

Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools

April 2022

“Upon returning to the classroom after partial school closures, staff reported that a significant proportion of children were demonstrating noticeably poorer interpersonal skills than they had prior to partial school closures. Specifically, children were increasingly struggling to take turns talking, engage meaningfully with talk partners and respectfully listen to their peers.

We were keen to address this head on in order to re-establish the safe, calm learning environments teachers had worked to create with their pupils previously.

To do so, we looked to the EEF Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools guidance report, and decided to focus our efforts around Recommendation 1 which asks us to consider how we teach SEL skills explicitly. We resolved to plan regular teaching time which would target two of the five CASEL SEL core competencies, social awareness and relationship skills.”

In previous Spotlights, we have focused on various EEF Guidance Reports, and the sometimes overlooked additional resources that accompany them.

The quote above is an extract from one of three case studies that exemplify schools' use of the EEF [Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools Guidance Report](#). There will be many of you who recognise the context of the case study as we move beyond the worst of the pandemic. Missed schooling has impacted not only on our pupils' academic achievement, but also their social and emotional development. All of which makes this report more relevant than ever.

This [case study](#), written by Billesley Primary School, refers to the first Recommendation from the Report - **Teach SEL skills explicitly**. As with the majority of Guidance Reports, the Recommendations are also presented as a summary poster, with a range of practical ideas for implementation.

“Model the social and emotional behaviours you want children to adopt.”

“Give specific and focused praise when children display SEL skills.”

“Do not rely on ‘crisis moments’ for teaching skills.”



It also makes reference to the following core skills framework which is also to be found within the Guidance Report and linked resource bank: [EEF_SEL_Core_Skills.pdf](#)

Table 1: Core Skills at the heart of SEL

Core competency	Definition	Associated skills
Self-awareness	The ability to accurately recognise one's own emotions, thoughts and values and how they influence behaviour. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying emotions Accurate self-perception Recognising strengths Self-confidence Self-efficacy
Self-management	The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts and behaviours in different situations – effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work towards personal and academic goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impulse control Stress management Self-discipline Self-motivation Goal setting Organisational skills
Social awareness	The ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour and to recognise family, school and community resources and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding emotions Empathy/sympathy Appreciating diversity Respect for others
Relationship skills	The ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively and seek and offer help when needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Social engagement Relationship building Teamwork
Responsible decision making	The ability to make constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions and a consideration of the wellbeing of oneself and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying problems Analysing solutions Solving problems Evaluating Reflecting Ethical responsibility



Diagram adapted from CASEL 2017

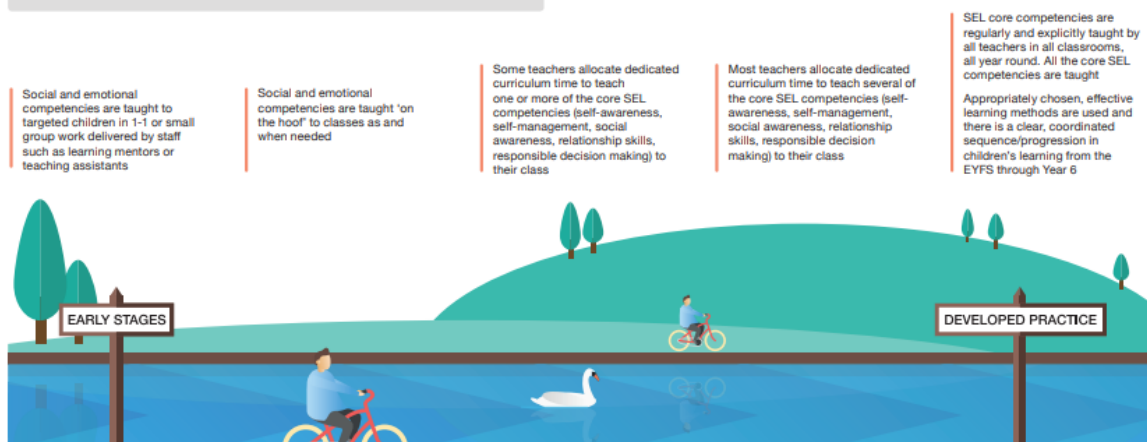
Further support is available in the form of a whole school audit tool, including this section which perhaps links most closely to the implementation of Recommendation 1.

An audit and discussion tool for SEL in your school CURRICULUM SELF-AUDIT



Big questions for discussion:

- How are we ensuring a basic entitlement to social and emotional learning for all children in all classes over time?
- To what extent do we understand the progression and cycle of SEL learning through the school?
- How are teachers making decisions about what to teach, and when?



The full audit can be downloaded here: [EEF_SEL_Audit_Tool.pdf](#)

There are also two further case studies, one from another primary school and the other from a nursery. These can be accessed here.

[EEF Case Study SEL Sheringham Nursery](#)

[EEF Case Study SEL Woodhall Primary School](#)