2008; P187).

The creation of a safe environment is also supported through: structuring TSW sessions on the same day at the same time each week; setting ground rules with the pupils; paying attention to the room environment; and the use of relaxations strategies at the start and end of each session.

4.1.2 TSW and promoting academic and emotional development

Waters (2004) claims that TSW can promote both academic and emotional development in children. Waters (2001, 2008) highlights that government initiatives (e.g. the Every Child Matter agenda, DfES, 2003; Removing Barriers to Achievement, DfES 2004; and the Children’s Plan, DCSF, 2007) advocate the need to address emotional well-being along with academic achievement. Waters (2001) highlights the scarcity of therapeutic support for primary school children and acknowledges a split between educational and health departments in supporting these children. Furthermore, she argues:

“According to the Code of Conduct for SEN a referral for special educational needs is made because the child is not progressing with their learning due to EBDs. Any therapeutic work will therefore need to be evaluated on whether this has helped the child progress socially, personally and academically as a result.” (Waters, 2001; P4).

Waters (2001) notes that whilst many behavioural programmes have been put in place, there has been very little done by way of addressing the emotional needs of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (the Special Educational Needs

Advisory Sub-committee, NAGSEN 1998). Furthermore, Waters claims that TSW groups are distinguishable from other therapeutic approaches used in schools (e.g. play and art therapy) because pupils write out their stories and therefore are developing their literacy skills simultaneously (Waters, 2008). How TSW is considered to promote literacy skills and emotional development is discussed below.

4.1.3 Waters' claims re: how TSW develops literacy skills

The link between emotional wellbeing and learning has been recognised (e.g. Bion's 1965 theory that anxiety needs to be sufficiently contained in order for thinking to take place). Waters (2004) states that:

“Children with emotional anxieties are often too preoccupied with their internal world to focus on what is going on in the classroom. By the time these children reach junior school the discrepancy between their writing skills and those of their peers can become obvious.” (Waters, 2004; P6).

Thus, removing emotional barriers to learning is thought to facilitate academic progress. Furthermore, Waters (2004) advocates an approach to learning literacy skills that engages children in writing through their interest, helps them to realise that writing can be ‘personally satisfying’ and to become more open to advice to improve literacy skills such as spelling and grammar (Pullman, 2008). Thus, the TSW model claims to be appropriate as an intervention for reluctant writers. Waters (2001) states that:

“By giving children, who have emotional difficulties and are also reluctant writers, the opportunity to write stories with a personally relevant emotional content they may become more engaged with the writing process. They may become motivated to complete the stories and in the process develop their academic literacy skills.....” (Waters, 2001; P63).

Furthermore, a child's reluctance to write is thought to be overcome in part, by the facilitator modelling writing without concern for correct spelling or grammar. Other

ways of encouraging writing advocated within TSW include sharing work with the group, asking for ideas and presenting the children's stories within books (with the grammar and spelling corrected). Thus, the TSW model holds that through promoting engagement in story writing activities, and removing emotional barriers to learning through creating an emotionally containing environment, the pupils' literacy skills will develop incidentally.

However, it is possible that the converse may apply, when a child's reluctance to write might impede their engagement with the intervention. A reluctant writer may be anxious about the prospect of writing and may have little energy left to access and process emotions. Thus, the TSW model may be aiming to tackle too many areas of development simultaneously. Never-the-less, a study conducted by Waters (2004b) reported a number of positive effects on children's social and academic learning, including that TSW:

- "supported listening and speaking skills;
- fostered an interactive relationship between the teacher and group with respect to story writing skills;
- increased pupils' concentration and motivation to engage with story writing;
- and improved pupils' self-esteem as writers." (Waters, 2004b; P5).

The study did not report academic grades, and no pre and post measures were used. There is therefore a lack of rigorous independent research into the effectiveness of the model on developing academic skills. The evidence relating to the TSW model is further discussed in the following section.

4.2 Evidence base for therapeutic stories

There appears to be limited evidence regarding the effectiveness of therapeutic storywriting techniques. However, the South-East Region Special Educational Needs Partnership (SERSEN) commissioned an evaluation of the impact that TSW groups

had on children's emotional, social and academic learning. The evaluation was undertaken by Waters (2004b) who set out to answer a number of research questions including:

- In what ways does TSW impact on emotional learning – in particular the ability to articulate feelings and process them through metaphor?
- In what ways does TSW impact on social learning – in particular the ability to listen and empathise with others?
- What impact does TSW have on academic learning – in particular motivation to write, imagination and self-esteem as writers?

Data were collected through group and individual semi-structured interviews with twenty-one children who attended one of five TSW groups in four schools. Thematic analysis was used to identify key issues that emerged through the interviews and the percentages of responses that conformed to the themes were given. Teachers who led TSW groups were also interviewed and data from these interviews were triangulated with the information obtained through the children's interviews.

Waters (2004b) reported that TSW had a number of positive effects on children's social, emotional and academic learning including that it:

- “enabled pupils to use the medium of story writing to process emotional experiences;
- helped pupils move through difficult feelings;
- supported listening and speaking skills;
- fostered an interactive relationship between the teacher and group with respect to story writing skills;
- increased pupils' concentration and motivation to engage with story writing; and
- improved pupils' self-esteem as writers.” (Waters, 2004b; P5).

Waters (2004b) acknowledged that future research might be required, exploring whether the suggested gains in social and emotional skills transferred into the classroom. Apart from percentages used in the thematic analysis, no quantitative

data were used in Waters' own (2004b) study, and qualitative data were open to criticism regarding their susceptibility to subjective judgment biasing the results.

Waters' research may therefore usefully have been complemented by quantitative pre and post measures of social and emotional and academic attainment.

Stories from three children were used to show how the children used storywriting to 'explore and process difficult feelings' (Waters, 2008). This was done through a content analysis of their stories. Waters, (2004b) reports that:

"The analysis of the metaphor contained in the sample of pupils' stories showed a high degree of correlation with pupils' emotional issues as presented by the referring teacher and the pupils themselves." (Water, 2004b; P26).

However, the children all attended ten TSW sessions and whilst Waters makes reference to recurring themes in the stories, it is not known whether any of the stories could not easily be interpreted in terms of personal significance to the child. It is possible that only some stories related personally to a child (even to their unconscious needs), and that other stories might be produced creatively or be based on recent events.

Similarly to Waters (2008), Pomerantz (2007) an educational psychologist, describes how she used therapeutic stories to support two children individually and three children within a group. All children were described as having 'severe social, emotional and behavioural needs'. Pomerantz (2007) incorporated knowledge about the children into stories that were either authored by her or co-written with the children. Pomerantz described how a therapeutic story that she had authored had helped a child recognise that 'some behaviour is problematic', as evidenced through the child's drawings relating to the story. Pomerantz also described how three children who co-authored a therapeutic story were re-integrated into class groups

months after the intervention. However, after completing a story with another child, the child began to show 'more marked' distressing behaviour (e.g. absconding, refusal to cooperate). Pomerantz therefore reminds us that therapeutic work should be 'pursued with care' as it carries a risk. Never-the-less she argues that...

"therapeutic stories can be used by educational psychologists in a safe way adhering to the key principals but without the need for extensive training." (Pomerantz, 2007; P46).

Having critically discussed the claims relating to the TSW model, the processes that are purported to bring about change and the evidence, it is clear that there appears to be some uncertainty regarding whether a child's story will contain material of personal relevance, and the extent to which a child can identify with the content of a story affects the potential for the story to bring about change. An early study by Despert and Potter (1936) investigated the use of story as a means of investigating psychiatric problems in twenty-two institutionalised children. Although their research was not 'methodologically rigorous' and was based on 'impressionistic evidence' (Brandell, 1984) they offered a number of conclusions including that:

- "The story is a form of verbalised fantasy through which the child may reveal his/her inner drives and conflicts.
- A recurring theme is generally found indicating the principal concern or conflict, and this may be corroborated with other clinical evidence (e.g. dream material).
- Anxiety, guilt, wish-fulfilment, and aggressiveness are the primary trends expressed.
- The use of stories appears to be most valuable when the child determines the subject matter of his/her story. The story can be used as both a therapeutic and an evaluative device." (Brandell; 1984, P54).

This offers some, although weak, evidence that stories have personal relevance in so much as the content reflects a child's psyche. However, the strength of the evidence of outcomes relating to the TSW and storywriting interventions generally, is fairly weak if one considers the categories of evidence used by Wolpert et al (2006)

who provide advice to mental health professionals regarding the evidence base for different types of interventions. Indeed, Wolpert et al (2006) have reported that there is insufficient evidence regarding the effectiveness of psychodynamic interventions for children with conduct or anxiety disorders.

I now critically explore the theoretical underpinnings of the model.

4.3 Theoretical underpinnings of the TSW model

Waters (2004) argues that TSW is an integrative therapeutic model as it draws on knowledge from a number of areas including: psychodynamics, core counselling skills (e.g. a Rogerian, person centred approach and Jungian guided imagery), and behaviourism. However, the principal theory is described in terms of the psychosynthesis model and particularly the theory of sub-personalities developed by Assagioli (e.g. 1975) an Italian Psychiatrist who worked with Freud in the early development of psychoanalysis (Palmer & Hubbard, 2009). Assagioli developed psychosynthesis as a move towards a more optimistic view of humans within a 'growth model' rather than one based on a disease model' (Lacey, 2006) and because he felt that Freud's ideas 'did not to him, sufficiently acknowledge the spiritual dimension' inherent in humans (Palmer & Hubbard, 2009). Psychosynthesis assumes that humans have a 'higher or spiritual' self (Assagioli, 1965) that brings a 'sense of freedom, universality and communication with other selves' and can be used to guide psychological resources (Brown, 1997). Psychosynthesis then, has been described as being aligned to transpersonal and humanistic psychology (Palmer & Hubbard, 2009).

Assagioli's theory of subpersonality holds that we all have a number of subpersonalities developed through our experiences, which are aspects of the self

that have different attributes, emotional states, behaviours and roles. As suggested by psychoanalytic theory, we act unconsciously and in accord with these subpersonalities, unless they are brought to awareness. Bringing awareness to these subpersonalities strengthens our sense of self and enables us to draw on these personalities at will. A subpersonality may be triggered by a situation in which we take on, or identify with, the attributes of that personality.

Waters (2001) extends this theory by arguing that it is possible to make the identification with a subpersonality conscious, thereby allowing choice of whether to identify with it or not. In this respect the subpersonality is 'on-call' and held in the 'section of the consciousness' (Slater, 1995). However, this is contrary to the notional use of a metaphor in TSW and the practice of not making interpretations explicit.

Assagioli (1973) describes a model of the psyche (that is depicted in Figure 1) that is similar to Freud's levels of consciousness. The model views the psyche as being split into the higher, middle and lower unconscious. The lower unconscious is where the unconscious drives and complexes reside, and is thought to relate to past experiences. Whitmore (1995) likened the lower unconscious to Freud's unconscious where basic drives, strong emotions and complexes reside. Within this level will be 'hidden agendas such as the need to gain attention or to be loved' (Slater, 1995).

The middle unconscious relates to recent or near present experiences. The personal self or 'I' resides here and contains our thoughts, feelings, memories and our awareness. The personal self takes on the attributes of the active subpersonality and is able to 'disidentify with all subpersonalities'. Waters (2001) states that:

"When the personal self is able to disidentify, i.e. step out of role, from all subpersonalities it connects with the higher self and in its place the self is able to engage free will. It is rather like the freedom of the conductor of an orchestra being able to bring in each instrument at will. This is generally a stage only possible to reach in adulthood, if at all; although in working with children it is possible to consider disidentifying

from a particular subpersonality at a particular time.” (Waters, 2001; P25).

Waters (2001) argues that the middle unconscious connects with the higher unconscious, that relates to future potential and contains latent functions, spiritual energies and aspirations. It is our ‘evolutionary future, intuitions, altruistic love and ecstasy’ (Slater, 1995). Hay and Nye (1998) argue that children appear to have inherent spiritual dimensions. They observed through their work with children that from the age of ten years, children who are ‘spiritually aware’ use strengths relating to ‘inner authority’; an ‘elaboration of the spiritual ideal’; and a ‘single mindedness’ (Ruddock & Cameron, 2010).

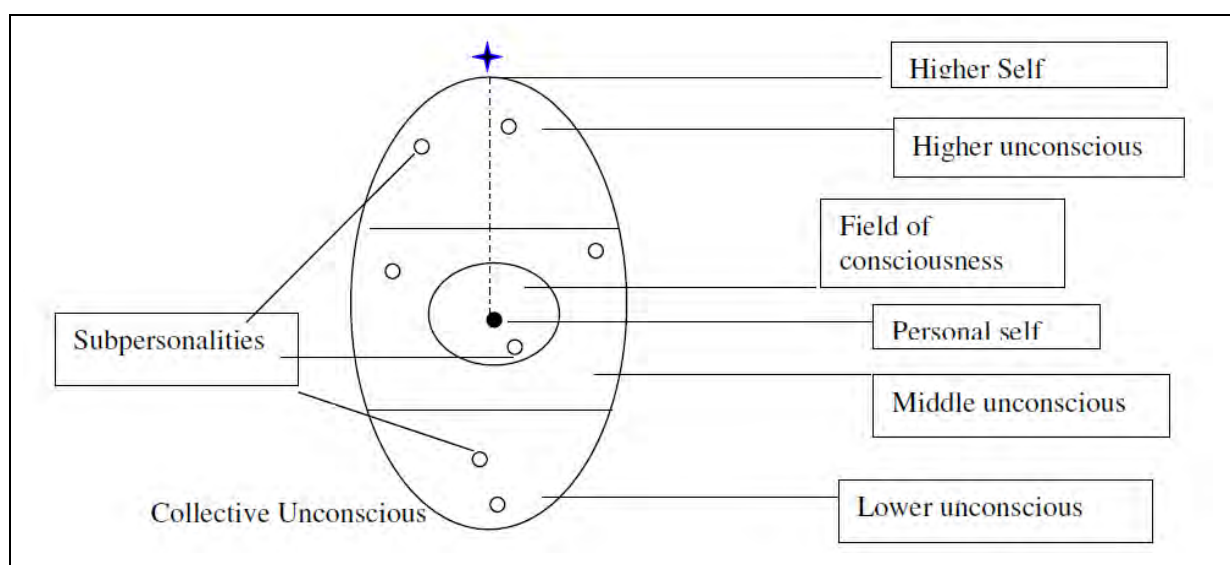


Figure 1. The ‘Psychosynthesis model of subpersonalities’ Taken from Waters (2001, P24).

According to the TSW model, children project their subpersonalities onto the characters in their story, allowing them to view them objectively. By taking the role of narrator, the child is able to explore these subpersonalities/characters and it is through this process that emotional literacy develops as they are encouraged to consider how a character feels, what their needs are and how they might react. Once the

subpersonality has been identified and explored in relation to its interaction with other subpersonalities, the child may disidentify or 'let go of' the subpersonality (Waters, 2001). Furthermore, Waters (2004a) argues that the child may be able to draw on subpersonalities in the higher self/unconscious to help them with a difficulty. It is thought that the introduction of magic into a story may help a child draw on the wisdom and spirituality contained in their higher self, and that this will help them resolve difficulties or conflict.

The TSW model suggests four steps which can lead to a greater emotional awareness and a stronger sense of self. These are: recognition (naming of the traits of the main characters' in a story); identification (achieved by asking the child to think how the character would feel/react or what they might need to make them happy); integration (exploration of interaction between characters in the story); and disidentification (exploration of different endings and resolutions to a story).

Thus, Waters advocates the use of stories and metaphors as a method for children to process their subpersonalities and learn about themselves and different possibilities of behaving or viewing a situation. The process of disidentification with a problematic subpersonality is thought to be therapeutic, without which, the child might suppress the subpersonality. The ability to let go of the subpersonality is represented within a story by the satisfactory ending of that story (i.e. where a conflict or dilemma has been resolved (Waters, 2001)). Conversely, a reoccurring theme might be observed within a story or across stories, if there is no satisfactory resolution. The TSW facilitator may then wish to introduce concepts relating to spirituality which the child can draw on to help explore an alternative resolution.

4.4 Critique of the mechanisms and theory underpinning the TSW model

The TSW model is positioned within a psychodynamic approach that advocates the use of techniques designed to develop emotional literacy. However, the links between emotional literacy and psychosynthesis/subpersonality theory appear to be tenuous. The TSW model does not distinguish well between developing emotional literacy generally, and resolution of difficulties of direct relevance to a particular child. Indeed, psychosynthesis theory, that underpins the TSW model, is based on the development of the whole psyche and incorporates the notion of spirituality as having a role in promoting emotional wellbeing generally. Psychosynthesis and spirituality are critically explored in the following section.

4.4.1 Psychosynthesis and spirituality

Assagioli's model of the psyche and subpersonalities differs from the more widely known and better accepted Freudian theory of personality with particular respect to the introduction of spirituality. Spirituality has been given little attention in the psychology academic literature until recently. Yet some have linked positive therapeutic outcomes' with spiritual dimensions (Ruddock & Cameron, 2010). The positive effect that spirituality may have on wellbeing has begun to be explored in a number of fields (Cornah, 2006). Spiritual beliefs have been thought to pervade...

“an individual's everyday encounters with other people, inform the kind of attributions the person makes for successful and problematic events in life, the meanings he or she constructs around unpredicted life experiences and the way in which their relationships are conducted.”
(Ruddock & Cameron, 2010; P26).

The notion of a higher/spiritual self and its role in strengthening identity as acknowledged in the Assagioli's theory of subpersonalities, appears to be reflected in OFSTED's (2004) description of spirituality in children:

“It is about the development of a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose. It is about the development of a pupil’s “spirit”. Some people may call it the development of a pupil’s “soul”; others as the development of “personality” or “character”. (OFSTED, 2004; P8).

Zohar and Marshall (2001) have argued that spiritual intelligence is more important than emotional and intellectual intelligence. ‘Spiritual’ in this sense refers to...

“being in touch with some larger, deeper, richer whole that puts the present limited situation into a new perspective. It creates a sense of “something beyond” and adds meanings and values to what one does, and a sense that actions are part of some greater universal process.” (Gersch et al, 2010; P226).

Similarly, it has been argued that one way in which spirituality may promote emotional wellbeing is:

“...that believing that one is part of something greater than one’s self may permit a person to reframe or reinterpret life’s events that are usually perceived uncontrollable, in such a way as to make them less stressful and more meaningful.” (Ruddock & Cameron, 2010; P27).

Gall et al (2005) argue that there is evidence in the literature that higher levels of spirituality are associated with greater resiliency and that spiritual resiliency is linked to mental health (Bennett et al, 2010). However, Gersch et al (2010) argue that there has been little research regarding the effective assessment or tools to promote children’s spiritual development.

Although there appears to be little evidenced regarding the use of the ‘higher or spiritual’ self in emotional development, spirituality as a concept appears to be recognised as having a role in emotional wellbeing, albeit indirectly, through having a greater sense of self and purpose. The notion of spirituality as being linked to learning in school has also been discussed (e.g. Gersch et al, 2008).

Given that there is little or no supporting evidence for psychosynthesis in academic literature, caution should be applied in using psychosynthesis as a means to ‘explain’

emotional and/or spiritual development. Furthermore, whilst the theory of psychosynthesis underpins the TSW model, Waters does not hypothesise how TSW impacts on a child's spiritual development despite this being a distinguishing aspect of the theory. However, as noted in section 4.1.2 'What is the TSW model?' Waters model does use the notion of psychodynamic interpretation, but the mechanisms behind how interpretation facilitates positive change are not clear and is discussed in the next section.

4.4.2 Psychodynamic interpretation

The TSW model assumes that the content of a child's story parallels difficulties of personal relevance to the child and therefore that a child's story can be interpreted in this context. That is, the characters in child's story are thought to reflect a child's subpersonality and exploration of story characters might then be considered, by extension, exploration of the psyche.

The notion of exploration of the self through externalising/disidentifying with subpersonalities/story characters as described in the TSW model, has some similarity with Narrative Therapy which works on the premise that it is through 'restorying' (e.g. developing alternative narratives/ways of viewing events) that we construct and reconstruct our lives (Epston & White, 2001). Some would argue that we use narrative in our everyday lives in which we continuously reappraise actions and anticipate outcomes. Waters (2004a) cites Brooks (1984) as an example who considers that we live:

"immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed" (Waters, 2004a; P3).

However, Narrative Therapy makes reference to the 'restoring' of actual or predicted events rather than those based in the hypothetical. Given that in TSW sessions the child is not encouraged to write about difficulties of personal relevance, it could be that the content of a child's story reflects their imagination or second hand experience. Thus, characters of a child's story may hold no symbolic significance and not always appropriately be subject to interpretation through the lens used in the TSW model and may not have potential to impact on a child's psyche.

4.4.3 Summary of critique of the mechanisms and theory underpinning the TSW model

The theoretical underpinnings of the model appear to be unnecessarily complex and unclear. There is, for instance a lack of clarity regarding the extent and utility of psychodynamic interpretations, or the supposedly complementary practice of facilitating emotional literacy through providing reflective comments. It is also unclear whether the model aims to promote emotional literacy generally or whether it aims predominantly to resolve unconscious influences, relevant to a particular child.

One could also argue that the humanistic therapeutic environment in which TSW is conducted might be partially responsible for any observed improvements to a child's emotional or academic progress. However, evaluating the impact of transpersonal approaches has been recognised as being inherently difficult to measure, as impact is based on subjective experience (Palmer & Hubbard, 2009).

Furthermore, in attempting to be such a comprehensive approach to promoting children's development and because of the tenuous links between the underpinning theory and the projected positive outcomes of the intervention, the TSW model does not lend itself well to evaluation. Rigorous, multi-method analysis/evaluation of the model's claims regarding promoting emotional wellbeing and academic attainment is

required before it can be established as a credible model of intervention. I now describe the context and outcomes of the intervention that I undertook.

4.5 The TSW intervention that I co-facilitated

The TSW intervention that I undertook offers some anecdotal evidence regarding the TSW model and the context and outcomes of the intervention are described below.

4.5.1 The context of the TSW intervention

I attended training based on the TSW model developed by Waters (2004a) that comprised three full days spread over a period of nine weeks. The training was delivered by a Senior Educational Psychologist and a member of the 'Treasure Team' – a team within the Educational Psychology Service that is commissioned to deliver such interventions and training in schools and other children's support agencies. Consistent with Waters' model, participants were required to set up and run TSW group sessions (ten weekly sessions) within a school during the course of the training. Progress and difficulties encountered by the participants could be shared during subsequent training sessions.

The value of interpreting a child's story was raised and discussed during the first training session. Given that children are not encouraged to write about personal circumstances and that there is no clear distinction between responding to a child's story whether it is thought to have personal relevance or not, active interpretation was deemed not to be appropriate/necessary. Indeed, it was considered that experience in the psychoanalytic therapeutic approach would be necessary for valid interpretations to be made (which the trainees did not have).

However, psychosynthesis theory could be used to identify whether characters contained within a child's story resided in the lower, middle or higher conscious, with the assumption that this may have some utility in suggesting facilitator actions (e.g. suggesting the introduction of 'magic' into a story so as to engage the higher self and promote resolution of an unresolved conflict).

I was one of six participants who undertook the training. Other participants were another Trainee Educational Psychologist, a SENCo, teaching assistants and pastoral support staff. I co-facilitated a therapeutic story writing group (with a colleague who was also a Trainee Educational Psychologist) in a primary school. The characteristics of the children who took part in the intervention are given in the table below. The group comprised four children, two boys and two girls. All four children had been referred to the Educational Psychology Service for difficulties with literacy (they were all at least two years behind their peers in attainment in literacy) and all were reluctant writers.

The intervention ran for a shortened period of six weeks due to delays in the return of consent forms (see Appendix I) and the end of the school year. There were also disruptions caused by events such as school photos, induction days to secondary schools and family holidays. This meant that only one child attended all six sessions. The room in which the intervention was conducted was not optimal, as there was a high level of noise from adjacent classes and there were many interruptions. There were, for example, at least three occasions on which a class of children entered the room for a lesson. I believe that these factors impacted on the potential of the intervention to generate positive outcomes (given that the creation of a safe environment is considered to be an important aspect of the TSW sessions – as mentioned in Section 4.1.2 'What is the TSW model?'). In particular, I felt that the

noisy environment detracted from the ability fully engage in relaxation exercises at the start and end of each session.

| Child (Pseudonym) | Year Group | Difficulties associated with referral to Educational Psychology Services | Number of TSW sessions attended |
|-------------------|------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Henry | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Social emotional/behavioural difficulties | 6 |
| Mathew | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Social emotional/behavioural difficulties • Specific language disorder | 5 |
| Nancy | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Social emotional/behavioural difficulties • Communication difficulties | 4 |
| Rachel | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Social emotional/behavioural difficulties | 5 |

Table1: Characteristics of the children who took part in the TSW intervention

4.5.2 The procedure and ethical considerations of the TSW intervention

The sessions were run according to a handbook developed by a former member of the Treasure Team. The handbook comprised a number of resources such a template for letters for parents describing the TSW intervention and inviting their consent for their child to take part (a copy of an adapted consent letter can be seen in Appendix I), session plans, relaxation exercises (suggested to be an integral part of TSW sessions in order to help create a safe environment, see section 4.1.2) and lists of suggested story openings and reflective comments.

During the first session, the children were provided with an explanation of the purposes of the group. The explanation indicated that the sessions provided the children with the opportunity to write stories that would hopefully be interesting to

them and which would allow them to learn about emotions and helpful ways forward through exploration of story characters'. They were told what they would be invited to do during the sessions and asked if they wanted to take part. Given that no psychodynamic interpretations was to be used, it was not deemed necessary to provide an explanation of this aspect of Water's TSW model and thus informed consent was based on an understanding of the basic tenants and procedures of the intervention. This is consistent with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) that stipulates that psychologists should:

"Ensure that clients, particularly children and vulnerable adults, are given ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose, and anticipated consequences of any professional services or research participation, so that they may give informed consent to the extent that their capabilities allow." (British Psychological Society, 2005; P12).

However, no explanation regarding the underpinning psychodynamic theory relating to the mechanisms thought to promote emotional wellbeing was provided. In this respect, the children were blind to aspects of the facilitators' role. This was deemed feasible for three reasons. Firstly, such an explanation was likely to be beyond the children's comprehension, as it relates to a specialist psychological perspective; secondly, the provision, or indeed withholding, of such information, did not appear to be associated with any potential significant adverse impact; and thirdly withholding such information was considered to be required in order to preserve the integrity of the intervention, given that a main mechanism that allows exploration of potentially difficult emotions is through metaphor and utility of covert hypothetical interpretation of a characters position within the psyche.

The children were then asked to generate ground rules for the sessions, and the facilitators negotiated with the children that good listening skills and respect for other's views would form part of the ground rules. It was also agreed that the

children maintain confidentiality and would not discuss what others had expressed outside of the sessions.

Each week, children were given the choice to: write a story from one of a number of donated suggested story openings taken from the handbook; to continue writing a story from a previous session; or to make up their own story. During the sessions, the facilitators modelled story writing and facilitated the storywriting of the children through the use of reflective comments and questions. The facilitators invited the children to comment on their and each others' stories and suggest possible actions that a story character could take, if the child indicated that they wanted support.

At the end of each session, the work books were collected and the children's stories were typed and returned to the children in the subsequent session in which the stories were celebrated and read aloud (with the child's permission to share their story). Oral permission was sought from the three children present in the final session, for me to share their stories. These stories can be seen in Appendix II (the names of the children have been changed).

An ethical dilemma in undertaking this intervention was the invested time in conducting the intervention given the limited evidence of its effectiveness and weak support for the theoretical underpinnings of the model. However, given that the intervention is being marketed in the publication of Water's (2004a) book and was being used as an intervention within the service that I work, I considered that the potential benefits of exploration of the intervention outweighed the potential that the intervention would not generate any tangible positive benefits to the children who took part. The benefits of undertaking the intervention include the contribution to evidence based practice that is likely to hold generalised benefits to those who receive Educational Psychology Services. Ethical practice is recognised as a

balance according to a 'cost/benefits' ratio as outlined by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) (Cohen et al, 2008). Furthermore, the school benefits from ongoing support from a link Educational Psychologist who is available to monitor the children's progress and intervene to further promote positive change where appropriate.

4.5.3 Outcomes of the TSW intervention

The children had clear difficulties with literacy and I considered that they required a high level of encouragement to write. They appeared to engage better with donated story openings – perhaps indicating interest in creating story despite their initial reluctance to write. The stories produced were of limited length. One boy ("Henry") wrote stories for Sessions One to Four which appeared to have a repeated theme, where the main character was late and was striving to overcome circumstances beyond the main character's control, as can be seen in the stories presented below. This might indicate, according to the TSW model, an area in which a potential resolution to an ingrained emotional dilemma/difficulty is sought (stemming from a subpersonality residing in the lower conscious).

Session 1:

Dreyfus the dragon slammed the door and walked out to get to the hospital because he was late for work.

Session 2:

Book 1.

Dreyfus the dragon slammed the door and ran out to get to the hospital because he was late for work because a person had a heart attack. Dreyfus got there but he still lost him. Dreyfus had never lost a person in his life so he said "I am never going to be late again" so he got an alarm clock and the next day.....

You will have to read the next book.....

Session 3

Book 2.

It was another day Dreyfus was late again. His alarm clock does not work and there was a person having an asthma attack so he ran out of the door and ran and ran but he saved him.

But it isn't the end of Dreyfus the dragon.

Session 4:

Book 3

Dreyfus the dragon was getting ready to go to his mums but was late again, but he has a car now, so he was not late for his dinner. On the way there he broke down so he ran and ran and got there, but it was closed and his mum said "Where have you been?"

"I broke down".

"I will take you out", then he had a nice day.

The end (but not for Dreyfus)!

I therefore decided to introduce a 'magical cone' that the children were invited to incorporate into their stories in Session Five. This was to help promote a resolution to what appeared to be a recurring/unresolved difficulty through accessing the 'spiritual/higher self'. From Session Five, Henry's stories no longer featured the recurring theme of lateness and the main character appeared to have more control over his environment as can be seen in the stories that he wrote in Sessions Five and Six:

Session 5

One day a knight lived in a castle. The knight was very good at fighting and killed everything that stood in his way. He was going on a quest to find two pebbles, one black and the other yellow and the only magic cone in the world that had one very sharp side. He needed these to kill the dragon that lived in a dark cave. The two pebbles and the cone would become one when put together to make a magic key. The knight set out to find all of these items.

Session 6

The knight was on the quest to find the items but he did not know that there was another item, a leaf. So the knight found an item – it was the two pebbles. The knight went through day and night to find the cone and he found it, but he had to kill a dragon and he would have to put them together. But it did not work so he picked up the leaf and it worked. He ran and ran through the door and got his sword to kill the dad dragon. So he went into the cave and came out with his pebble and cone as a wizard.

Perhaps this offers some – although weak, support to the notion that the higher/spiritual self can be utilised to promote resolution of unconscious negative influences, although there is no evidence to suggest that any underlying difficulties had been diffused.

Henry appeared to engage better in writing stories compared to the other children in the group, who appeared to be conscious of their poor literacy skills and often masked their work with their arm or looked at each others' work. Some commonality can be seen in the content of Mathew's and Nancy's stories created in Session Four, where, below, they both chose to write about a lion who was in pain after chewing hard meat:

Mathews' Session 4 story:

Lenny the Lion paced up and down in front of the bush, his feet making deep, dusty tracks. Backwards and forwards he went, muttering under his breath. He was very much in pain because as he was chewing his hard meat. One of his teeth came out. It was very sore and he couldn't eat anything. He went to the jungle and the Lion found some mint for his dinner.

Nancy's Session 4 story:

Lenny the Lion paced up and down in front of the bush, his feet making deep, dusty tracks. Backwards and forwards he went, muttering under his breath. He was very much in pain because as he was eating some hard meat, one of his teeth came out. It was very sore and he couldn't eat anything. He went to sleep so it stopped hurting.

This may represent some anxiety that the children had with their literacy skills. This anxiety and the difficulty experienced by the facilitators in creating the 'safe environment' conducive to allow exploration of potentially difficult emotions, may have inhibited the children from writing stories that had content of significant personal relevance to them. This is further evidenced by two of the children (who were from the same class) choosing to recount the 'Three Little Pigs' as their story in one session as can be seen in Mathew's story below.

Mathew's session 3 story:

The three Little Pigs.

The three little pigs lived with their mum. The mum said to the three little pigs to go and build a home. The three little pigs went to build a house on their own.

One little pig made a house out of straw. The second pig made a house of sticks and the third little pig made a home out of brick.

Then the wolf came to the straw house and the wolf huffed and puffed. He then went to the stick house and he huffed and puffed.

Then the wolf went to the brick house and huffed and puffed but he couldn't blow the house down.

Given two children had chosen to retell a well known story during the same session, it is unlikely that the stories reflected content of significant personal relevance to the two children in this case, where a psychodynamic interpretation would therefore not have been appropriate. This suggests that story content may on occasion hold little personal relevance and suggests the need for caution in interpreting meaning or attributing a child's story, suggesting the story represents aspects of their personal circumstance.

It is possible that the group situation was unhelpful in supporting the children to use the sessions to write about experience of personal relevance to them, despite the agreement to maintain confidentiality. It is possible that the children may have been reluctant to reveal their emotions to their peers, even through the safety of metaphor. However, group interventions have been accredited as having some advantages over individual work, some of which are listed by Burton (2006) as including that group work, which, Burton suggests,

- helps to normalise feelings or behaviours through promoting recognition that others may experience the same;
- can help develop social skills such as respect for others and good listening;
- promotes a greater range of view points and alternative behaviours; and
- peer influence can be used positively to shape more appropriate behaviour.

However, Burton (2006) also states:

“That the effectiveness of any group work in schools will depend not only on its content and the skills of the facilitator, but inevitably upon the general ethos of the school and the commitment of school staff to support the work.” (Burton, 2006; P218).

Thus, it is possible the effectiveness of the intervention may have been compromised by it being the first delivery of the TSW sessions by the facilitators and the lack of commitment in the school to support the groups, evidenced by their not ensuring that the groups were uninterrupted, or in a room conducive to the TSW intervention. Furthermore, Burton (2006) recognises the characteristics of the participants who take part in the groups can affect a group’s functioning, and consideration should therefore be given to who is invited to take part in any group. The children attended one of two classes, and therefore each child was in the same class as at least one other child who attended the group. The children would therefore see each other on a daily basis and this may have meant that there was some reluctance for them to share difficult emotions. Also that two of the children were in Year 2 and two in Year 6 is likely to have impacted on the dynamics of the group and perhaps negatively impacted on the feeling of safety experienced by the Year 2 pupils and their level of engagement in discussion, due to differing developmental ages.

4.6 Conclusion

This report has highlighted a lack of clarity regarding the link between the theoretical underpinnings of the TSW model and the processes through which the intervention is purported to promote emotional wellbeing. In particular, there is a lack of clarity regarding the extent of use and utility of psychodynamic interpretations of a child’s story and the lack of reference to spiritual development in the TSW model, given that a distinguishing feature of the psychosynthesis model is its notion of access to the

‘spiritual/higher self’ in promoting personal development and resolution of difficult emotions.

Furthermore, the TSW model claims to be a method that promotes both academic and emotional development and is described as appropriate for use with children who have emotional difficulties, as well as those who have difficulties with literacy and who may be reluctant writers. However, given the recognition that anxiety may impact negatively on the capacity to learn, one might argue that these difficulties may compound each other and restrict the ability of the child fully to engage in the TSW intervention (as perhaps evidenced by the intervention that I co-facilitated, described here).

The TSW model then, claims to promote positive development in children relating to a number of areas, and uses a range of theoretical approaches to describe the processes which enable such change. In its holistic approach, the TSW model does not lend itself well to evaluation. Indeed, there appears to be no published independent evaluation of the TSW model, although a case study (Water, 2004b) provides some support for the TSW model claims. However, Lowman (2005) argues that case studies have been described as useful in developing an approach, but that empirical studies are required once the approach is used (Bennett & Monsen, 2011). Further evaluation studies are therefore required that may be strengthened by the use of the outcomes measures advocated by the CAMHS Outcome Research Consortium (CORC) (Wolpert et al, 2007) that aim to collect quantifiable data from the perspectives of the child, parents and practitioners working in support of child (e.g. the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Goodman, 1997), regarding change to the presenting difficulties.

My own intervention has indeed indicated that not all children's stories contain information of personal relevance and therefore, caution should be applied in using psychodynamic interpretations. However, the intervention did offer some, although weak support for the notion that spirituality (or magic in this case) was helpful in promoting a resolution (evidence by the end to a recurring theme in one child's stories), although there is no evidence emotional development was assimilated into the child's psyche.

The fidelity of my intervention with the TSW model can be questioned, given that my intervention deviated from the model in that I did not actively set out to interpret children's stories with regards to parallels between the story metaphors and what is known about the child's personal circumstance. Indeed, I believe that the use of psychodynamic style interpretations should be supported by further training in psychodynamic approaches to ensure that the facilitator has the necessary skills. In terms of my professional practice, although I consider that further research is required to ascertain the credibility of the TSW model in its entirety, I believe certain aspects of the model may hold some utility. In particular, I consider the use of stories as a medium to process emotions that may otherwise be too distressing to work through explicitly, a potentially useful tool. Furthermore, although the notion of spirituality and its impact on emotional wellbeing generally appears to be in its infancy, I consider spirituality to be an emergent area of interest and perhaps worthy of further research and development.

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Appendix I: Parental consent form

Dear Parent/ Carer

Your child has been selected to take part in a Therapeutic Storywriting Group due to begin on 10/05/10. The group will be led by XXXXXX and Lorraine Jebbett (Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologists) who are undertaking training to become therapeutic story writing therapists. The group, which will take place during the literacy hour, will run for 8 weeks. Groups will be small with around 4 children in each. At the end of the course the child will be given their own book of stories and a certificate of attendance.

Children will write their own stories, draw pictures to go with them and share them, if they wish, with other members of the group. During the sharing element of each session, children will have the opportunity to actively listen, thus improving both their listening skills and their concentration. Therapeutic Storywriting can also help children to express their inner thoughts and feelings in a safe way, which can then lead to improved emotional and academic literacy. As well as supporting the English curriculum, Therapeutic Storywriting may also dovetail with areas covered in the Personal, Social, Health, Education and Citizenship (PSHE & C) curriculum.

Your child will be asked questions relating to how they feel about their writing; listening and social skills and how they feel about school before and after the sessions begin. This allows us to evaluate how well the sessions went. We would like your consent to use this information and some of the stories generated in the sessions as part of a doctoral training programme in Child and Educational Psychology. A report may be written and handed in to a University as part of these studies. The report will not give any information that would identify the children who took part.

If you would like further information about Therapeutic Story writing, then please feel free to contact the school at your convenience.

Please could you sign below to say that you are happy for your child to take part in the sessions and for the information gathered to be used in a report for training purposes.

Thank you for your support!

Yours faithfully

XXXXXXXXXX - Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologists

Lorraine Jebbett - Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologists

Parent/Carer name:

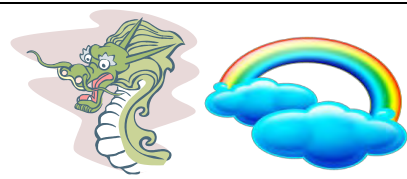
Signature:

Date:

Appendix II: Children's storeys

Henry's stories

Session 1



Dreyfus the dragon slammed the door and walked out to get to the hospital because he was late for work.

Session 2

Book 1.

Dreyfus the dragon slammed the door and ran out to get to the hospital because he was late for work because a person had a heart attack. Dreyfus got there but he still lost him. Dreyfus had never lost a person in his life so he said "I am never going to be late again" so he got an alarm clock and the next day.....

You will have to read the next book.....

Session 3

Book 2.

It was another day Dreyfus was late again. His alarm clock does not work and there was a person having an asthma attack so he ran out of the door and ran and ran but he saved him. But it isn't the end of Dreyfus the dragon.

Session 4

Book 3

Dreyfus the dragon was getting ready to go to his mums but was late again, but he has a car now, so he was not late for his dinner. On the way there he broke down so he ran and ran and got there, but it was closed and his mum said "Where have you been?"

"I broke down".

"I will take you out", then he had a nice day.

The end (but not for Dreyfus)!



Session 5

One day a knight lived in a castle. The knight was very good at fighting and killed everything that stood in his way. He was going on a quest to find two pebbles, one black and the other yellow and the only magic cone in the world that had one very sharp side. He needed these to kill the dragon that lived in a dark cave. The two pebbles and the cone would become one when put together to make a magic key. The knight set out to find all of these items.

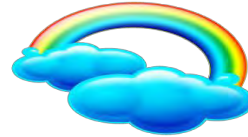


Session 6

The knight was on the quest to find the items but he did not know that there was another item, a leaf. So the knight found an item – it was the two pebbles. The knight went through day and night to find the cone and he found it, but he had to kill a dragon and he would have to put them together. But it did not work so he picked up the leaf and it worked. He ran and ran through the door and got his sword to kill the dad dragon. So he went into the cave and came out with his pebble and cone as a wizard.



Session 1

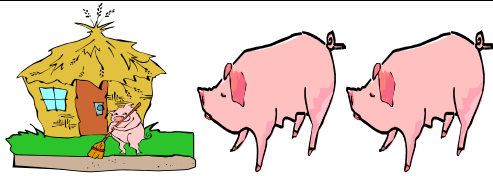


Dreyfus the Dragon slammed the door and Dreyfus the Dragon was in a rush to go to work. He walked out the door but his mum said to Dreyfus the Dragon to dry up and he said to his mum “no I can’t” he said to his mum.

He was about to go when he saw a body on the floor and he found it on the path.

The End

Session 3



The three Little Pigs.

The three little pigs lived with their mum. The mum said to the three little pigs to go and build a home. The three little pigs went to build a house on their own.

One little pig made a house out of straw. The second pig made a house of sticks and the third little pig made a home out of brick.

Then the wolf came to the straw house and the wolf huffed and puffed. He then went to the stick house and he huffed and puffed.

Then the wolf went to the brick house and huffed and puffed but he couldn’t blow the house down.

Session 4



Lenny the Lion paced up and down in front of the bush, his feet making deep, dusty tracks. Backwards and forwards he went, muttering under his breath.

He was very much in pain because as he was chewing his hard meat. One of his teeth came out. It was very sore and he couldn’t eat anything. He went to the jungle and the Lion found some mint for his dinner.

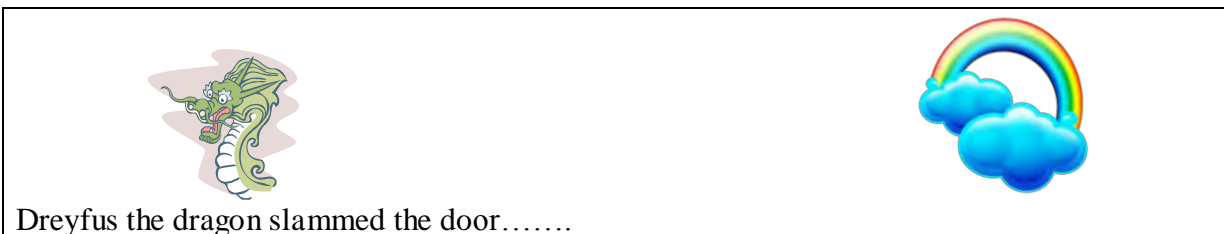
Session 5

One day a knight was angry. He found pebbles on the floor and he picked them up. He then saw a magic cone in the tree. The knight threw his sword up into the tree to knock the cone down. He picked up the magic cone from the grass.



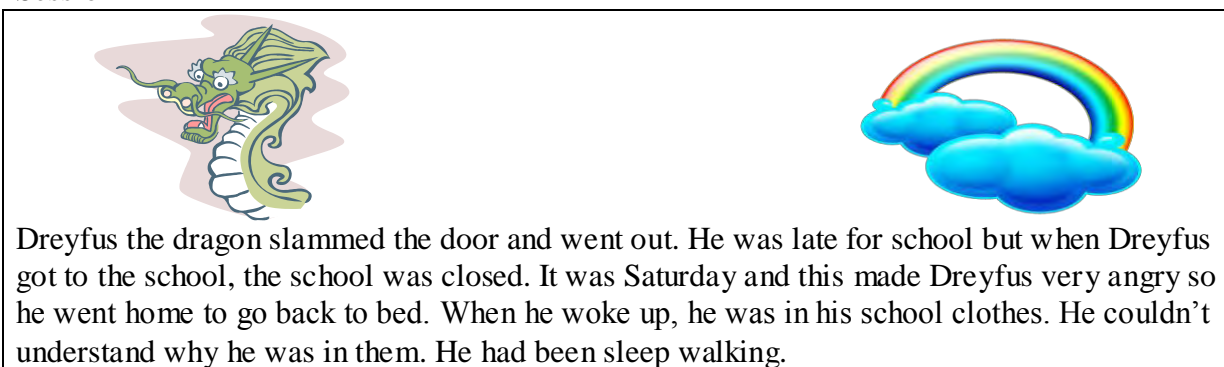
Nancy's Stories

Session 1



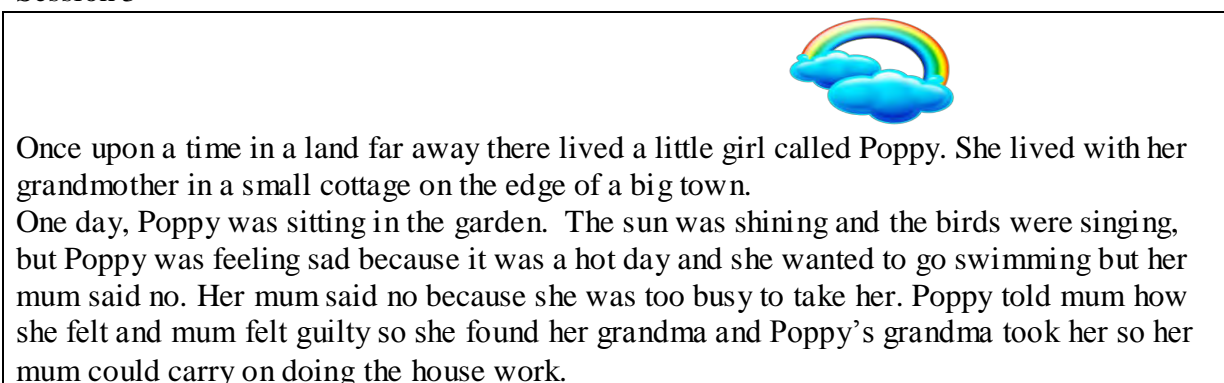
Dreyfus the dragon slammed the door.....

Session 2



Dreyfus the dragon slammed the door and went out. He was late for school but when Dreyfus got to the school, the school was closed. It was Saturday and this made Dreyfus very angry so he went home to go back to bed. When he woke up, he was in his school clothes. He couldn't understand why he was in them. He had been sleep walking.

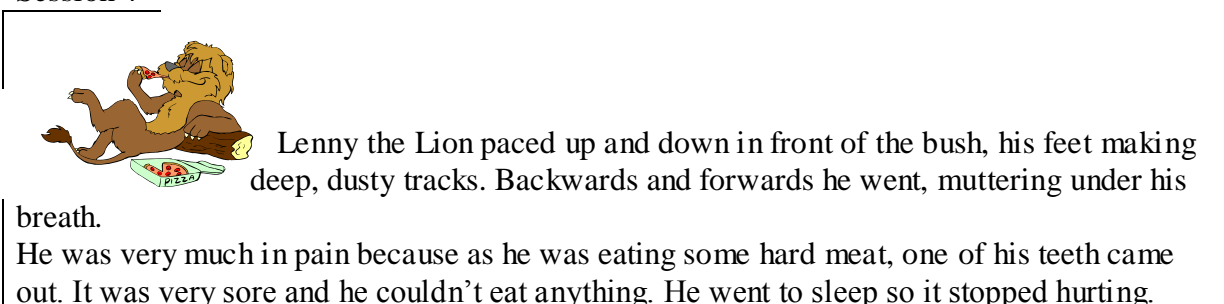
Session 3



Once upon a time in a land far away there lived a little girl called Poppy. She lived with her grandmother in a small cottage on the edge of a big town.

One day, Poppy was sitting in the garden. The sun was shining and the birds were singing, but Poppy was feeling sad because it was a hot day and she wanted to go swimming but her mum said no. Her mum said no because she was too busy to take her. Poppy told mum how she felt and mum felt guilty so she found her grandma and Poppy's grandma took her so her mum could carry on doing the house work.

Session 4



Lenny the Lion paced up and down in front of the bush, his feet making deep, dusty tracks. Backwards and forwards he went, muttering under his breath.

He was very much in pain because as he was eating some hard meat, one of his teeth came out. It was very sore and he couldn't eat anything. He went to sleep so it stopped hurting.

CHAPTER FIVE: A CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF AN EVALUATION OF A SEAL INTERVENTION IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL

Abstract

This report critically explores an evaluation of the processes and outcomes of a SEAL programme in a secondary school in the West Midlands. Data relating to a number of measures (e.g. the reported impact of SEAL on staff and pupils; staff knowledge of SEAL; ways in which the SEAL programme was implemented; the extent and usefulness of staff training; and development needs relating to SEAL) were gathered through questionnaires that were completed by school staff. Data were also gathered from pupils through a questionnaire that invited pupils to rate themselves on statements relating to the five SEAL domains, and also statements relating to their behaviour, attendance, learning and general emotional wellbeing. Pupils also took part in focus groups designed to gain their views regarding the extent to which they considered the teachers to be caring and the extent to which they considered that they had a say in what goes on in the school. The data provide a comprehensive 'snapshot' of the processes and procedures used to promote social and emotional development and the reported impact on pupils and staff, which informed recommendations for action through which to promote the further development of social and emotional skills in the school.

5.1 Introduction and background

This report critically reports the process and outcomes of an evaluation research study that I was involved in as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. The evaluation study aimed to explore the impact that the implementation of a SEAL intervention had in a secondary school in the Local Authority (LA) in which I work. Secondary SEAL was initially rolled out in 2007/8 and is being implemented in around seventy percent of secondary schools nationally (Humphrey, et al 2010). Eight schools in the LA had taken part in piloting the secondary SEAL programme beginning in Sept 2007. Participating schools had access to support for the implementation of SEAL through Behaviour and Attendance networking support groups (SEAL was implemented as part of the National Behaviour and Attendance Strategy pilot in

2003-2005; Hallam et al, 2006). Each school had adopted an individual approach to SEAL according to its own requirements and there is therefore a lack of consistency with regards to how SEAL was implemented. However, an evaluation of secondary SEAL was funded through the Behaviour and Attendance budget that focused on two volunteering schools of the eight participating schools.

Two Educational Psychologists (EPs) in the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) hold a specialism in the area of SEAL and have supported the implementation and evaluation of this initiative in primary schools throughout the LA. These EPs also attended SEAL support network groups where they developed awareness of the need for a pilot evaluation study for secondary SEAL. The EPS expressed an interest in conducting the evaluation and developed a Service Level Agreement to this end. The EPS received the commission to undertake the evaluation during the Summer term of 2010. However, the evaluation team was not established until February 2011. The team comprised one Senior EP, two EPs, myself (a Trainee EP) and two BSc Psychology students on placement as part of their course. The remit of the study was negotiated and the lead EPs had decided on the methodology and the materials that would be used (discussed later in the Design and Procedures section). I was responsible for undertaking the evaluation study with one of the participating schools (supported by the psychology students): a role that included gathering and analysing the data generated and reporting these data to the team, the school and the study sponsors. This report describes the process and outcome of the evaluation within this one school.

The school is a large secondary school with around 1,200 pupils on roll (according to the school website that is not referenced as this would compromise the school's anonymity). The school was rated as either 'good' or 'outstanding' for areas

inspected by OFSTED in 2009 (not referenced as this would compromise the school's anonymity).

5.2 What is SEAL?

SEAL stands for Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning and was initially developed for primary schools as part of the national Behaviour and Attendance Pilot in 2003 (Hallam et al, 2006). SEAL was then introduced by the Labour Government in 2005 as part of a national strategy developed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2005) relating to behaviour and attendance. The primary SEAL initiative has a number of resources that primary schools could use to help them implement SEAL into their school. SEAL may be implemented on a number of levels or waves of intervention, with intervention at a whole school level (e.g. quality teaching), followed by small group level (intervention for children who may benefit from additional help) and then intervention with individual children (DfES, 2005). The SEAL strategy is partly based on the recognition that a better learning environment is linked to better academic results (Greenfield et al, 2003). SEAL can be seen to fit in with the growing interest in children's social and emotional skills (Wigelsworth et al, 2010) and a move away from a primary focus in schools on the academic curriculum and academic attainment, to one which also aims to promote children's and young people's wellbeing, as seen in the introduction of the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) guidance and the Children Act (2004). This is further evidenced by OFSTED's (2003) framework for inspection that sets out that schools are required to promote emotional wellbeing of pupils.

SEAL centres around the development of five domains relating to the social and emotional skills proposed by Goleman (1995) in the model of emotional intelligence (DfE, 2010), namely:

- self awareness;
- self regulation (managing feelings);
- motivation;
- empathy; and
- social skills,

and aims to promote the 'development and application' of the domains to learning (Humphrey et al 2010). A national evaluation of SEAL commissioned by the DCSF in 2007 found that SEAL in primary schools was associated with small but positive impact on pupil outcomes, including behaviour, social and emotional skills (Humphrey et al, 2009). The theoretical underpinnings of SEAL are discussed below.

5.3 Theoretical underpinnings of SEAL

Wigelsworth et al (2010) report that despite the interest in supporting children's social and emotional skills and learning, the research regarding the psychological underpinnings of social and emotional skills has not kept up, and consequently there is little agreement regarding the definition of social and emotional skills, or how they may best be measured. Whilst the term social and emotional skills is used in government policy, the academic literature uses a variety of terms including 'emotional literacy' (e.g. Park, et al, 2003); 'emotional competence' (e.g. Elias, et al, 1997) and 'social and emotional intelligence' (e.g. Salovey & Mayer, 1990). This has led to calls for clarification of these terms (Weare & Grey, 2003), although some claim that the terms are not necessarily representing distinctive areas, but have

much in common, and are therefore interchangeable (Wigelsworth et al, 2010).

Wigelsworth et al (2010) compare the definitions relating to 'emotional intelligence' given by Salovey, Brackett, and Mayer (2004) and 'emotional literacy' given by Antidote (2009):

"[emotional intelligence refers to...] the processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding, and management of one's own and others' emotional states to solve emotion-laden problems and to regulate behaviour." (Wigelsworth et al, 2010; P174).

"[emotional literacy refers to...] the practice of integrating in ways that build understanding, and management of one's emotions, then using this understanding to shape our actions." (Wigelsworth et al, 2010; P174).

Petrides and Furnham (2001) identify 'facets of social and emotional skills common to definitions', that include emotional perception, awareness, regulation and management. Matthews et al (2004) argue that the 'broad nature' of the definitions means a precise construct is not possible, while Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews (2002) argue that such terms are 'bereft of any conceptual meaning' (Wiglesworth et al, 2010; P177). This lack of agreed definition makes measurement of social and emotional skills problematic. However, Wigelsworth et al (2010) argue that given the interest in social and emotional skills in educational policy, EPs are becoming more likely to be asked to be involved in the measurement and evaluation of social and emotional skills. This report provides one such example.

Guidance relating to SEAL from the DfES (2007) cites Goleman's (1995) concept of emotional intelligence (that builds on the work of Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2000 and 2004, who first coined the term emotional intelligence) and Le Doux's (1998) and Damasio's (2000) work on emotion and the brain that showed that emotion (often unconscious), rather than reason, influences action (McLaughlin, 2008).

However, Craig (2007) has noted concern regarding Goleman's (1995) definition of

emotional intelligence that has been criticised as spurious, and distorting the more conceptually defensible, research-based work of Meyer, Salovey and Caruso (McLaughlin, 2008). Thus, the SEAL initiative is open to criticism, given the debate regarding the integrity of its theoretical underpinnings. However, SEAL has been promoted as a national policy initiative despite these inherent shortcomings: how SEAL is to be implemented is discussed in the following section.

5.4 Whole school approach

SEAL is described by Humphrey et al (2010) as...

“a comprehensive, whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools .” (DCSF, 2007; P4).

The DCSF (2007) argues that SEAL’s conceptualisation as a whole school approach means that it should address the whole context of the school, including the organisation, procedures, structures and ethos, not just the pupils or an isolated area of practice (Humphrey, et al, 2010). Implementation of SEAL at a school level is characterised by a number of principles such as: planning to improve behaviour and attendance; developing a school ethos/climate that promotes social and emotional skills; planned opportunities for pupils and staff to develop social and emotional skills; recognition by staff of the ‘significance of social and emotional skills to learning and wellbeing’; involvement of pupils in school life; and access to small group work for pupils who may benefit. However, SEAL is intended to be a framework for school improvement (Weare, 2010) rather than a structured package, and schools are ‘encouraged’ to consider various approaches to SEAL implementation in accord with their school improvement priorities (Humphrey et al, 2010). Thus, SEAL

implementation should therefore be tailored to suit to the school's needs; however, Weare (2010) argues that this can lead to dilution and confusion, and criticism that...

“SEAL is essentially what individual schools make of it rather than being a single, consistently definable entity.” (DfE, 2010; Paragraph 2).

5.5 Evidence of the effectiveness of SEAL

Much of the literature relating to the impact of school-based interventions to promote social and emotional learning comes from the United States of America (Humphrey, et al 2010). However, Humphrey et al (2010) report that there have been five evaluation studies of the SEAL programme, three of which relate to primary SEAL and two to secondary SEAL (prior to their national evaluation of secondary SEAL in 2010). The secondary SEAL evaluations were carried out by Smith et al (2007), and OFSTED (2007).

The Smith et al (2007) evaluation gathered data from six LAs and was undertaken in two phases, one between October 2005 and August 2006, and the other between September 2006 and May 2007. Both phases comprised telephone interviews with members of the LA (e.g. Behaviour and Attendance consultants); and case studies with ten schools within five of the pilot LAs. The cases studies gathered data through face-to-face interviews with staff and pupils and from questionnaires administered to teaching staff. The aim of the evaluation was to explore a number of areas that included: how the intervention was managed and implemented (e.g. whole school level, training etc.); the perceived impact of the intervention; and future aspirations for the intervention.

The findings of the Smith et al (2007) evaluation included that schools had generally embraced the programme and considered it beneficial, but there was variability with regards to how SEAL was implemented. That is, there was variability regarding

whether the programme was delivered on a whole-school basis or was delivered through the pastoral system or curricula. Smith et al also reported challenges such as differences in staff perceptions relating to the goals of SEAL and a 'slowing down of activity' over the course of the programme (Humphrey, et al 2010, P13).

Furthermore, Smith et al (2007) found that schools reported a lack of materials for monitoring and evaluating the programme. Staff also highlighted the importance of staff training and of developing staff and pupil awareness and understanding of the programme as important to effective whole school implementation.

The OFSTED (2007) study found similar difficulties and also highlighted the importance of 'leadership belief and support' in the SEAL programme (Humphrey et al, 2010). The OFSTED (2007) study was a longitudinal study with eleven schools (from five different LAs) comprising a range of types (e.g. non-faith, single sex and a special school) and included two-day visits from Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) each term, starting from the Summer term 2005 and ending in the Autumn term 2006. The HMIs collected a range of data from: formal and informal discussion with senior school staff and LA consultants relating to behaviour and attendance; a questionnaire designed to survey pupils' and teachers' perception of their interactions, relationships and behaviour (that were used to develop sociograms); and scrutiny of the schools' documents (e.g. the social, emotional and behaviour plan). The HMI also undertook observations of a target group of pupils (in Years 7 or 8) during lessons as well as lunch and break-times. There were two purposes to the observations: to observe the pupils' social, emotional and behaviour skills over time, and to observe the effectiveness of the strategies that teachers used to promote these skills.

However, the OFSTED report (2007) noted that some schools had implemented SEAL more effectively than others and that some schools had implemented SEAL with only the target groups, whereas other schools had implemented SEAL with the whole staff. Variability in how schools implement SEAL is likely to have implications regarding the extent to which any observable results can be attributed to the SEAL programme itself. A case study approach might have allowed a more valid exploration of processes and outcomes that are thought to be associated with SEAL. Humphrey et al (2010) report that both secondary SEAL evaluation studies were focused on implementation of SEAL processes rather than outcomes or impact. However, Smith et al (2007) found in a follow up questionnaire, that school staff considered the SEAL programme to have positively impacted on pupil behaviour, teaching and learning and wellbeing. In contrast, the OFSTED (2007) study found no significant impact on pupils' behaviour or social and emotional skills, although schools indicated that they benefitted from the programme.

A national evaluation of secondary SEAL was undertaken by Humphrey et al (2010) that undertook case studies with nine schools. The evaluation aimed to explore how SEAL had been implemented with particular regard to a 'whole-school' approach and also to assess the impact of SEAL on outcomes for schools, staff and pupils. The schools were visited approximately once every term, at which time data were gathered through lesson observations, interviews and focus groups with pupils, school staff and LA staff, and through examination of school documents. Data gathered included: pupil and staff perceptions of the school climate; pupils' understanding and knowledge of and involvement in SEAL; and staff social and emotional skills.

The case studies showed variation with regards to the approaches to, and progress in, implementing SEAL, and it was suggested that a variety of factors was influential in determining the variation, including 'failure to sustain initial activity' and a 'superficial approach to implementation ('box ticking')' (Humphrey et al 2010). There was also a great deal of variation with regards to the extent to which SEAL had been implemented as a whole school approach. Some schools selected 'pockets' of activities as developmental areas from the SEAL guidance 'at the expense of the bigger picture' (Humphrey et al, 2010, P2). Humphrey et al (2010) noted for SEAL implementation on a whole school level, the importance of...

"staff 'will and skill', in addition to time and resource allocation, as being the most crucial in driving implementation forward (or indeed, holding it back)." (Humphrey et al, 2010; P2).

There is some research support for principles of 'starting small'. For example, universal social and emotional learning interventions have been found to be more effective if they conform to Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit (SAFE) principles (Durlack, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010). However, multi-component approaches to whole school programmes appear to be more effective than more restricted initiatives. Wells et al (2003), for example, found that whole school approaches that aim to change the school culture and involve staff, parents, the community and pupils, show greater success (Humphrey et al, 2010). Conversely, Durlack et al (2010) did not find an advantage of multi-component programmes compared to those based on a single component. Others noted difficulty in offering reliable comment on the impact of social and emotional learning programmes because most are 'curriculum based' and there are too few programmes using similar approaches to allow for valid comparison (Blank et al, 2009; Adi et al, 2007). Never the less, Humphrey et al (2010) argue that...

“there is a clear rationale for the adoption of a whole-school approach to SEL [social and emotional learning] that is based on empirical evidence, albeit tempered by recent findings which suggest that a more detailed analysis is required to help us understand exactly what the optimal SEL programme conditions are, and how applicable they are to the English context.” (Humphrey et al, 2010; P12).

Furthermore, Tew (2010), referring to the key premise of Antidote’s (2003) work, states that...

“a school’s atmosphere or ethos shapes the social contexts, which in turn promote or inhibit emotional literacy, wellbeing or mental health for all.” (Tew, 2010; P131).

Humphrey et al (2010) report that their findings are consistent with research that identified facilitators and barriers that include the implementation of support systems and prior planning as impacting on the effectiveness of SEAL implementation (e.g. Greenberg et al, 2005; Durlack & DuPre, 2008).

Durlack and DuPre (2008) reviewed the factors affecting social and emotional learning programmes and found a link between outcomes and aspects of programme implementation such as:

- the extent to which the programme was delivered as intended (fidelity);
- how much the programme was delivered (dosage); and
- how well the programme was delivered (quality).

The fidelity of the implementation was also found to be associated with programme effectiveness by Catalano et al (2004).

Other factors found to impact on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programme effectiveness include: funding, politics, capacity, perceived need for improvement, leadership and support systems (Durlak & DuPre; 2008), along with pre-planning, training prior-to, and during programme implementation, and ‘the quality of the materials’ (Greenberg et al, 2005).

The Humphrey et al (2010) study also gathered quantitative data from twenty-two schools which were participating in the SEAL programme, and compared these to nineteen schools which had not adopted the SEAL programme. The data gathered focused on a variety of areas, such as mental health difficulties, social and emotional skills and behaviour, (using self-report surveys) during 2008, 2009 and 2010. The data were gathered from pupils who were in Year 7 in the 2007/8, academic year and involved 8,630 pupils.

Humphrey et al (2010) report that overall...

“SEAL (as implemented by the schools in our sample) failed to have a positive impact, although the results were less straightforward here. Analysis of school climate scores indicated significant reductions in pupils’ trust and respect for teachers, liking for school, and feelings of classroom and school supportiveness during SEAL implementation. Additionally, qualitative data around perceptions of impact indicated a feeling that SEAL had not produced the expected changes across schools. However, school climate data also showed a significant increase in pupils’ feelings of autonomy and influence, and this was supplemented by anecdotal examples of positive changes in general outcomes (e.g. reductions in exclusion), as well as more specific improvements in behaviour, interpersonal skills and relationships.” (Humphrey et al, 2010; P3).

Humphrey et al (2010) report that the implementation of SEAL in the schools that were studied...

“failed to impact significantly upon pupils’ social and emotional skills, general mental health difficulties, pro-social behaviour or behaviour problems.” (Humphrey et al, 2010; P2).

Given the variability in how SEAL is implemented, an exploration of the outcomes in each individual school in accord with the way that SEAL was implemented in that school, would allow informed reflection as to why the anticipated outcomes were not observed. However, Humphrey et al (2010) made a number of recommendations based on the findings of their evaluation that included that there should be: structure and consistency in programme delivery; monitoring of the fidelity of programme

delivery; sufficient time and resources available to staff; and greater engagement with parents.

How SEAL was implemented in the school to which the current report refers is described below.

5.6 SEAL implementation in the focus school in my own LA

The SEAL programme was initiated in October 2007, and was incorporated into a school initiative that aimed to develop Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) in pupils through a school-developed programme called 'SECRETs for Learning'. SECRETs specifically related to the development of number of overarching skills such as how to be a reflective and creative learner and how to self-manage and to work as part of a team. As well as incorporation of SECRETS and the PLTS skills within the school curriculum, the school taught social and emotional skills explicitly through the Personal, Social and Health Education lessons (delivered weekly by tutors in the school), although it was expected that learning relating to these areas would pervade subject lessons. The topics covered during PSHE lessons were set themes for each year group in which: Year Seven lessons focused on identification and management of feelings and emotions; Year Eight focused on bullying and friendships; and Year Nine focused on non-verbal communication, emotional aspects of communication and where to go for support.

As the SEAL implementation programme evolved, the school developed a calendar that set out monthly objectives relating to SEAL and PLTS. Staff received a 'Powerpoint' presentation regarding the PLTS and SEAL objectives in March 2009. The objectives were advertised on monthly posters hung in classrooms and were also worked on during assemblies. Senior staff lesson observations included

consideration of how these learning objectives were developed within subject lessons.

The school implementation of SEAL was therefore focused on developing the skills of the pupils, rather than on developing a whole school approach (e.g. to include developing the school ethos/culture or staff skills). This relatively narrow focus is not congruent with the 'the spirit' of the SEAL policy. Furthermore, a focus on developing pupil skills might limit the potential impact that a SEAL intervention may have. This view is supported by a study conducted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (Weare & Gray, 2003) regarding what promotes emotional wellbeing and competence in children. The study examined research literature and undertook interviews with staff from five LAs in England. The study highlighted the importance of a whole school approach as well as the development of a school environment and ethos that promote warm relationships, participation and pupil and staff autonomy (Tew, 2010).

The design and procedure of the present evaluation study are described below.

5.7 Design and procedure

Prior to the establishment of the evaluation team, the two lead EPs had negotiated the purpose and design of the pilot evaluation study. The brief for the evaluation had two main aims: to evaluate the impact that SEAL had made in the two participating schools and to develop materials that schools could use on an annual basis to monitor the impact of SEAL (this aspect of this evaluation is not discussed in this report as the report focuses on the reported impact of SEAL). The tools that were to be developed would allow for an exploration of the impact of SEAL in a school, according to a number of factors that included school climate (although the SEAL

intervention did not focus on developing staff skills and the school climate in the school in this study), and the impact on pupil and staff emotional wellbeing. The lead EPs negotiated with the study sponsors that the evaluation would not explore how SEAL had been implemented in the schools, as each individual school would have an awareness of this. However, as noted above, any potential impact that SEAL had, is likely to be influenced by specific dimensions of its remit and implementation (see Antidote, 2003). Indeed large scale evaluation studies have been criticised for not taking account of context. Robson (2002), for instance states:

“It may be unrealistic to expect a necessarily complex social programme of intervention to generate substantial overall effects irrespective of context, participant characteristics, etc.” (Robson, 2002; P118).

Pawson and Tilley (1997) also note that it is not the intervention programmes themselves that bring about change, but the people who co-operate with them. Thus, an evaluation study might best be aligned to a realist methodology that explores ‘what works, for whom, and in which context’ rather than searching for outcomes (Robson, 2002; P120).

A realist approach is, to some extent, exploratory in that information about the context can be used to generate hypotheses about the mechanisms that operate within the context that enable or disable change (Robson, 2002). On the basis of the findings of this evaluation research, changes to the context can be suggested that would better facilitate attainment of the positive outcomes associated with the SEAL intervention. Indeed, Robson (2002) argues that:

“Evaluation is often concerned not only with assessing worth or value but also with seeking to assist in the improvement of whatever is being evaluated.” (Robson, 2002; P205).

However, the lead EPs considered using published materials relating to the measurement of emotional literacy included the Trait Emotional Intelligence

Questionnaire, (TEIQue, Petrides et al 2006); and the Emotional Literacy Assessment and Intervention (ELIA, Southampton Psychology Service, 2003), to ascertain impact. These materials were rejected because of difficulty in gaining access to the materials within the time frame of the evaluation. Additionally, these measures have been criticised for lacking...

“specificity and tending to be less “change sensitive” than the more detailed, multi-dimensional measures that are available.” (Wigelsworth, et al, 2010; P178).

The lead EPs therefore opted to develop their own materials to suit the requirements of the evaluation that would cover both the potential impact of SEAL on pupils and school staff and the school climate, rather than focus on one potential area for impact (e.g. pupils’ social and emotional development). The data were to be gathered through questionnaires administered to school staff and pupils. The staff questionnaire was an adapted version of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2007) School Questionnaire published as part of the ‘SEAL: tools for profiling, monitoring and evaluation’. The questionnaire was adapted by the lead EPs and presented to the research team as a tool to gather data, to be refined following the study on the basis of its efficacy in gathering the required data. The questionnaire aimed to gather data relating to a number of measures, including staff reports regarding:

- knowledge of what is meant by emotional literacy and the initiatives in the school to develop emotional literacy;
- ways in which emotional literacy is implemented in the school;

- the extent to which SEAL had impacted on various aspects of the school (e.g. the social and emotional skills of pupils, attendance, behaviour, staff morale and wellbeing, teaching and learning);
- the extent and usefulness of staff training relating to social and emotional literacy; and
- professional development needs relating to developing social and emotional skills.

Although the focus of the evaluation was to be on the impact of SEAL, the comprehensive range of areas that the questionnaire covers affords a realist approach to the evaluation as it allows hypotheses regarding ‘how and why’ the intervention works (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). In this sense, the methodology in this study can be said to conform to a case study (Robson, 2002) as it allows exploration of the context of the school and inference regarding how aspects of the context enable or disable change associated with the SEAL intervention. However, knowledge of how SEAL was implemented in the school was needed to support this approach. I sought this knowledge through the lead EPs, as they had an understanding of how the schools in the LA had implemented SEAL through their attendance at the behaviour and attendance support group meetings, and the assistant Head Teacher. I used this knowledge to help interpret the data generated.

The questionnaire was a mixed design comprising both multiple choice responses that invited participants to rate their agreement with statements (e.g. strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly disagree), and open-ended questions that invited participants to provide comment (the Questionnaire can be seen in Appendix

l). The staff questionnaire was administered by the Deputy Head Teacher during staff meetings. Forty-one staff (out of approximately ninety staff) completed the questionnaire. Further participant details are given in the summary of staff questionnaire responses in Appendix II.

The pupil questionnaire developed by the lead EPs, comprised adapted items from the staff questionnaire and invited participants to respond to rating scales regarding self statements relating to the five SEAL domains and to statements relating specifically to behaviour; attendance; learning and emotional wellbeing; (the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix II). Measures of typical behaviour such as those used in self-report questions, have been acknowledged as being quick and easy to administer whilst open to criticism for being open to 'high levels of bias and social desirability' (Wigelsworth, 2010; P178).

Given that there were no pre-evaluation data available, and that no pre and post comparison could therefore be made, self-report measures appeared to afford the most appropriate way of gathering data. This meant that the evaluation could provide only a snapshot of the current climate of the school, and that impact of the SEAL intervention could only be inferred. However, it was anticipated that the data may suggest areas for development, and a bench mark against which comparison could be made in subsequent years, if the tools were used annually. The study might therefore be better positioned as an initial phases of an Action Research study in the sense that it aims to promote change and over successive cycles of: planning change; observing what happens; reflecting on the underling processes; and planning further action (Robson, 2002). Thus the data obtained in this study are likely to be more formative (with focus on developing the intervention in the school)

rather than summative (assessing the effectiveness of the programme) (Robson, 2002).

The lead EPs decided that the pupil questionnaire was to be administered to twenty-seven pupils in the school comprising one pupil from each of the tutor groups for the year groups Seven, Eight and Nine (within a nine form entry school) by myself and a Psychology Student. The pupils were drawn from these year groups as pupils in Year Ten and above had been educated within the school prior to the implementation of SEAL. The school was asked to invite pupils to participate using a random method (e.g. randomly identifying a pupil from the register of each tutor group). It was thought that twenty-seven pupils was a manageable number to collect data given that in addition to completing the questionnaire, the same pupils were invited to take part in a focus group that had two purposes (negotiated by the lead EPs). Firstly, the pupils were asked to comment on the usability of the questionnaire to inform future development and use of the questionnaire as a tool for evaluation. This aspect of this evaluation is not discussed in this report as the report focuses on the reported impact of SEAL. Secondly, the focus groups were designed to gather information regarding the extent to which pupils considered the school to be a caring environment (with a focus on the extent to which school staff were considered to be caring towards the pupils) and also the extent to which pupils experienced autonomy in the school (the focus group format can be seen in Appendix V). This information was to complement the data gathered in the questionnaire and inform a summary of the impact of SEAL in the school.

Focus groups are considered to be an efficient way to collect data as they can generate data from a number of people at the same time (Robson, 2002), and also because the group environment promotes a sense of greater anonymity (compared

to interviews), which means that participants are more likely to disclose their views (Beck et al, 1986). However, they tend to produce less rich data compared to individual interviews (Morgan, 1988) and also carry the risk that some voices may be lost in the group, as less articulate individuals may not share their views and the views of more dominant individuals may polarise the group (Robson, 2002). For this reason, it was decided that the pupils would be asked to write their views and examples on 'post it' notes and place these on a flip chart before a group discussion took place.

The pupils were first invited to complete the questionnaire alone and were then invited to comment as a group on the usability of the questionnaire. The pupils were then asked to take part in the focus groups.

The pupils were to be divided into three groups (comprising a mix of pupils from each year group) so that each group would comprise nine pupils, in conformity with the advice that between eight and twelve participants are considered a suitable number (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). However, an administrative error meant seventy-one pupils were invited to participate (twenty-seven pupils from each year group, with three from each tutor group). This meant that groups had to be divided into groups of twenty-seven pupils. Pupil absences meant that sixty-four pupils took part in total.

I was responsible for liaising with, and coordinating the evaluation in the school, and my work included: developing the format for the focus groups (commensurate with team discussion and in accord with the aims that the lead EPs had negotiated and the specific questions that they considered should be addressed); administering (but not designing) the pupil questionnaire; leading the focus groups (supported by a Psychology Student); gathering and analysing the questionnaire and focus group

data and feeding back the findings to the school (along with the psychology students).

Given that a focus group facilitator gathers data through interacting with the group (Morgan, 1988) in order to gain a collective, rather than a collection of individual views, participants in the group interact with each other and the agenda of the participants, rather than the facilitator can predominate (Cohen et al, 2007). Focus groups may therefore be better facilitated with fewer participants than the large number that attended the groups in this study. Focus groups have been accredited with empowering participants and groups of participants to 'speak out' in their own words (Cohen et al, 2007; P376), but empowering participants is less easy to achieve with a large number of participants, as a group that is relatively large may be difficult to manage (Morgan, 1988).

5.7.1 Threats to validity and reliability

The large number of pupils who took part in the focus groups in the current study meant that it was less easy to empower all participants, and/or ensure that all voices were heard. Furthermore, it was less easy contemporaneously to record the views during group discussion as a number of pupils appeared to want to give their views concurrently or in quick succession. However, these difficulties were mitigated, to some extent, by inviting all pupils to provide their views on 'post it' notes at the outset and by my checking my understanding of the main views provided and the extent to which there was conformity in the group regarding these views.

Morgan (1988) notes that sampling is an important factor influencing the success of a focus group. Cohen et al (2007, P376) suggest that groups work best when the participants comprise 'relative strangers rather than friends'. Given that the pupils in

this study were drawn from different tutor groups and from a random sample, the likelihood that the sample comprised close friends was reduced. Although random sampling is accredited as useful in enabling generalisation to the wider population and as having less risk of sampling bias compared to purposive sampling (Cohen et al, 2007), the focus group sample in the current study is open to criticism for being small (compared to the target population e.g. Year Seven, Eight and Nine pupils). Furthermore, the school did not provide details regarding the strategy used to identify the participating pupils, and it is not possible to discern the risk associated of sampling bias. Therefore, this study is open to criticism regarding the risk of lacking in 'overall reliability' (Cohen et al, 2007; P377). However, despite these caveats, the data generated from the pupils appeared to have a high level of conformity.

Validity in qualitative research might be described in terms of 'honesty, richness, depth and scope', of the data generated, and should be seen in relative terms, rather than something absolute that is to be achieved (Cohen et al, 2007). Thus, validity might be viewed according to the extent to which the data are comprehensive and are reported with fidelity (e.g. Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) and authenticity (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Cohen et al, 2007). Indeed, Maxwell (1992) described threats to validity for qualitative research in terms of a number of different areas including description (the accuracy and completeness or non-selectivity of the account) and interpretation (fidelity to the participants rather than 'imposing meaning'). Given that there was a relatively large number of pupils in each focus and the difficulties that this presented in terms of ensuring all voices were heard and recorded during group discussion, the 'description' of the pupils' accounts may be questioned. However, attempts to strengthen validity were made by asking the pupils whether there were

any contrary views or whether they wanted to add anything during the discussions, with any such comment noted.

There is also the possibility that pupil responses were influenced by 'respondent bias' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), where participants may withhold information or respond according to what they feel the researcher would like to hear. Throughout the focus group discussions, I endeavoured to mitigate this risk, by reminding pupils of the purpose of the research and making clear at the outset that I was not a member of the school staff – thus establishing a sense of independence from the school, that I believe facilitated openness in discussions. I also tried to minimise my own 'reactivity bias' and 'researcher bias' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), though presenting an openness to new or unexpected information and accepting contradictions.

5.7.2 Ethical considerations

In accordance with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004) revised ethical guidelines for educational research, all pupils were given a clear explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire and focus groups; what they would be asked to do; how the data would be used and stored; and to whom they would be reported. This included ensuring data were to be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998), in that the views would not be identified with individual pupils. The findings from the study are described below. The findings from the staff questionnaire are first reported, followed by the findings from the pupil questionnaire and the focus groups. All data can be seen in Appendices IV and VI.

5.8 Findings from the Staff Questionnaire

Because of the comprehensive nature of the information gathered through the questionnaire and for ease of interpretation, the findings relating to the staff questionnaire are described according to three main areas: the impact of SEAL on staff and pupils; staff knowledge of SEAL; and staff training. These are described in turn before a summary and discussion of the findings is provided.

5.8.1 The reported impact of SEAL on staff and pupils

Most staff (64+%) reported that SEAL had had little or no impact on staff morale and the development of social and emotional skills in staff (see responses to Question 9). This is to be expected given that the implementation of SEAL focused on developing pupils' skills rather than staff skills.

Most staff (64+%) reported that SEAL had had little or no impact on: pupil behaviour; pupil attendance; or school atmosphere (responses to Question 9). However, a slender majority of staff (51+%) considered that pupils 'always', or 'considerably often', showed: good behaviour; attendance; application to their work and felt happy regarding being in school (responses to Question 16). This suggests that the good pupil behaviour observed in school is not considered by staff to be associated with the implementation of SEAL. It is possible that the good behaviour may be considered to be associated with other initiatives within the school; this is an area that may be further explored in the future.

A majority (54+%) of the staff reported that they considered pupils to have a number of social and emotional skills (see responses to Question 15). However, there was little evidence (based on staff comments given in response to Question 17) of a perceived impact of SEAL on pupil emotional wellbeing, and there were mixed

responses to the impact that SEAL had on pupil emotional wellbeing; teaching and learning; and the development of emotional skills in pupils, with 41+% indicating 'some' or 'considerable' impact (see responses to Question 9). A few staff reported (see comments provided for Question 17) that SEAL may be associated with pupils being: more aware of, and able to articulate their feelings; more reflective, and showing: increased enjoyment and engagement with learning; greater self awareness and improved relationships. These comments were too few to generalise to the staff population.

5.8.2 Staff Knowledge of SEAL

Whilst most of the staff (81%) knew what was meant by the terms 'emotional health' and 'wellbeing', less than half (44%) had heard of the five SEAL domains.

Furthermore, nearly half (49%) of the staff were aware of the initiatives in the school to promote emotional literacy, whilst just over half (51%) of respondents were not aware, or not sure that they were aware of initiatives to promote emotional literacy (responses to Questions 5-7). This would indicate that whilst staff are generally aware of initiatives to promote emotional literacy, these initiatives may not, in their minds, map directly onto, or be explicitly linked to the SEAL domains. This is consistent with the approach in the school which incorporates the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills into other initiatives (e.g. the PLTS and SECRETS) and is supported by the finding that staff promote, or intend to promote, emotional literacy in a number of ways that include incorporating teaching into subject lessons and explicit teaching through PSHE (responses to Question 8). However, staff also reported their aim to promote emotional literacy through developing pupil awareness, which includes the use of strategies such as modelling

behaviour, encouraging discussion and the use of resources such as posters. Other staff indicated other methods that they may use to promote emotional literacy, such as group work.

5.8.3 Staff Training

Staff appeared to recognise the importance of social and emotional skills in relation to pupil attainment and achievement (responses to Question 14). However, there were mixed responses to the statements:

- I feel supported in the role of developing social and emotional skills in my school, and
 - I feel confident about developing pupils' social and emotional skills,
- with a majority of respondents (54+%) indicating that they either 'disagree', or 'strongly disagree' with these statements (responses to Question 14). Thus, staff may perhaps benefit from more support and training with regards to developing pupils' social and emotional skills.

Over half of the staff (51%) had indicated that they had received training and support regarding emotional literacy (responses to Question 10) and over half (58%) of staff reported that the training that they had received had helped their understanding of emotional literacy either to 'some extent', or 'a great deal' (responses to Question 11). However, some staff also indicated that they would like more: time; training; revisiting of training and training specifically relating to how to incorporate learning of emotional literacy into their lessons and schemes of work, and supporting resources (responses to Question 12).

5.8.4 Summary and discussion of findings from the staff questionnaire

That the main area of impact appears to relate to pupils' development of social and emotional skills and their emotional wellbeing is consistent with the school focus on developing these skills in pupils, rather than focusing on staff development. Perhaps the school management had judged that there was no requirement to develop staff social and emotional skills because the school considers staff to have the requisite skills, as evidenced by the findings of the questionnaire that staff reported that they liked working in the school, and most staff (71%) reported that relationships between staff and between staff and pupils (95%) were good (responses to Question 14). However, the social and emotional skills of school staff have been highlighted as important with regards to aspects of pupils' behaviour. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) for example found that emotionally literate teachers support positive behaviour. Furthermore, Roffey (2010) highlighted that pupils learn through watching and copying adult role models, and that:

“A stressed, demoralised, disaffected, educator is unlikely to deliver effective SEL [Social Emotional Learning] curricula. Schools need to consider structures and practice that might be put in place to support teacher well-being and resilience.” (Roffey, 2010; P161).

Furthermore, Howard et al (1999) found that the most positive (non-family) role models for resilient children were teachers who ‘took a personal interest in them’ (McLaughlin, 2008, P357). Harden et al (2001) concluded from their review of the research relating to mental health promotion initiatives and pupils' views that:

“There was a need to advance interventions which aimed to improve social relations between teachers and young people, since there was a concern from young people about teachers not being good sources of emotional support or self-esteem.” (McLaughlin, 2008; P358).

These tentative interpretations are further supported by the findings generated through the pupil focus groups that indicated that the school should give

consideration to developing staff skills in responding to pupils and the school developing the consistency with which staff in school adopt a caring approach to pupils. These findings are discussed below in relation to the ‘findings from the pupil questionnaire and focus groups’.

5.9 Findings from pupil questionnaire

The findings from the pupil questionnaire are reported here. The findings relating to the SEAL domains are first reported followed by the findings relating to pupils’ behaviour, attendance, learning and emotional wellbeing generally. A summary and discussion of the findings from the pupils’ questionnaire are then provided.

5.9.1 Pupils’ skills relating to the SEAL domains

Most pupils reported (responses to items relating to SEAL domains) that they agreed or strongly agreed with statements about themselves regarding: self awareness (88+%); motivation (88+%); empathy (84+%); social skills (84+%); while a smaller majority of pupils’ (55+%) responded that they ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to two statements relating to expressing and managing their feelings. Over half of the pupils (55%) said that they either ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with a statement regarding using strategies to manage their feelings, indicating that although pupils are aware of their feelings and can express them to others, they may not know how best to manage these feelings.

5.9.2 Behaviour, attendance, learning and emotional wellbeing

Most pupils (81+%) reported to often or always show good behaviour and good attendance (86+%); apply themselves to school work and achieving their full

potential (80+%). The pupils' responses to whether they enjoyed learning were more mixed, with 55% responding that they often or always 'enjoy learning', while 45% responded that they 'never' or 'sometimes' enjoy learning. However, the responses to learning indicate that pupils generally considered that they applied themselves to learning, enjoy learning and reached their full learning potential. Furthermore, most pupils (58+%) reported to 'often', or 'always', feel good about themselves and feel happy about school and reported to be resilient.

5.9.3 Summary and discussion of findings from the pupil questionnaire

Thus the findings from the pupil questionnaire showed that pupils reported to:

- consider themselves to have an understanding of their feelings and how they linked to their behaviour;
- value themselves as individuals;
- set achievable goals;
- apply themselves to their learning;
- monitor and evaluate their performance;
- have good listening skills;
- respect and value others' thoughts;
- understand the impact of issues such as bullying and discrimination have on others;
- effectively communicate with others; and
- build and sustain positive relationships and work well in groups.

The findings therefore indicate that pupils report to have a number of skills relating to the SEAL domains but may benefit from learning about strategies for managing their feelings.

The findings also showed that pupils reported to have skills relating to achieving in learning. This is encouraging given that children in UK have been found to generally score low on self reports of subjective wellbeing (McLaughlin, 2008). However, given that no pre-SEAL intervention data are available, it is only possible to infer that the social and emotional skills that pupils reported they had are associated with the implementation of intervention in the school to promote such skills. It is also not possible to delineate any potential impact, if any, that may have resulted from SEAL intervention in isolation, as this was incorporated into the broader SECRETS initiative. Indeed, Le Doux (1998) argued that it is difficult to gain control over emotions, and this cannot be easily taught (McLaughlin, 2008). Thus it is possible that the targeted learning of social and emotional skills may not have contributed to pupils' positive self reports. This is consistent with finding that a majority of pupils report they have sound social and emotional skills (e.g. awareness of their emotions) whilst indicating the need for support in developing strategies to manage feelings. Similarly, Craig (2007) argues that there is inadequate evidence that the formal teaching of social and emotional skills is effective, and may even be detrimental to children who may become more anxious, narcissistic and/or self obsessed. Instead, Craig (2007) advocates that the development of social and emotional skills should focus on working with teachers to: promote their own greater awareness of children's emotional lives; promote their relationships with pupils; and develop their modelling skills. McLaughlin (2008) also argues that emotional regulation is based on a social process and that it is through relationships with adults that children learn to regulate their emotion (e.g. Gerhardt, 2004); argument that is potentially significant in shaping strategies aiming to promote pupils' emotional wellbeing in schools. McLaughlin therefore states that:

“The remedy should lie with the adults, not with changing children’s emotions.” (McLaughlin, 2008; P363).

McLaughlin further argues that:

“It is the daily experience of children and young people in schools that seems to matter most, not the construction of special programmes, although some programmes can be very helpful...” (McLaughlin, 2008; P364).

5.10 Findings from the focus groups

These findings focus on pupils’ contributions to discussion regarding the extent to which pupils considered that staff care about pupils in their school and the extent to which pupils felt that they have a say in what goes on in the school. Pupils’ responses to each of these discussions are summarised and discussed in turn below. There appeared to be a high level of agreement between pupils in their responses to the focus group questions, and the nature of their responses appeared to relate directly to the question asked. What appeared to be the general consensus of the groups, albeit with noted exceptions, are described below and illustrative comments are provided. The focus group data can be seen in Appendix VI.

5.10.1 Summary and discussion regarding the extent to which pupils consider that staff care about pupils in the school

The majority of responses tended to indicate that staff care ‘a bit’ about pupils in the school. Many of the comments related to examples of how staff demonstrated a lack of caring, that included staff showing favouritism (e.g. to those who are achieving), and not listening, as can be seen in the following pupil comments:

- *“Some teachers don’t listen to students when they are trying to talk.”*
- *“Some teachers don’t want to hear; they give sanctions before listening to why you were late etc.”*
- *“I think in between a lot and a bit because some are nice and some are not and some can be nicer to others (favouritism).”*

- *“Because sometimes they sort things out well and you can talk to them but mostly they are really hard to talk to and sometimes don’t listen to your views”.*

However, there appeared to be general agreement among the pupils that it was not easy to generalise to all staff as there appeared to be variability in the extent that staff show they care, as illustrated in the following comments:

- *“Because teachers are different and have some favourite students and let them do different things than others. However, some teachers care a lot and give each other equal things.”*
- *“It depends what teacher, as many care and others don’t care that much. So a general statement would say they care a bit. Also some teachers favour smarter or sportier students in the class.”*
- *“Some teachers ask how you are, or if you’re going home they will go and see you, but some teachers don’t bother.”*

One exemplar comment of how staff show they care included that they care...

- *“a lot, because they are quite harsh on learning, so they want us to learn and they are strict on bullying, discrimination and prejudice.”*

The importance of a caring environment has been highlighted by a number of researchers. Haertel et al (1981), for instance, found that positive relationships between pupils and staff promote greater achievement and reduce social friction (Tew, 2010). Hattie (2009) also identified interaction between pupils and teachers as important to effective education. Staff who are understanding, friendly and helpful are also associated with a number of positive outcomes for pupils, including higher attainment, more enjoyment in learning, better attendance, higher motivation, and with enabling pupils to learn more (Wubbels, et al, 1991).

In order to promote caring relationships between pupils and staff, Tarlow (1996) argues that there are three pre-requisite conditions: being there; time; and dialogue (Tew, 2010). In order for the school to further develop a caring environment they might therefore develop a consistent approach to caring for pupils and provide

specified times where pupils can access a nominated member of staff (perhaps their form tutor) with whom they can talk if required.

5.10.2 Summary of pupils' responses regarding the extent to which they have a say in what goes on in the school

The pupils reported a number of processes through which they can have a say, (e.g. suggestion boxes and student ambassadors who report to senior school staff on a regular basis). However, the pupils generally appeared to agree that suggestions made through these processes were not acted on, although there were some exceptions to this, as illustrated in the comments below:

- *“Year 7 have all agreed they wanted to extend the mini café and they did it.”*
- *“History had a vote on what they wanted to be taught one lesson. The teacher had three lessons planned and we got to choose which lesson we wanted.”*
- *“Because there is a student voice where you can share your ideas but most of the time they don't listen.”*
- *“Staff and teachers do let students have their say, but sometimes they just go ahead and do whatever they want without asking you.”*
- *“They didn't listen to the people who didn't want the blazers. Even though they have student voice they don't make it better for everyone.”*
- *“Sometimes because we have student voice, but often they don't listen. On the other hand, they make big decisions without consulting us. e.g. BLAZERS. They don't think about how we feel; they just want to make the school look good.”*

The importance of pupil experience of autonomy was highlighted by 'Antidote': a charity that since 1997, has pushed for a greater attention in schools to social and emotional aspects of learning. Tew (2010) reports that Antidote undertook a study in collaboration with the University of Bristol, during 2000 to 2004 that found five aspects of school life that impacted on pupils' and staff capacity to engage in teaching and learning, that included how: listened to; capable; safe; accepted and included people felt (Tew, 2010, P129). Furthermore, these aspects were also found to be associated with a number of other factors including: the 'overall emotional experience' (Tew, 2010, P129); and relationships in the school (Haddon et al, 2005).

Thus, these five aspects are thought to contribute to the overall wellbeing of pupils and school staff and enable their engagement in teaching and learning. Pupil engagement with school is also thought to be associated with developing pupils' social and emotional competence (Weare & Gray, 2003).

To further develop pupil autonomy, a recommendation made to the school was to build in a feedback loop to pupils, regarding the implementation or otherwise (and reasons) for suggested changes arising through processes designed to gather pupil views (e.g. suggestion boxes, student ambassadors etc).

5.11 General discussion

The evaluation provided a snapshot of the current picture in the school which led to suggested areas for further development in the school. These areas for development included: increasing the pupils' sense of autonomy; developing a consistent approach across staff in caring for pupils; and increasing the training and support to school staff regarding their understanding of emotional literacy and how to promote this. The findings and relevant literature also suggest that SEAL may have a greater potential to make a positive impact if the intervention includes the aim to develop staff social and emotional skills.

Given that there was no pre-SEAL intervention data, and that it is therefore not possible ascertain to change or indeed to delineate the potential impact of SEAL from other initiatives in the school designed to promote social, emotional and thinking skills, the current study had more utility as a formative evaluation that suggested changes to the processes within the school to implement SEAL compared to summative evaluation that focuses on the effects of the SEAL intervention (see Robson, 2002 for a description of formative and summative evaluations).

Other limitations of the evaluation include that the relationships between pupils and their peers was not explored. This may be a useful area to explore in future evaluation studies as McLaughlin (2008) argues, based on her review of the research, that:

“The emotional well-being of young people is deeply bound up in the processes of inclusion, teaching and learning and community building in schools and classrooms. It is inseparable from the quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils and pupils and pupils. There are hard to define and to engage with but this review suggests that if we are to take the development of emotional well-being seriously, they are where we should locate our effort.” (McLaughlin, 2008; P365).

Given that there is little evidence that secondary SEAL provides significant measureable positive impact in schools, possibly in part, because of a lack of comparative studies due to the comprehensive and differing nature of the intervention, and the autonomy of schools in choosing how to implement aspects of SEAL, one might consider whether SEAL provides a credible approach to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and academic attainment. Indeed, the theoretical underpinnings of SEAL would suggest some caution in choosing SEAL as an intervention package. More research is required to determine the impact of SEAL that is based on specific programmes that are delivered with a high level of fidelity and whose projected outcome measures are linked specifically to the purpose and nature of the intervention and that can more easily control for, or account for the impact of other variables.

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Appendix I: Staff questionnaire

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning: Promoting and developing emotional literacy – Staff Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire. Your responses to this questionnaire are anonymous and will be treated in confidence.

School name *(Please tick one box)*

XXXX

☐

XXXX

☐

Please note that in answering this questionnaire emotional literacy includes work undertaken in school to embed SEAL, PLTs etc

A. BACKGROUND

1. **Gender** *(please tick one box)*

Male

☐

Female

☐

2. **Which of the following best describes your principal professional role?** *(please tick any appropriate boxes)*

Form tutor

7

☐

8

☐

9

☐

10

☐

11

☐

12

☐

13

☐

Vertical

☐

Subject teacher

☐

Senior leader

☐

NQT

☐

Learning support/teaching assistant

☐

Teacher with additional responsibilities
(e.g. gifted and talented provision)

☐

Learning mentor

☐

Middle leader

☐

Other *(please give details below)*

☐

3. **How many years of professional experience in school do you have?** *(please tick one box)*

0-5 years

☐

6 – 10 years

☐

11 – 20 years

☐

20+ years

☐

4. **How long have you been at this school?** *(please tick one box)*

0-5 years

☐

6 – 10 years

☐

11 – 20 years

☐

20+ years

☐

B. EMOTIONAL LITERACY IN OUR SCHOOL

5. **Are you aware of initiatives in your school to promote emotional literacy?**
(please tick one box)

Not sure

☐

No

☐

Yes

☐

6. **Do you know what is meant by the term emotional health and well-being?** *(please tick one box)*

Not sure

☐

No

☐

Yes

☐

7. Have you heard of the five emotional literacy domains? (e.g. self-awareness, managing feelings) (please tick one box)

Not sure ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐

8. Please briefly provide up to three examples of how you promote or intend to promote emotional literacy through your teaching/professional practice.

1.

2.

3.

9. The development of social and emotional aspects of learning has been rigorously promoted through a staged approach in secondary schools since September 2005. What impact do you think this has had in your school on the following areas? (please tick one box on each line)

| | No impact | Little impact | Some impact | Considerable impact |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Student behaviour | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Staff morale | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved school atmosphere | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student emotional well-being | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Staff emotional well-being | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Teaching and learning | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Development of social and emotional skills in students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Development of social and emotional skills in school staff | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other (please give details)

C. EMOTIONAL LITERACY - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10. Have you received any training and/or support specifically in relation to emotional literacy? (please tick one box)

Not sure ☐ No (Go to 12) ☐ Yes ☐

11. **To what extent has the training and/or support you have received helped your understanding of emotional literacy?** *(please tick one box)*

Not at all

☐

To some extent

☐

To a great extent

☐

12. **Thinking about the future, what training and/or support would be useful to help you understand and promote emotional literacy in your school with staff and students?** *(please give details)*

13. **Have you used any materials/ resources to help you promote emotional literacy in your school?**

(please tick one box)

Not sure

☐

No

☐

Yes

☐

(If yes, please give details)

D. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

14. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by ticking one box in response to each statement.

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| The teaching and learning of social and emotional skills are fundamental to student achievement and attainment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School staff need to be confident about their own social and emotional skills before they can actively teach them to students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The ethos of my school helps to promote the social and emotional skills of students and staff | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is possible to find time to teach social and emotional skills in secondary schools | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I feel supported in the role of developing social and emotional skills in my school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I feel confident about developing students' social and emotional skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I like working in this school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I think staff to staff relationships are good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I think staff to student relationships are good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

15. Please consider students in your school and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements (please tick one box for each statement)

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Students value themselves as individuals | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students understand the links between how they think, feel and behave | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students can identify and label their own feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students understand their feelings and manage them appropriately | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students express their emotions clearly to others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students use a range of strategies to manage their feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students set themselves achievable goals | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students can monitor and evaluate their own performance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students apply themselves to work during lesson time | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Listening skills among students are good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students respect and value the thoughts, feelings and opinions of others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students understand the impact of issues such as bullying, prejudice and discrimination | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students communicate effectively with others and express their own thoughts and feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students can build and sustain positive relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students work well in groups | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16. Please indicate how often students in your school conform to each of the following statements *(please tick one box for each statement)*

| | Never | Sometimes | Always | Often |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Student behaviour in the classroom is good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student behaviour during unstructured times is good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student attendance at school is good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students arrive at school on time | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students arrive at lessons on time | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students apply themselves to their school work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students enjoy learning | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students are achieving their full potential | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students feel good about themselves | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students feel happy about being in school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Students are resilient when faced with difficulties. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 17 Look at the four areas listed below and, in the second column, briefly cite any ways in which emotional literacy has had a positive impact:**

| | |
|--|--|
| Behaviour | |
| Student behaviour in the classroom | |
| Student behaviour during unstructured time e.g. breaks and lunch time. | |
| Attendance | |
| Persistent absence | |
| Occasional absence | |
| Punctuality | |
| Learning | |
| Student enjoyment | |
| Student progress | |
| Student engagement | |
| Emotional well-being | |
| Self awareness | |
| Empathy | |
| Motivation | |
| Managing feelings | |
| Social skills | |

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix II: Pupil questionnaire

**Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning:
Promoting and developing Emotional Literacy – Student Questionnaire**

Please complete the following questionnaire. Your responses to this questionnaire are anonymous and will be treated in confidence.

School name *(Please tick one box)* **XXX** ☐
XXXX ☐

I am in Year **7** ☐ **8** ☐ **9** ☐

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

(please tick one box for each statement)

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I value myself as an individual | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand the links between how I think, feel and behave | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I can identify and label my own feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand my feelings and manage them appropriately | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I express my emotions clearly to others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I use a range of strategies to manage my feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I set myself achievable goals | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I can monitor and evaluate my own performance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I apply myself to work during lesson time | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My listening skills are good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I respect and value the thoughts, feelings and opinions of others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand the impact of issues | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

such as bullying, prejudice and discrimination

I communicate effectively with others and express my own thoughts and feelings

☐☐☐☐

I can build and sustain positive relationships

☐☐☐☐

I work well in groups

☐☐☐☐

Please turn over

Please indicate how often you conform to each of the following statements (*please tick one box for each statement*)

Never Sometime Often Always

My behaviour in the classroom is good

☐☐☐☐

My behaviour during unstructured times is good

☐☐☐☐

My attendance at school is good

☐☐☐☐

I arrive at school on time

☐☐☐☐

I arrive at lessons on time

☐☐☐☐

I apply myself to my school work

☐☐☐☐

I enjoy learning

☐☐☐☐

I am achieving my full potential

☐☐☐☐

I feel good about myself

☐☐☐☐

I feel happy about being in school

☐☐☐☐

I am resilient when faced with difficulties.

☐☐☐☐

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix III: Focus group format

Introduction (5 mins)

Thank you for coming along. You will be aware of the things that are being taught in your school. We would like to find out how things that have been taught regarding emotions and social behaviour, have made a difference to you and the school staff. We hope to find this out by asking you to do a number of tasks. The first task asks you to fill out a questionnaire. We will then ask you some questions about the questionnaire (not your responses) and then we want to ask you about the staff in the school. We will start then with the questionnaire.

Task 1 completing the questionnaire (estimated time 10 mins).

HOLD UP A QUESTIONNAIRE.

The questionnaire has two pages. On the first page there is a box which indicates which school this is. Could you please tick the box that says..... There is also a box for you to tick which year you are in. You are not asked to give your name so no one will be able to link your responses to you. The first page also asks you to rate yourself on a number of things. There are four possible answers that you can give and these are:

- **Strongly Disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Agree**
- **Strongly Agree**

When you have completed the first page, turn over and you will see some more questions. This time, the responses that you can give are:

- **Never**
- **Sometimes**
- **Often**
- **Always**

There are no right or wrong answers and we will not be able to help you fill out the questionnaire.

We will use your answers to see how the school teaching has made a difference to the pupils in this school and to make the questionnaire better. The information you give will also be written up in reports that will be read by a number of people including school staff, people in the local authority and will be written up as a university report.

Once you have completed the questionnaire we will be asking you if there were any questions that you did not understand or that were difficult to answer. This is because we want to make it better for when it is used again in the future. If you do not know how to answer a question, just try your best to answer it but put a mark next to it so that you remember which question it was. When you have all finished, we will collect your questionnaires in. Do you know what you have to do?

Task two. What was difficult about the questionnaire? (15 minutes).

DRAW THE GROUP TOGETHER. EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING:

We would like to find out how easy the questionnaire was to complete.

Difficulty with words/questions:

- **Were there any questions/words that you did not know the meaning of?
Can anyone guess as to what the word or question means?**
- **What might be a better word?**

(RECORD THE RESPONSES)

Difficulty with answering a question:

- **Were there any questions that were difficult to answer?**
- **Why was this difficult?**
- **How might we better find out about.....**

What do you think the questionnaire was about?

Can you think of a time when this has been discussed in school?

(RECORD THE RESPONSES)

Task 3 (Staff/school questions 15 mins).

OPEN FLIP CHART TO APPROPRIATE PAGE. IT SHOULD HAVE THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN ON IT:

How much do staff/adults care about students in this school?

| | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| A lot | A bit | Not a lot |
| Reasons/Examples | Reasons/Examples | Reasons/Examples |

We want to find out a little bit about the adults/staff in the school. Please do not use the names of adults/staff as this would not be fair to them.

The first question is:

How much do you think staff/adults care about students in this school?

Could you please write on a/some post it note/s whether you think staff/adults care either 'a lot' 'a bit' or 'not a lot' and give an example.

LEAVE A COUPLE OF MINUTES FOR THEM TO WRITE EXAMPLES
INVITE PUPILS TO PLACE THEIR POST IT'S ON THE CHART UNDER EITHER 'A LOT' 'A BIT' OR 'NOT A LOT' AND INVITE PUPILS TO SAY MORE ABOUT IT – BY ASKING THEM HOW STAFF/ADULTS SHOW THIS AND USING PROMPTS E.G

Would you go to a staff member (NON NAMES, e.g. teacher, tutor, mentor) if you wanted to talk about something?

RECORD RESPONSES OR EXAMPLES ON THE FLIP CHART.

Question 2:

OPEN FLIP CHART TO APPROPRIATE PAGE. IT SHOULD HAVE THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN ON IT:

How much do staff/adults let students have a say in deciding what goes on in this school?

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A lot Reasons/Examples | A bit Reasons/Examples | Not a lot Reasons/Examples |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|

The second question is:

How much do you think staff let students have a say in deciding what goes on in this school?

Could you please write how much you think staff/adults let students have a say in deciding what goes on in the school (e.g. 'a lot' 'a bit' or 'not a lot') and give an example.

LEAVE A COUPLE OF MINUTES FOR THEM TO WRITE EXAMPLES
INVITE PUPILS TO PLACE THEIR POST IT'S ON THE CHART UNDER EITHER 'A LOT' 'A BIT' OR 'NOT A LOT' AND INVITE PUPILS TO SAY MORE ABOUT IT – BY ASKING THEM HOW STAFF/ADULTS SHOW THIS AND USING PROMPTS E.G

Would you go to a staff member (NON NAMES, e.g. teacher, tutor, mentor) if you had an idea about how to make the school better?

RECORD RESPONSES OR EXAMPLES ON THE FLIP CHART.

Thank you for taking part.

Materials needed:

- Questionnaires
- Pens
- Room
- Flip chart
- Flip chart pens

Appendix IV: Summary of staff questionnaire data

Summary Sheet of staff questionnaire responses:

The questionnaire was completed by forty staff members during a staff meeting. The questionnaire comprised 17 questions. The data generated for each question is recorded and summarised in turn.

Question 1

Question 1 asked respondents to tick a box to indicate their gender.

41 staff returned questionnaires. This comprised 15 male and 25 female staff members (one participant did not provide a response).

Question 2

Question 2 asked: Which of the following best describes your principal professional role?

28 out of the 40 (70%) of the respondents indicated that they had a form tutor role and taught one of the years groups year 7-11 (See table below for exact numbers). Twelve of the staff did not provide an answer to this question

| Year Group | Number of staff | Percentage of responses. |
|------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 7 | 6 | 15 |
| 8 | 2 | 5 |
| 9 | 7 | 17 |
| 10 | 6 | 15 |
| 11 | 7 | 17 |
| 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | 0 | 0 |
| Vertical | 0 | 0 |

Question two also asked respondents to indicate their role in the school. There were required to tick a box that is appropriate to their role. Forty staff answered this question and the number and percentage of staff who ticked each box is given in the table below.

| Type | Number of staff | Percentage of responses |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Subject | 21 | 52 |
| NQT | 2 | 5 |
| Additional Responsibilities | 3 | 7 |
| Middle leader | 8 | 20 |
| Senior leader | 2 | 5 |
| LSA/TA | 0 | 0 |
| Learning mentor | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 4 | 10 |

The responses to question 2 show that over half (52%) of the respondents were subject teachers and form tutors for years 7-11. With a quarter (25%) in middle or senior lead positions in the school. There were no Learning Support Assistants, Teaching Assistants or Learning mentors who completed the questionnaire.

Question 3

Question 3 invited staff to indicate how many years of professional experience in school they had by ticking the appropriate box. All staff provided a response to this question. The number and percentage of each response is given in the table below.

| Type | Number of staff | Percentage of responses |
|----------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 0-5yrs | 14 | 34 |
| 6-10yrs | 10 | 24 |
| 11-20yrs | 10 | 24 |
| 20+yrs | 7 | 17 |

The responses to question 3 show that staff who completed the questionnaire varied with regards to the number of years professional experience they have in school.

Question 4

Question 4 invited staff to indicate how many years they had been in school by ticking the appropriate box. Forty staff provided responses to this question. The number and percentage of each response is given in the table below.

| Type | Number of staff | Percentage of responses |
|----------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 0-5yrs | 27 | 66 |
| 6-10yrs | 8 | 20 |
| 11-20yrs | 3 | 7 |
| 20+yrs | 2 | 5 |

The responses to question 4 show that most of the respondents (86%) had been with the school 0 – 10 years with 12% who have been with the school for more than 11 years.

Questions 5 to 7

Questions 5 to 7 invited staff to respond 'Not sure'; 'No'; or 'Yes' to questions regarding their emotional literacy in the school. All staff provided responses to these questions. The number of staff and percentage of responses to each question is given in the table below.

| Response | Not Sure | | No | | Yes | |
|--|----------|------|----|------|-----|------|
| Question | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Q5. Are you aware of initiatives in your school to promote emotional literacy? (n=41) | 10 | 24 | 11 | 27 | 20 | 49 |
| Q6. Do you know what is meant by the term emotional health and well-being? (n=41) | 6 | 15 | 2 | 5 | 33 | 81 |
| Q7. Have you heard of the five emotional literacy domains? (e.g. self-awareness, managing feelings) (n=41) | 11 | 27 | 12 | 29 | 18 | 44 |

The responses for questions 5 – 7 show that whilst most of the respondents (81%) knew what was meant by the terms emotional health and wellbeing, less than half (44%) had heard of the five SEAL domains relating to emotional literacy. Furthermore, nearly half (49%) of the staff were aware of the initiatives in the school to promote emotional literacy whilst just over half (51%) of respondents were not aware or not sure that they were aware of initiatives to promote emotional literacy. This would indicate that whilst staff are generally aware of initiatives to promote emotional literacy, these initiatives may not map directly onto, or be explicitly linked to the SEAL domains. This is consistent with the approach in the school which incorporates the teaching and learning of social and emotional aspects of learning into other initiatives signed to promote skills (e.g. the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills and SECRETS).

Question 8

Question 8 invited staff to provide up to three examples of how they promote or intend to promote emotional literacy through their teaching/professional practice.

The comments were grouped into themes to allow for summary of the overall responses. The themes are:

1. Incorporation into subject lessons.
2. Explicitly taught through PSHE
3. Through the use of resources (e.g. posters)
4. Promoting student awareness
5. Strategies (e.g. modelling skills, use of praise, encouraging discussion)
6. Methods/activities (e.g. group work, transition activities, writing)

The themes are assigned a code and are given in the table below next to the comment made.

| Comment | Theme |
|--|-------|
| During lessons that address social, ethical and moral issues in biology e.g. stem cells and abortion | 1 |
| Trying to be more aware of people's feelings and likely reactions | 4 |
| Motivating students in P.E lessons/OSHL | 1 |
| Rosylin Franklin story - sexism | 1 |
| Group work in class | 6 |
| Team - promote awareness and links | 1 |
| Encourage pupils to look at body language | 4 |
| Relevant issues in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde" | 1 |
| Transition activities | 6 |
| Understanding of how people feel - directly related to lessons using images to promote emotions | 1 |
| Praise good behaviour and effort - boosting self image | 5 |
| Extended questions relating to development issues | 5 |
| Expressing emotion - writing about how things make you feel | 5 |
| Secrets Poster | 6 |
| Use of language through posters | 3 |
| Listening skills and discussing/writing about styles of | 3 |

| | |
|--|---------|
| Team work and collaboration | 1 |
| Use of language through posters | 3 |
| Promoting independent learning | 5 |
| After school extra-curricular clubs | 6 |
| Encouraging openness and reject reactionary attitudes | 5 |
| Reference to teaching materials | 3 |
| Through CPSHEE teaching | 2 |
| Discussing situations/how characters deal with emotions | 5 |
| Sharing concerns with a trusted professional friend | - |
| Talking/empathy work in cpsitee | 2 |
| Talking about persecutions of Jewish nuclear scientists e.g. unable to read | 1 |
| PSHE | 2 |
| Lessons - use of 'secrets' | 1 and 3 |
| Encourage listening to others' point of view | 5 |
| Teaching y7 students about relevant issues through T.I.E | 1 |
| Tutor time activities | 6 |
| See Q7 - Don't know how it is defined | - |
| Often referred to in CPSHE lessons | 2 |
| Demonstrate respectful behaviour | 5 |
| Referred to within CPHSEE lessons | 2 |
| Empathy - working in groups | 6 |
| Secrets Powerpoint | 3 |
| Empathy with others and surroundings | - |
| Through CPSHE lessons | 2 |
| Use through secrets PowerPoint | 3 |
| Secrets | 3 |
| Building solid working relationships with form | - |
| Challenging preconceived opinions and prejudice | 5 |
| Explicit instructions about working together | 5 |
| Ensuring that students are aware when doing peer evaluations of the boundaries. Possible consequences e.g. negative feedback | 4 |

| | |
|---|---------|
| Group work/ how this relates to everyone is different | 6 |
| Amongst tutor group | 6 |
| Students - self review | 4 and 5 |
| Encourage discussions which involves exchange of ideas | 5 |
| Teaching y8 about relevant issues through "the tempest" | 1 |
| Lesson objectives | 1 |
| Model a caring attitude | 5 |
| Extended questions relating to natural hazards | 1 |
| Secrets in daily newsletter | 3 |
| Focus through daily newsletter | 3 |
| Self reviewing | 4 and 5 |
| Encouraging boys to be open emotionally | 5 |
| Working with individuals | 6 |

The comments given to question eight show that staff promote or intend to promote emotional literacy in a number of ways that include incorporating teaching into subject lessons and explicit teaching through PSHE. They also aim to promote emotional literacy through developing student awareness which includes the use of strategies such as modelling behaviour, encouraging discussion and through the use of resources such as posters. Some respondents also indicated the methods that they may use to promote emotional literacy such as through group work.

Questions 9

Questions 9 invited staff to comment on what impact they considered that SEAL had to various aspects of social and emotional learning. Staff were invited to respond by ticking one of four boxes that indicated either 'No impact'; 'Little impact'; 'Some impact' or 'Considerable impact'. The number and percentage of responses are given in the table below. Not all of the staff provided responses to all aspects and the number of staff who provided a response is given next to the aspect.

| Response | No Impact | | Little Impact | | Some Impact | | Considerable Impact | |
|---|-----------|------|---------------|------|-------------|------|---------------------|------|
| Aspect (number of responses) | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Student behaviour (n=39) | 7 | 17 | 20 | 49 | 12 | 29 | 0 | 0 |
| Student attendance(n=38) | 8 | 20 | 21 | 51 | 9 | 22 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff morale (n=37) | 15 | 37 | 14 | 34 | 7 | 17 | 1 | 2 |
| Improved atmosphere (n=38) | 6 | 15 | 20 | 49 | 12 | 29 | 0 | 0 |
| Student emotional wellbeing (n=37) | 3 | 7 | 14 | 34 | 19 | 46 | 1 | 2 |
| Staff emotional wellbeing (n=37) | 17 | 42 | 12 | 29 | 8 | 19 | 0 | 0 |
| Teaching and learning (n=37) | 3 | 7 | 17 | 42 | 16 | 39 | 1 | 2 |
| Development of Social and emotional skills in students (n=37) | 3 | 7 | 14 | 34 | 20 | 49 | 0 | 0 |
| Development of Social and emotional skills in staff (n=37) | 10 | 24 | 18 | 44 | 9 | 22 | 0 | 0 |

The responses to question 9 indicate that most staff (64+%) reported that SEAL has had 'little impact' or 'no impact' on: student behaviour; student attendance; staff morale; school atmosphere; staff emotional wellbeing; and the development of social and emotional skills in staff. However, there were mixed responses to the impact that SEAL had on student emotional wellbeing; teaching and learning; and the development of emotional skills in students with 41+% indicating some of considerable impact. That the main area of impact appears to be relating to students development of social and emotional skills and their emotional wellbeing in consistent with the school focus on developing these skills in students rather than focusing on staff development.

Staff were also invited to provide 'other' comment. The following comments were given:

- Students are calmer if they feel their opinions matter
- Unsure as fairly new to school.
- A lot of staff see SEAL as yet another "thing" that they've got to include in an already packed lesson schedule

There were too few 'other comment's to allow analysis or generalisation to the school setting.

Questions 10

Question 10 invited staff to respond 'Not sure'; 'No'; or Yes' to a question about whether they have received training relating to emotional literacy. The number of staff and percentage of responses is given in the table below. All staff provided responses to this question.

| Response | Not Sure | | No | | Yes | |
|--|----------|------|----|------|-----|------|
| Question | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Q10 Have you received any training and/or support specifically in relation to emotional literacy? (n=41) | 6 | 15 | 14 | 34 | 21 | 51 |

The responses to question 10 show that over half of the staff (51%) had indicated that they have received training and support regarding emotional literacy. However, many staff (49%) also reported that they had not or were not sure that they received this training.

Question 11

Question 11 invited staff to respond 'Not at all'; 'To some extent' or 'To a greater extent' to a question regarding the extent to which training about emotional literacy had helped. The number of staff and percentage of responses is given in the table below.

| Response | Not at all | | To some extent | | To a great deal | |
|--|------------|------|----------------|------|-----------------|------|
| Question | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Q11. To what extent has the training and/or support you have received helped your understanding of emotional literacy? (n=27) | 3 | 7 | 23 | 56 | 1 | 2 |

Seven respondents answered not applicable to this question, perhaps reflecting that nearly half of the respondents reported not to have had or to be sure of having had training in this area. Of the other responses, 23 (56% of staff) reported that the training that they had received had helped their understanding of emotional literacy either to some extent, or to a great deal with 3 (7%) reporting to not have found the training helpful at all.

Question 12

Question 12 asked 'Thinking about the future, what training and/or support would be useful to help you understand and promote emotional literacy in your school with staff and students?' The comments were grouped into themes to allow for summary of the overall responses. The themes are:

1. More time/training.
2. Revisiting training (e.g. what emotional literacy is and key aspects)
3. Training how to incorporate learning into lesson and schemes of work
4. Resources

The comments and themes are given in table below.

| Comment | Theme |
|---|---------|
| Time to actually actively concentrate on it within our schemes and evaluate how it is used and how we can be more explicit | 1 |
| Revisiting key aspects of what emotional literacy is and how to promote it in the workforce and classroom | 2 |
| Practical workshops, guidance through SAU | - |
| Teachers need inset time to share ideas/practice | 1 |
| Training and resources for use in lessons | 1 and 4 |
| How to implement in subject lessons | 3 |
| Repeated 'drip feed' information in bite size chunks. Time to reflect then put in to practice | 1 |
| Have it applied to specific schemes of work for each subject | 3 |
| None | - |
| Definition of emotional literacy. Proven ways to incorporate into lesson - I do not want to reinvent the wheel. Educational studies that demonstrate successful impact. | 1 and 3 |
| I understand it and try to use it so don't feel extra training would be beneficial | - |
| Structured training programme | 1 |
| Any form of training or observation of it being effectively used | 1 |
| After school extra development | - |
| Practical training session to help understanding of emotional literacy | 1 |
| More training and Starter/Plenary ideas to use (weekly theme running through) | 1 and 3 |
| More training in starter and plenary ideas | 1 and 3 |

| | |
|---|---------|
| More definitive ways of using it in lessons, samples plans/examples | 3 and 4 |
| Further training - little and often, how to incorporate further in to starters and plenaries | 2 and 3 |
| Learning about the different domains and how often to plan learning experiences that promote them | 1 and 3 |
| Opportunities to put ideas in to practice | - |
| Staff need more SEAL support. More emotional support for NQTs and new staff would benefit all. | - |
| Train us! | 1 |
| What is it? | - |
| Curriculum links | 3 |

The comments given to question 12 indicate that staff would like more time and training, revisiting of training, training specifically relating to how to incorporate learning of emotional literacy into their lessons and schemes of work and supporting resources. Two comments indicated that they did not require more training.

Question 13

Question 13 asked 'Have you used any materials/ resources to help you promote emotional literacy in your school?'

The comments made are given in the table below.

| |
|--|
| Secrets. Posters and aims and objectives in class |
| School produced materials |
| Secrets PowerPoint, notes on board, discussion |
| In CPHSEE |
| Seal activities book & official materials |
| SECRETS Powerpoint/Poster/read out monthly. Focus on scheduled newsletter |
| Powerpoint, poster, newsletter |
| The SEAL poster - relating them to learning objectives and referring to them throughout the lesson |
| Classroom posters, Powerpoint presentations, CPSHE time |
| Powerpoint slide provided last year |
| Secrets sheets per month |
| Posters in classrooms |

There are two few comments made for question 13 to allow a thematic analysis. However, the comments that were given indicate that staff generally used a 'Powerpoint' presentation, posters and SECRETS to promote emotional literacy.

Question 14

Question 14 invited staff to rate their agreement with a statement regarding social and emotional skills. There were required to give one of four responses 'Strongly agree'; 'disagree'; 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree'. The number and percentage of responses are given in the table below. Not all of the staff provided responses to all aspects and the number of staff who provided a response is given next to the aspect.

| Response | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|
| | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Statement (number of responses) | | | | | | | | |
| The teaching and learning of social and emotional skills are fundamental to student achievement and attainment (n=39) | 0 | 0 | 12 | 29 | 23 | 56 | 4 | 9 |
| School staff need to be confident about their own social and emotional skills before they can actively teach them to students (n=39) | 3 | 7 | 6 | 15 | 21 | 51 | 9 | 22 |
| The ethos of my school helps to promote the social and emotional skills of students and staff (n=39) | 0 | 0 | 14 | 34 | 20 | 49 | 5 | 12 |
| It is possible to find time to teach social and emotional skills in secondary schools (n=40) | 3 | 7 | 13 | 32 | 21 | 51 | 3 | 7 |
| I feel supported in the role of developing social and emotional skills in my school (n=40) | 3 | 7 | 25 | 61 | 12 | 29 | 0 | 0 |
| I feel confident about developing students' social and emotional skills (n=39) | 0 | 0 | 22 | 54 | 17 | 42 | 0 | 0 |
| I like working in this school (n=37) | 2 | 5 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 39 | 15 | 37 |
| I think staff to staff relationships are good (n=40) | 1 | 2 | 10 | 24 | 23 | 56 | 6 | 15 |
| I think staff to student relationships are good (n=39) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 25 | 61 | 14 | 34 |

The responses to question 14 show that a majority of respondents (58+%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- The teaching and learning of social and emotional skills are fundamental to student achievement and attainment
- School staff need to be confident about their own social and emotional skills before they can actively teach them to students
- The ethos of my school helps to promote the social and emotional skills of students and staff
- It is possible to find time to teach social and emotional skills in secondary schools
- I like working in this school
- I think staff to staff relationships are good
- I think staff to student relationships are good

This indicates that staff recognise the importance of social and emotional skills regarding learning and that they staff like working in the school and feel relationships between staff are good. However, there were more mixed responses to the statements:

- I feel supported in the role of developing social and emotional skills in my school
- I feel confident about developing students' social and emotional skills,

with a majority of respondents (54+%) indicating that they either disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements.

This indicates that whilst staff generally recognise the importance of social and emotional skills, and that relationships between staff in the school are good, they would perhaps benefit from more support and training with regards to developing students social and emotional skills.

Question 15

Question 15 invited staff to rate their agreement with a statement regarding students' social and emotional skills. There were required to give one of four responses 'Strongly agree'; 'Disagree'; 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree'. The number and percentage of responses are given in the table below. Not all of the staff provided responses to all aspects and the number of staff who provided a response is given next to the aspect.

| Response | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|---|-------------------|------|----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|
| | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Statement (number of responses) | | | | | | | | |
| Students value themselves as individuals (n=38) | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 33 | 81 | 3 | 7 |
| Students understand the links between how they think, feel and behave (n=36) | 1 | 2 | 13 | 32 | 21 | 51 | 1 | 2 |
| Students can identify and label their own feelings (n=36) | 0 | 0 | 12 | 29 | 22 | 54 | 2 | 5 |
| Students understand their feelings and manage them appropriately (n=32) | 1 | 2 | 13 | 32 | 18 | 44 | 0 | 0 |
| Students express their emotions clearly to others (n=35) | 2 | 5 | 10 | 24 | 22 | 54 | 1 | 2 |
| Students use a range of strategies to manage their feelings (n=37) | 2 | 5 | 15 | 37 | 20 | 49 | 0 | 0 |
| Students set themselves achievable goals (n=36) | 2 | 5 | 15 | 37 | 17 | 42 | 2 | 5 |
| Students can monitor and evaluate their own performance (n=37) | 1 | 2 | 7 | 17 | 27 | 66 | 2 | 5 |
| Students apply themselves to work during lesson time (n=36) | 2 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 26 | 63 | 5 | 12 |
| Listening skills among students are good (n=38) | 1 | 2 | 13 | 32 | 23 | 56 | 1 | 2 |
| Students respect and value the thoughts, feelings and opinions of others (n=35) | 2 | 5 | 7 | 17 | 22 | 54 | 4 | 9 |
| Students understand the impact of issues such as bullying, prejudice and discrimination (n=37) | 0 | 0 | 6 | 15 | 26 | 63 | 5 | 12 |
| Students communicate effectively with others and express their own thoughts and feelings (n=34) | 2 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 26 | 63 | 0 | 0 |
| Students can build and sustain positive relationships (n=36) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 31 | 76 | 3 | 7 |
| Students work well in groups (n=34) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 26 | 63 | 4 | 9 |

The responses to question 15 show that a majority of staff (54+%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Students value themselves as individuals;
- Students understand the links between how they think, feel and behave ;
- Students can identify and label their own feelings;
- Students express their emotions clearly to others;
- Students can monitor and evaluate their own performance;
- Students apply themselves to work during lesson time;
- Listening skills among students are good;
- Students respect and value the thoughts, feelings and opinions of others;
- Students understand the impact of issues such as bullying, prejudice and discrimination;
- Students communicate effectively with others and express their own thoughts and feelings ;
- Students can build and sustain positive relationships;
- Students work well in groups.

There more mixed responses for the following statements:

- Students understand their feelings and manage them appropriately;
- Students use a range of strategies to manage their feelings;
- Students set themselves achievable goals.

However, nearly half of staff (44+%) and the majority of staff who responded to these questions (n=18+) indicated their agreement with the statements.

This indicates that a majority of the staff who took part in answering the questionnaire, reported that they consider students to have a number of skills relating to social and emotional skills.

This indicates that staff recognise the importance of social and emotional skills regarding learning and that they staff like working in the school and feel relationships between staff are good. However, there were more mixed responses to the statements:

- I feel supported in the role of developing social and emotional skills in my school
- I feel confident about developing students' social and emotional skills,

with a majority of respondents (54+%) indicating that they either disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements.

This indicates that whilst staff generally recognise the importance of social and emotional skills, and that relationships between staff in the school are good, they would perhaps benefit from more support and training with regards to developing students social and emotional skills.

Question 16

Question 16 invited staff to rate how often students conform to a number of aspects of behaviour. There were required to give one of four responses 'Never'; 'Sometimes'; 'Always' or 'Often'. The number and percentage of responses are given in the table below. Not all of the staff provided responses to all aspects and the number of staff who provided a response is given next to the aspect.

| Response | Never | | Sometimes | | Always | | Considerable Often | |
|--|-------|------|-----------|------|--------|------|--------------------|------|
| Statement (number of responses) | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Student behaviour in the classroom is good (n=35) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 10 | 24 | 20 | 49 |
| Student behaviour during unstructured times is good (n=40) | 1 | 2 | 18 | 44 | 1 | 2 | 20 | 49 |
| Student attendance at school is good (n=30) | 0 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 27 | 25 | 61 |
| Students arrive at school on time (n=40) | 0 | 0 | 7 | 17 | 6 | 15 | 27 | 66 |
| Students arrive at lessons on time (n=40) | 0 | 0 | 8 | 20 | 5 | 12 | 27 | 66 |
| Students apply themselves to their school work (n=39) | 0 | 0 | 8 | 20 | 5 | 12 | 26 | 63 |
| Students enjoy learning (n=39) | 0 | 0 | 11 | 27 | 3 | 7 | 25 | 61 |
| Students are achieving their full potential (n=40) | 0 | 0 | 19 | 46 | 2 | 5 | 19 | 46 |
| Students feel good about themselves (n=39) | 0 | 0 | 14 | 34 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 54 |
| Students feel happy about being in school (n=38) | 0 | 0 | 12 | 29 | 3 | 7 | 23 | 56 |
| Students are resilient when faced with difficulties (n=39) | 1 | 2 | 23 | 56 | 2 | 5 | 13 | 32 |

The responses to Question 16 show that a majority of staff (51+%) considered that students always or considerably often showed the behaviour indicated by the statement with the exception that students are resilient when faced with difficulties. This indicates that staff report that staff consider that students generally show good behaviour, attendance application to their work and feel happy regarding being in school. However, there were mixed reports regarding whether students were resilient.

Question 17

Question 17 invited staff members to cite ways in which SEAL had made a positive impact relating to four areas of students functioning:

1. Behaviour, including behaviour in the classroom and during unstructured times;
2. Attendance, including persistent absence, occasional absence and punctuality;
3. Learning, including student enjoyment, progress and engagement in learning; and
4. Emotional wellbeing, including self awareness, empathy, motivation, managing feelings and social skills.

The comments given relating to these areas are given in the respective tables below:

| Behaviour | |
|--|---|
| Feel valued | |
| Is very good on the whole | |
| Not been at this school long enough to assess | |
| Student behaviour has improved as they are able to articulate their feelings | |
| Unless I was assessing students direct response to a SEAL activity I could not with any certainty answer these questions | |
| I don't know what emotional literacy is - emotional reading? | |
| Express feelings about this | |
| Student behaviour in the classroom | Student behaviour during unstructured time e.g. breaks and lunch time. |
| Calmer | More self focused |
| Is very good on the whole | Built in thoughtfulness |
| Reflecting on actions | This generally needs improvement |
| Students more aware of their feelings | No impact. Break and lunch times are a disgrace, students cannot use their time well when all they are allowed to do is stand on the playground. Now wonder we have such a bad atmosphere at these times. |
| In getting students to think about their behaviour | Little impact |
| Understanding the need for respect | No impact - students behaviour during this time is awful! Students are bored as there is nothing to do. |

There are too few responses to undertake a thematic analysis or to allow generalisation to the school staff. However, in general, some of the comments indicated little or no impact whilst the positive impact reported included that students are more aware of and able to articulate their feelings and are more reflective/thoughtful.

| Attendance | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| Better | | |
| Not sure yet. Students are made aware of the importance of all of these (persistent/occasional absence & punctuality) | | |
| Has it had an impact? | | |
| No impact | | |
| No impact | | |
| Persistent absence | Occasional absence | Punctuality |
| Yes | Group ethos | Better |
| | | Is generally good |
| | | No impact |

There are too few responses to undertake a thematic analysis or to allow generalisation to the school staff. However, many of the few comments given questioned whether there had been any impact on attendance at all.

| Learning | | |
|--|------------------|--------------------------------|
| More focussed | | |
| They know how to interact and measure success. They take part well. Especially when thinking of others e.g. charity events | | |
| Student enjoyment | Student progress | Student engagement |
| Higher | Better | Better |
| Understand how to work with others | | Student engagement/involvement |
| Reflection | | Basic social skills |
| Sharing positive experiences | | More able pupils only |

There are too few responses to undertake a thematic analysis or to allow generalisation to the school staff in general. However, the reported positive impact include increased enjoyment and engagement with learning.

| Emotional wellbeing | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|---|---------------|
| Better | | | | |
| Encourages students to look at themselves and be aware of how others see them | | | | |
| Relationships | | | | |
| Self awareness | Empathy | Motivation | Managing feelings | Social skills |
| Students deal better with confrontation | Most students can assess and respond to others effectively | Higher | Making them aware of choice | Much better |
| Who they are and what they want | Getting them to consider how others may feel | Not sure | Don't know | Yes |
| Don't know | Don't know | It is specifically taught | Understanding helps them to cope in many ways | Possibly |
| Students are exactly that. More aware of their own feelings | Students are more able to see the other view in a decisive way | | Yes | Perspective |
| Being more reflective | It is specifically taught | | Yes | |
| Yes | Yes | | Possibly | |
| Yes | Not really | | Perspective | |
| Very much so | Relationships | | Vocabulary to talk about these | |
| Reflection | | | | |
| Relationships | | | | |

There are too few responses to undertake a thematic analysis or to allow generalisation to the school staff. However, in general, some of the comment reported that students are more reflective and self aware and improved relationships.

Staff were also invited to add anything else and the comments given are shown in the table below:

| |
|---|
| I feel this questionnaire was a little vague as some classes are fantastic and extremely well behaved and others are not, therefore it is difficult to judge. |
| Incorporate equality and anti-homophobia, racism,? into PSHE as a long project to challenge often narrow minds to see RE day stats vs prejudice created quite a reaction. |
| Difficult questionnaire to answer. Vague. |
| Q15. These are all too general. Does not apply to all equally. Q16. Depends on student. |
| Would like to know more. Need training. |
| Having only been at this school for 4weeks it is difficult to judge some answers |
| Question 15: Agree - Disagree (dependent on year/personal circumstances/emotional maturity) |
| Social and emotional learning is very important - should schools teach it? Big Q. more psychologists and counsellors for staff and pupils necessary education. Social and emotional learning is not something a school can teach. We learn such skills from family, society etc. The "poverty of society" is the reason for low social and emotional skills. Happiness linked to materialism. Individual rights vs. community cohesion. |
| Expectations on staff to deliver so many things in lessons means there is rarely time or inclination to include SEAL. The focus is always on targets and data |
| Q17: Unsure! |
| Q15. Depends on groups, however, on the whole agree. |
| SECRETS has not really impacted on behaviour in general or on inter-relationships between students, it has merely highlighted students own awareness of their emotional well-being. |
| It has not had the impact it could have. |

There are too few responses to undertake a thematic analysis or to allow generalisation to the school staff. However, some of the comments indicated difficulty with answering parts of the questionnaire as there are difference between students, groups and years etc.

Conclusion

Staff training relating to SEAL

Over half of the staff (51%) had indicated that they have received training and support regarding emotional literacy (see responses to question 10) and over half (53%) of staff reported that the training that they had received had helped their understanding of emotional literacy either to some extent, or to a great deal (see responses to question 11). However, some staff also indicated that

they would like more: time; training; revisiting of training and training specifically relating to how to incorporate learning of emotional literacy into their lessons and schemes of work and supporting resources (see responses to question 12).

Staff knowledge of SEAL

The findings indicate that whilst most of the staff (81%) knew what was meant by the terms 'emotional health' and 'wellbeing', less than half (44%) had heard of the five SEAL domains. Furthermore, nearly half (49%) of the staff were aware of the initiatives in the school to promote emotional literacy whilst just over half (51%) of respondents were not aware, or not sure that they were aware of initiatives to promote emotional literacy (as seen in responses to questions 5-7). This would indicate that whilst staff are generally aware of initiatives to promote emotional literacy, these initiatives may not map directly onto, or be explicitly linked to the SEAL domains. This is consistent with the approach in the school which incorporates the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills into other initiatives (e.g. the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills and SECRETS). This is supported by the finding that staff promote or intend to promote emotional literacy in a number of ways that include incorporating teaching into subject lessons and explicit teaching through PSHE (see responses to question 8). However, staff also reported to aim to promote emotional literacy through developing student awareness which includes the use of strategies such as modelling behaviour, encouraging discussion and through the use of resources such as posters. Other staff also indicated the methods that they may use to promote emotional literacy such group work.

Staff appeared to recognise the importance of social and emotional skills in relation to learning (see responses to question 14). However, there were mixed responses to the statements:

- I feel supported in the role of developing social and emotional skills in my school
 - I feel confident about developing students' social and emotional skills,
- with a majority of respondents (54+%) indicating that they either disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements (see responses to question 14). Thus, staff may perhaps benefit from more support and training with regards to developing students social and emotional skills.

The reported impact of SEAL

Most staff (64+%) reported that SEAL has had little or no impact on: student behaviour; student attendance; staff morale; school atmosphere; staff emotional wellbeing; and the development of social and emotional skills in staff (see responses to question 9). However, there were mixed responses to the impact that SEAL had on student emotional wellbeing; teaching and learning; and the development of emotional skills in students with 41+% indicating some or considerable impact. That the main area of impact appears to be relating to students development of social and emotional skills and their emotional wellbeing in consistent with the school focus on developing these skills in students rather than focusing on staff development. Perhaps the school management

had judged that there was no requirement to develop staffs social and emotional skills . This is supported by the findings of the questionnaire that showed that like working in the school and feel relationships between staff are good (see responses to question 14)

A majority of the staff reported that they considered students to have a number of skills relating to social and emotional skills (see responses to question 15). A majority of staff (51+%) considered that students always, or considerably often, showed: good behaviour; attendance; application to their work and felt happy regarding being in school. However, staff reports were mixed regarding whether students were resilient (see responses to question 16). There was very little evidence (based on staff comments made in question 17) of much positive impact of SEAL on student: behaviour; attendance; learning or emotional wellbeing. This suggests that the good student behaviour observed in school is not considered by staff to be associated with the implementation of SEAL. It is possible that the good behaviours in school may be considered to be associated with other initiatives within the school and this is an area that may be further explored in the future. However, a few staff reported that SEAL may be associated with students being: more aware of, and able to articulate their feelings; more reflective, and showed: increased enjoyment and engagement with learning; greater self awareness and improved relationships.

Appendix V: Summary of pupil questionnaire data

Summary Sheet of pupil questionnaire responses:

Participant information.

Sixty-four pupils completed the questionnaire. The number and percentage of pupils for each year group can be seen in the table below.

| Year Group | Number | Percentage |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Y7 | 22 | 34 |
| Y8 | 26 | 41 |
| Y9 | 16 | 25 |

The table shows that there was a good spread of pupils from years 7, 8 and 9.

SEAL Domains

The questionnaire asked pupils' to rate their agreement with statements regarding their social and emotional skills. The statements relate to one of the SEAL domains. There were invited to respond by ticking one of four boxes that either said 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree'. The number and percentage of responses for each statement can be seen in the table below.

| Response | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|---|-------------------|------|----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|
| Statement (number of responses) | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Self Awareness | | | | | | | | |
| I value myself as an individual (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 40 | 63 | 16 | 25 |
| I understand the links between how I think, feel and behave (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 44 | 69 | 14 | 22 |
| I can identify and label my own feelings (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 40 | 63 | 17 | 27 |
| Managing Feelings | | | | | | | | |
| I understand my feelings and manage them appropriately (n=64) | 4 | 6 | 15 | 23 | 29 | 45 | 16 | 25 |
| I express my emotions clearly to others (n=63) | 7 | 11 | 22 | 35 | 23 | 37 | 11 | 18 |
| I use a range of strategies to manage my feelings (n=64) | 7 | 11 | 28 | 44 | 22 | 34 | 7 | 11 |
| Motivation | | | | | | | | |
| I set myself achievable goals (n=64) | 6 | 9 | 13 | 20 | 23 | 36 | 64 | 34 |
| I can monitor and evaluate my own performance (n=64) | 4 | 6 | 9 | 14 | 34 | 53 | 17 | 27 |
| I apply myself to work during lesson time (n=64) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 33 | 52 | 25 | 39 |
| Empathy | | | | | | | | |
| My listening skills are good (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 9 | 14 | 34 | 53 | 20 | 31 |
| I respect and value the thoughts, feelings and opinions of others (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 30 | 47 | 29 | 45 |
| I understand the impact of issues such as bullying, prejudice and discrimination (n=64) | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 17 | 27 | 44 | 69 |
| Social Skills | | | | | | | | |
| I communicate effectively with others and express my own thoughts and feelings (n=63) | 1 | 2 | 14 | 22 | 31 | 49 | 17 | 27 |
| I can build and sustain positive relationships (n=64) | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 39 | 61 | 20 | 31 |
| I work well in groups (n=64) | 2 | 3 | 9 | 14 | 26 | 41 | 27 | 42 |

Summary

Self awareness

The responses show that most pupils (88%+) agreed or strongly agreed with the statements regarding self awareness indicating that they considered themselves to have an understanding of their feelings, how they link to their behaviour and value themselves as individuals.

Managing feelings

A majority of pupils' (55+%) responded 'agree' or strongly agree' to two statement relating to expressing and managing their feelings. Over half of the pupils (55%) said that they either disagree or strongly disagree with a statement regarding using strategies to manage their feelings. This indicates although pupils are aware of their feelings and can express them to others, they may not know how best to manage these feelings.

Motivation

The responses show that most pupils (88%+) agreed or strongly agreed with the statements regarding motivation indicating that they set achievable goals, apply themselves to their learning and can monitor and evaluate their performance.

Empathy

The responses show that most pupils (84%+) agreed or strongly agreed with the statements regarding empathy indicating that they have good listening skills; respect and value others thoughts and understand the impact of issues such as bullying and discrimination have on others.

Social Skills

The responses show that most pupils (84%+) agreed or strongly agreed with the statements regarding social skills, indicating that can effectively communicate with others; build and sustain positive relationships and work well in groups.

Behaviour, Attendance, Learning and Emotional wellbeing

The questionnaire also asked pupils' to rate their agreement with statements regarding aspects of their behaviour; attendance; learning and emotional wellbeing. There were invited to respond by ticking one of four boxes that either said 'Never', 'Sometimes', 'Often' or 'Always'. The number and percentage of responses for each statement can be seen in the table below.

| Response | Never | | Sometimes | | Often | | Always | |
|---|-------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|--------|------|
| Statement (number of responses) | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age | No | %age |
| Behaviour | | | | | | | | |
| My behaviour in the classroom is good (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 11 | 17 | 32 | 50 | 20 | 31 |
| My behaviour during unstructured times is good (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 12 | 19 | 34 | 53 | 17 | 27 |
| Attendance | | | | | | | | |
| My attendance at school is good (n=64) | 2 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 21 | 33 | 34 | 53 |
| I arrive at school on time (n=62) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 24 | 43 | 69 |
| I arrive at lessons on time (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 27 | 42 | 32 | 50 |
| Learning | | | | | | | | |
| I apply myself to school work (n=63) | 1 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 23 | 37 | 32 | 51 |
| I enjoy learning (n=64) | 4 | 6 | 25 | 39 | 26 | 41 | 9 | 14 |
| I achieve my full potential (n=64) | 1 | 2 | 12 | 19 | 37 | 58 | 14 | 22 |
| Emotional well-being | | | | | | | | |
| I feel good about myself (n=64) | 3 | 5 | 19 | 30 | 27 | 42 | 15 | 23 |
| I feel happy about being in school (n=64) | 2 | 3 | 20 | 31 | 28 | 44 | 14 | 22 |
| I am resilient when faced with difficulties (n=64) | 3 | 5 | 24 | 38 | 28 | 44 | 9 | 14 |

Behaviour and Attendance

The responses show that most pupils (81+%) reported to often or always show good behaviour and good attendance (86+%)

Learning

The responses show that most pupils (80+%) often or always applying themselves to school work and achieving their full potential. The pupils responses to whether they enjoyed learning were more mixed with 55% responding that often or always 'enjoy learning' and 45% responding that they never or sometimes enjoy learning. However, the responses to learning indicate that pupils generally considered that they applied themselves to learning, enjoy learning and reached their full learning potential.

Emotional well-being

The responses show that most pupils (58+%) either often or always feel good about themselves, feel happy about school and are resilient.

The pupils were invited to make any other comment. The comments given can be seen in the box below:

- We get feedback from our own ideas but sometimes the school does not give some, if any feedback on us, only in term time.
- This school understands students and I am happy to get into it.
- I am not confident in talking. I like my friends being with me. I am not confident in making friends with new people. I do not feel confident in telling people when I get bullied. I get bullied by people because of who I am. When I am with my friends I can express my feelings. I do not enjoy all subjects. I work well in groups if I know the people and are my friends. My attendance is often to always good – not perfect.
- I do not have anyone to talk to when I feel down.
- There is not place for me to take my anger out so I take it out on people. This happens often.
- I hate school
- I enjoy and learn better by theory rather than practice.
- On question 5, I could not answer as I do not really express anger, sadness and pain but if I am happy you can tell.
- I think the school is OK but very boring
- I find school rather unenjoyable and boring
- Yes that I enjoy but need a bit of help with expressing my feelings.

There are too few comments to undertake a thematic analysis and to generalise to the pupil population.

Appendix VI: Focus group data

Task 2: Summary of comments relating to what was difficult about answering the questionnaire?

The group were asked to highlight any words that they did not understand or any items that they had difficulty responding to. The following information was given (presented by focus group).

Focus Group 1:

Some pupils said that they did not know what resilient meant. One pupil suggested that it meant 'staying strong when faced with difficulties'. Pupils said that the question might be better understood if it used the following words/statements:

- I carry on when faced with difficulties
- try my hardest when faced with difficulties
- determination
- come back
- bounce back.

Some pupils indicated that they did not know what was meant by 'Unstructured'. Pupils said that the question might be better understood if it used the following word un-planned.

Some pupils indicated that they did not know what was meant by 'Unstructured'. Pupils suggestions regarding what it could mean include: unplanned.

Statements that were said to be difficult to rate include:

- 'I arrive at lessons on time'. This is because the pupil felt that the answer depended where the lesson is as it may take time to get there.
- 'I enjoy learning'. This was because it depends upon the subject.

One pupil also suggested that the statement might be easier to understand if there was a category between 'never' and 'sometimes', e.g. occasionally, in order to give more scope.

Focus Group 2:

Some pupils said that they did not know what resilient meant. Pupils suggestions regarding what it could mean included that it was about 'keeping going'; 'no giving up' and 'faced with difficulty you can look at it in a different way – so you can keep going'. Pupils said that the question might be better understood if it used the following words/statements:

- Do you ever stop when times are tough?
- Do you give up?

One pupil reported difficulty in responding to the statement 'I understand the impact of issues such as bullying, prejudice and discrimination' and pupils generally appeared to agree that they did not know what this meant.

One pupil suggested that the questionnaire may be improved if after each statement the participant was invited to indicate whether they do or do not agree with the

statement but also to be given opportunity to say why they agree/disagree with the statement.

One pupil commented that they found the question 'I feel happy about being in school' difficult to answer because they did not know which response to pick because they considered school to be boring whilst it is the only time that they can see their friends.

Other comments made by pupils were that if someone is bullied, the school makes an initial response, but after that, they shy away and that different teachers do different things about it.

Focus Group 3:

Some pupils indicated that they did not understand what was meant by 'unstructured' or 'resilient'. However, the group did not engage well regarding what the words might mean and how the statements may be better phrased.

Focus group three did not provide many responses regarding what they considered difficult to answer in the questionnaire (with the exception of one pupil who said that they found the question 'I value myself as an individual' difficult to answer). The group were therefore asked 'what did you think the questionnaire was about?' The responses given include

- About yourself
- Your feelings
- What you like as a person
- Your strengths and weaknesses.
- How you feel about school.

Group three were also asked 'How is SEAL used in school?'

The responses given include that it was taught through Personal Social and Health Education classes (taught weekly) and incorporated into lesson topics such as teaching about fire, linking it to how you learn. However, the lesson was considered not to make sense. One pupil also said that they are taught SEAL through learning about jokes.

One pupil commented that it would be helpful if the school taught 'more of the social and emotional stuff'.

Summary and conclusions of Task 2

Pupils reported that they did not understand what was meant by 'resilient' and 'unstructured'. These items may be better worded so that pupils are able to understand them. Pupils also reported some difficulty with completing the questionnaire in general because of the general nature of statements. Some pupils reported that it was difficult to respond to some of the statement because it depended on a number of things. Examples were given that it depends upon the school staff. This indicates that the statement might be better worded if they invited pupils to indicate a relative number of school staff who display a certain trait or behaviour.

Task 3: How much staff care and how much pupils have a say.

Task 3 invited pupils to give their views regarding how much staff care about pupils in the school and how much pupils have a say in what goes on in the school. Pupils were first asked to rate how much they considered staff cared or how much say they had by writing either 'Not a lot'; 'A bit'; or 'A lot' on a 'post it note' and to also provide an example. The group was then drawn together for a discussion to further explore these questions. The comments written on the post it notes as well as the comments made during the group discussion are given below by focus group and according to their rating.

How much do staff/adults care about students in this school?

Focus Group 1:

| Staff care not a lot about students in this school (Focus Group 1) |
|--|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Because they always shout at you for being late by 1 second and give you lots of detentions and give you exclusions and ISOS.• Not at all because they give us too many detentions or ISOS and if you're sorry they don't listen. IT's NOT FAIR!!• They give to many detentions and ISOS and they don't give you a chance to explain. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Due to favouritism – sports teams and selection. If they play for that team they get picked all the time.• Talk to teachers, they'll walk off.• Sometimes they pick you more than others if you're their favourite.• They expect you to be perfect at a lesson, if you do something wrong – get shouted at. P.E/basketball breaks a rule e.g. dribble the ball, get told off. Due to favouritism.• If you actually don't understand you get told off. They shout if they think you're not listening.• If someone else talking. You always get the blame if you're the naughty one generally. Everything that goes on in class is your fault.• If you're really naughty because you have a bad day, next lesson, they expect you to be the same. If you do the slightest thing wrong, you get shouted at. |

| Staff care a bit about students in this school (Focus Group 1) |
|--|
| <p>'Post it' note comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because teachers are different and have some favourite students and let them do different things than others. However some teachers care a lot and give each other equal things. • As some people don't care at all and others care a lot so it depends on the teacher. Also some teachers favour more well behaved /sporty or smarter students. • Because of favouritism and if a teacher doesn't like a certain child. They do this due to behaviour and sports team and how well they know them. • It depends on the teachers and if you are good at the subject. Favouritism can be a problem too. • I think in between a lot and a bit because some are nice and some aren't and some can be nicer to others (favouritism) • Some teachers do care but some don't. Quite a few teachers have favourites which can make some people feel left out. It depends on the teacher. • The teachers expect you to be perfect after one lesson. Favouritism. • Because some teachers hate some pupils and they have favourite pupils. • Because some teachers are great where as others have favouritism over other students. • It depends what teacher as many care and others don't care that much. So a general statement would say they care a bit. Also some teachers favour smarter or sportier students in the class. • Some teachers prefer students over other students like if its in sports. • I think staff care about students a bit because in classes they only care about certain people – Favouritism. • The teachers only care about the students if they behave but otherwise they don't. • Most teachers have no feelings for kids but we have XXX who cares for other people. <p>In between a bit and not a lot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends how much work you do on it – favouritism • Because if you sometimes misbehave they treat you like a little kid all the time and they will favour some students. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you're good at the subject they care a bit more. If your better or understand they help the person that tries/wants to be better. • Depends on the teacher • Certain subject's teachers are equal. Others, people more able get better grades because they are better and get more care. • Sometimes they shout and have a go and don't even know why. |

| |
|---|
| Staff care A lot about students in this school (Focus Group 1) |
| 'Post it' notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think staff care a lot about students because they spend all day of school to improve our education. |
| Comments made during group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff disagree with favouritism and group people according to ability in P.E. |

Few pupils indicated either on the post it notes or during the group discussion that they considered that staff care 'a lot' about pupils in the school.

Other comments:

→ Treat year 11's better, as more mature known for longer.

→ They think they know what's happening but they don't

→ Not following through when needed help.

Focus Group 2:

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| Staff care not a lot about students in this school (Focus Group 2) |
| 'Post it' notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not a lot, they don't listen. Because there are a lot of kids in the school. So they target the people with learning e.g. games club for year 7s, but people are able to get along don't get the same treatment. Not a lot because they feel as if it has nothing to do with them Someone might call you a name but they won't care. |
| Comments made during group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers only target certain pupils like learning difficulties etc. from bullying. Help you if you go to a club. However there are only a minority that go to them a lot of people that do get bullied don't go to clubs, doesn't stop it. In a smaller group should be more staff : pupils. 'I've not been paid enough to deal with the likes go you.' Some break staff just leave you to it. May not tell you off and sometimes tell you off too much. Tell you off too quickly for minor things. Some teachers don't want to hear, they give sanctions before listening to why you were late etc. |

| Staff care a bit about students in this school (Focus Group 2) |
|--|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bit because teachers always say that we can go and talk to them if we have a problem but some issues are not noticed by teachers. • A bit – some teacher have favourites • Teachers do try to help you with issues but sometimes they don't care, they just say stuff like "oh, you'll feel better soon" or "oh don't worry you'll get better soon" • A bit because if someone said they felt sick to one teacher the teacher would say "just work with it" but if the feel sick they need to go to student services. This isn't just one teacher • A bit because not every teacher treats you the same • A bit because some teachers care more than others • Some teachers say there not paid enough to deal with the likes of you • They care sometimes but then tell you to be quiet, but some teachers care a lot • They sometimes ignore what's going on inside the classroom, e.g. someone getting picked on. They try not to do anything. • A bit because they are strict on bullying • It depends on what teacher you have • Because if you want to ask a question sometimes they just ignore you • Some teachers don't listen to students when they are trying to talk • Because they don't show it. Because they don't listen • Because one teacher has said to the class they only care because they are paid to • Because sometimes they sort things out well and you can talk to them but mostly they are really hard to talk to and sometimes don't listen to your views. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen sometimes – but tell you to be quiet so sometimes just tell you to get on with it. |

| Staff care A lot about students in this school (Focus Group 2) |
|--|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot because they are quire harsh on learning so they want us to learn and they are strict on bullying discriminations prejudice. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are against prejudice and bullying • Staff want you to learn and are strict |

Focus Group 3:

| Staff care not a lot about students in this school (Focus Group 3) |
|--|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They introduce the blazers without caring how much we hate them and are going to have to pay for them. • Some teachers care a bit and some care not a lot. • Some pupils do not want blazers and teachers don't care and are doing the blazers anyway. • They come in for the money. They take the 'mik' out of you and don't care how you feel. • We have to do things we don't want to do! Blazers! Boring |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blazers: Introduced, don't care about if our parents have no money to pay for them. Don't care we hate them. |

| Staff care a bit about students in this school (Focus Group 3) |
|---|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't always solve problems. • Some teachers let us do anything and then we don't learn anything. But some help us when they think we are struggling on something. • Some teachers care a lot but others don't. • Some teachers ask how you are or if you're going home they will go and see you, but some teachers don't bother. • Some teachers when you make eye contact will completely blank you. • Depends what mood they are in. The situation! • They do not listen to you and it makes me feel left out. • It's their job. For example, farmers have animals for meat, in that case they don't really care that much about the animals, just doing their job. It's the same for teachers and students really. • They don't listen, don't understand. • Some teachers do and some don't. • Frankly we are rather annoying. • Depends what teacher it is and if they have time. • It depends on the teacher because some care and some don't (they pretend they do but it's obvious they don't because they never help you). • Depends on the teacher. Some can help you and are really nice, but some aren't and don't help you to learn anything at school, because they let you do what you want. • Sometimes they can say things that might offend you and she don't think about how it could effect you. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't listen to what we think, you have to just go along with it. If they don't ask us about our views they just do what they think. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One teacher just 'blanks' (ignores) you when your around. She doesn't like pupils. • P.E teachers try to say something as a joke but they tend to offend you. • Some P.E teachers (females ones) do care. When I was ill she came and sat by me and made sure I was alright. • History teacher offended a different religion – when someone asked him 'sir are you a Buddha' he responded 'am I big, fat and gold? - he offended the Buddhist pupil in our class. • Child got pushed in hall – teacher just walked past like it didn't happen. • Put others above you in importance. Don't even think we're on the same level. • Favouritism • P.E teachers favour those that are more into sports – pick them to be leaders to do stuff. • Concentrate on one tea, at a time – others get offended. Favouritism, but not intentional. |
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|---|
| Staff care A lot about students in this school (Focus Group 3) |
| 'Post it' notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They help improve our skills. Give us an education. Build on our weaknesses. |
| Comments made during group discussion: |

Summary of focus group responses regarding whether staff care about pupils in the school

The majority of responses tended to indicate that staff care 'a bit' about pupils in the school. Many of the comments given related to examples of how staff demonstrated a lack of caring that included staff showing favouritism (e.g. to those who are achieving) and not listening as can be seen in the following comments made:

- *"Some teachers don't listen to students when they are trying to talk."*
- *"Some teachers don't want to hear, they give sanctions before listening to why you were late etc."*
- *"I think in between a lot and a bit because some are nice and some are not and some can be nicer to others (favouritism)."*
- *"Because sometimes they sort things out well and you can talk to them but mostly they are really hard to talk to and sometimes don't listen to your views".*

However, there was general agreement that it was not easy to generalise to all staff as there appears to be variability with regards to the extent that staff show they care as illustrated in the following comments:

- *“Because teachers are different and have some favourite students and let them do different things than others. However, some teachers care a lot and give each other equal things.”*
- *“It depends what teacher as many care and others don’t care that much. So a general statement would say they care a bit. Also some teachers favour smarter or sportier students in the class.”*
- *“Some teachers ask how you are or if you’re going home they will go and see you, but some teachers don’t bother.”*

An example comment of how staff show they care included that:

- “A lot because they are quire harsh on learning so they want us to learn and they are strict on bullying discriminations prejudice.”

To further develop a caring environment:

- Development a consistent approach to caring for pupils in the school.
- Provide specified times where pupils can access a nominated member of staff (perhaps form tutor) with whom they can talk to if required.

How much do the staff/adults let students have a say in this school?

Focus Group 1:

| Pupils do not a have a lot of say (Focus Group 1) |
|--|
| ‘Post it’ notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have student voice but they don’t listen to our amazing ideas. • Sometimes they say they will do but they never do except sometimes. • Because we have no opportunities to have our say. • They don’t listen to us.!! • We have no opportunities. • They don’t ask you. |
| Comments made during group discussion: |

| Pupils do not a bit of say (Focus Group 1) |
|---|
| ‘Post it’ notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If something happens like they start building we wouldn’t know why. • No staff does because they have to abide by the rules. But sometimes you can if you tell student voice. |
| Comments made during group discussion: |

| Pupils have a lot of say (Focus Group 1) |
|--|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes a teacher asks the class what type of lesson they want. • Can tell your idea to student voice and book a year ambassador. • We have Student Voice, will have ambassadors and can always talk to those people about it. • We have student voice and the JLT but it seems like you make suggestions which never change or happen. • Because of student voice and in form with games and ideas to raise money. • There are groups of people like student voice. • Student voice where we try and make the school better, and the students decide what happens. Also student Ambassador in each year group who meet with Mr XXX to tell them what the year group thinks • We have the opportunity to have our ideas for school heard, with student voice. It is the choice whether we want them to be heard, but we do have the opportunity. • We have student voice and they tell teachers what things we want to change. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <p>Group 1 did not explicitly identify in discussion whether they rated that they had 'a bit', 'a lot' or 'not a lot' of say of what goes on in the school. They did however give the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They say they listen but don't. Have ideas but they go for their own. • They don't ask you, just have a box. • Want to be asked stuff like non-uniform days etc. • They have suggestion boxes in school, put suggestion in, but looks like they don't act on them. • Year 7 have all agreed they wanted to extend the mini café and they did it. • History had a vote on what they wanted to be taught one lesson. The teacher had three lessons planned and we got to choose which lesson we wanted. • Made suggestion about toilets but it's not happened. |

Focus Group 2:

| Pupils do not a have a lot of say (Focus Group 2) |
|---|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They just do what they want and only head boy or girl can pick • Because they plan in advance to get a job done. • Not a lot, it's just what they want and we have no say • Because for example blazers, most student don't want them and their going ahead with it because they wanted them. They don't go on what most people say • We have no say what so ever! All we do is go to lesson and get punishment • Because you don't get a say in anything. They go ahead with their own ideas without you even knowing. • Because there is a student voice where you can share your ideas but most of the time they don't listen • Not a lot because most things that we say are not taken • There is nowhere to say or to tell them • When students put their hands up, teachers either don't answer you or they answer you but don't take much notice. <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> |

| Pupils have a bit of say (Focus Group 2) |
|---|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only student voice can say but sometimes student voice don't ask you about your views • They let you decide what you want to do in lessons • Staff and teachers do let students have their say but sometimes they just go ahead and do whatever they want without asking you • Because there is student voice and stuff like that • Student voice but that's about it • There's also JLT but you can't really know them <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student voice have you join, but no-one does. Students every two weeks on Tuesdays tell adults how to improve school. From every year. Could opt to be in it if wanted. But it doesn't work. Only thing changed were speakers in the hall to hear music, however too quiet. • JLT (junior leadership team) younger ones are too scared to speak to them. They consist of head boy and head girl. Can't go up to them unless you know them. What year 11 says goes. • Students didn't get to choose about blazers coming into school – parents did. More voted for non-blazers. • Suggestions box – however no-one used them. Don't take it seriously. • Can't connect with student voice, below year 10, no say. |

- Don't really ask yr7 as think they don't know much, haven't been at school long enough.
- Student voice – haven't spoken in PSHE yet to ask of any issues.

Pupils *have a lot* of say (Focus Group 2)

'Post it' notes:

- Junior leadership team
- Student Voice
- Suggestion boxes
- Student voice and JLT basically have a say in everything
- JLT
- Student Voice is a group where students have there own say its easy to add your own opinion and the whole school will have a say
- I always get asked.

Comments made during group discussion:

- Student voice is effective (PSHE lessons talk to).
- Student ambassador – meet once termly. Meet up with Mr XXX Tuesday every half term regularly. Meeting with year head to put ideas forward. Ambassadors are like head boy and head girl for every year.
- PSHE learn about social and emotional, drugs etc. They make you aware of things
- Youth clubs: interact, ask questions. No-one really talks to them. However they do help if needed. This takes place 7-9pm, on school site, with different adults to staff in school.
- More PSHE times...Ask you questions – learning about outside school stuff – your social life.

Focus Group 3:

| Pupils do not have a lot of say (Focus Group 3) |
|---|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLAZERS !!! • Ask hierarchy people. Don't ask a lot of students. • Evidence: Clip on ties, Blazers, No scarves allowed. • Especially XXXXX • They didn't listen to the people who didn't want the blazers. Even though they have student voice they don't make it better for everyone. • They don't listen just go ahead with their ideas. • They don't let you have your say in things they just go with what the staff/teachers want and what's "best for the school". • All there is, is students voice (that's it) • Have student voice head boy/girl etc. but no one speaks up. Some teachers don't care that we DON'T WANT BLAZERS. • They make us wear a uniform we hate and we can't ever wear a coloured coat. • Didn't let us have a say with the blazers. • Some people may not have the time when the teachers want to know and some teachers can't do anything about what we want only the head teacher. • They will ask your opinion, but then ignore it and do what they want anyway. • They don't care about our opinions. They are in it for the money and not for our education because they don't care. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although have student voice – not acted upon. • Head girl/head boy and Student voice: no-one really knows who student voice is. No-one really talks to them. Not acted upon. Head girl and head boy know we didn't want blazers, but had no say. |

| Pupils have a bit of say (Focus Group 3) |
|--|
| <p>'Post it' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Voice • We have student Voice but they didn't let us have a say in the blazers. • Sometimes because we have student voice but often they don't listen on the other hand they make big decisions without consulting us. E.g. BLAZERS, they don't think about how we feel they just want to make the school look good. |
| <p>Comments made during group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak a bit in assembly – if have ideas but no-one does speak. • Have to listen to classical FM, when speakers are on. No-one wanted to someone said and got told off. • Muslim people aren't allowed to listen to music – didn't do nothing. |

- No-one uses girls shower – not useful. People just mess around in them instead.
- Winters cold yet not allowed scarf's, hats and gloves on in playground.
- Red nose day, didn't get to do anything, expected something. Just did a talent show, wasn't allowed to dye hair etc. It was just boring.
- During winter, hat got confiscated. Some made suggestion to student voice. But they didn't take notice.
- Don't let you be individual, dye your hair, have different hair styles etc.
- Too many rules, therefore can't say what you want. Too restrictive.
- Don't care about our opinion, make us wear a uniform they just enforce it.
- Hold whole class in, when one person does something wrong.
C1: warning
C2: warning
C3:detention
- Can get hold behind for 15 minutes as a whole class just because of one person.

| Pupils have a lot of say (Focus Group 3) |
|---|
| 'Post it' notes: • |
| Comments made during group discussion: • |

Summary of focus group responses regarding how much pupils have a say in what goes on in the school

The pupils reported a number of process through which they can have a say including through the 'Student Voice', suggestion boxes and student ambassadors. However, the pupils generally appeared to agree that suggestions made through these processes were not acted on although there were some exceptions to this as illustrated in the comments below:

- *"Year 7 have all agreed they wanted to extend the mini café and they did it."*
- *"History had a vote on what they wanted to be taught one lesson. The teacher had three lessons planned and we got to choose which lesson we wanted."*
- *"Because there is a student voice where you can share your ideas but most of the time they don't listen."*
- *"Staff and teachers do let students have their say but sometimes they just go ahead and do whatever they want without asking you."*
- *"They didn't listen to the people who didn't want the blazers. Even though they have student voice they don't make it better for everyone."*
- *"Sometimes because we have student voice, but often they don't listen. On the other hand, they make big decisions without consulting us. e.g. BLAZERS. They don't think about how we feel they just want to make the school look good."*

To further develop pupil autonomy:

- Build in a feedback loop to pupils regarding the implementation or otherwise (and reasons) for suggested changes arising through processes designed to gather pupil views (e.g. student voice, ambassadors etc).

The groups were also asked, what would have changed in six months time if staff were more caring or pupils had a greater say in what goes on in the school? The following comments were made:

Focus Group 1:

- Teachers would listen better – you'd work harder.
- Treat everyone equally.
- Only punishing people that have done wrong – rather than whole class

Focus Group 2:

- Take more notice if they get paid more.
- Loose pay if people keep complaining about them.
- Complaint system would be helpful
- Teachers would be more open. More interaction with students both generally and in lessons.
- Have a day where a certain teacher would be available for drop-in sessions to help them.
- Year head to be in office more.

Focus Group 3:

- teachers listen to what's said.
- new teachers
- less stressed teachers.

The groups were also asked whether they felt they could speak with a member of staff if they were low or were having a bad day and who that member of staff might be. The following comments were made:

Focus Group 1:

- School counsellor – but not everyone speaks to her and she betrays your trust. Says she will see you again but she doesn't.
- Some teachers make arrangements but don't stick to it.

Focus Group 2:

- Can't go to talk to anyone.
- Can't connect with them
- Don't feel comfortable
- They always doing other stuff – marking books etc.
- They don't welcome you to talk to them
- Someone being bullied – just write a statement don't comfort you, don't do a lot about it or make upset person feel better
- Not a lot done to help.

→ Yes would be able to feel comfortable going to speak to them.

Focus Group 3:

→ Only a couple.

→ No-one at all – keep it to myself.

→ Staff/student services.

→ Sometimes even when you ill you can't go home because of your attendance.

→ Head of year won't let you go home if attendance is below 90%

Appendix VII: Consent letter

Dear parent

Re: an evaluation of emotional literacy at Secondary School

Your child and lots of other children in school are being invited to take part in a pilot evaluation. Before you and your child decide whether you would like to take part, it is important to know why this evaluation is being done and what it will involve.

The aim of this evaluation is to find out how children and staff at school have responded to and learned from the implementation of a social and emotional curriculum. We hope that this evaluation will tell us more about how schools can help to develop young people's emotional literacy (i.e. their self-image and self awareness, their ability to manage feelings and recognise the feelings of others).

If you agree for your child to take part, your child will complete a questionnaire at school and take part in a focus group. They will be removed from one lesson during the school day on Tuesday March 22nd. Your child will be able to withdraw from the evaluation at any point if they wish. The data gathered from this evaluation will also be shared with school staff and the local authority to inform the evaluation of emotional literacy in the future. It may be written up as an assignment as part of doctoral training in Educational Psychology. All information collected from your child during this evaluation will be kept strictly confidential and anonymised.

If you **do not want** your child to take part, please return the enclosed form to your child's tutor.

Yours sincerely

Parent withdrawal slip

Please complete this slip and return it to school **if you do not want** your child to take part in this study.

An evaluation of emotional literacy at Secondary School

Please tick the box if you do not want your child to take part

I do not want my child to participate in this study

Child's name: _____ ☐

School: _____

Signed: _____