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## Research Associate Report

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# More than a feeling

Developing the emotionally literate secondary school

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## Context of the study

“From five years ago, when behaviour was such an issue, the improvement in behaviour of students, and the relationships of the adults with the students have been the benefits” (deputy headteacher, school A).

Our attendance has gone up from 89 per cent to 94 per cent in five years which, for an inner city school, is quite an achievement and the unauthorised attendance is at 0.2 per cent... There is something really powerful about students wanting to be here (headteacher, school B).

The starting-point for undertaking this study was a personal goal to gain a greater insight into aspects of emotional literacy (and associated ideas such as emotional security and intelligence), and to evaluate the growing body of knowledge within secondary education. Also, I wanted to explore the potential impact of emotional literacy on learning and behaviour as building an emotionally literate school is a key part of the strategic development plan within my school. In addition, as a school involved in a pilot LEA and county educational psychology initiative to develop emotional literacy, it is anticipated the findings will inform further developments countywide.

Specifically, the study aimed to investigate the following:

- the rationale for promoting emotional literacy in secondary schools
- the potential impact of promoting emotional literacy in secondary schools
- what an emotionally literate school looks like and how we can achieve it
- models of interesting practice that demonstrate how school leaders promote and implement effective strategies to develop emotional literacy

### National perspective

Nationally, the government has raised the profile and importance of emotional literacy at policy level as it is perceived as “fundamental to school improvement” and “social, emotional and behavioural skills underlie almost every aspect of school, home and community, including effective learning and getting on with other people” (DfES, 2003, p.5).

In school settings, and on into adult life, children and young people need to be able to behave in socially acceptable ways. These skills – which involve managing their own feelings, demonstrating empathy, communicating effectively, managing relationships... have a significant impact on personal, career and academic success (DfES/HDA, 2004, p.19).

The emphasis on improving attendance and behaviour in schools is a response to the growing concern that students who misbehave and do not achieve are significantly lowering their life chances and ultimately their capacity to work. For Britain to continue to be economically competitive it needs to have a productive workforce who possesses appropriate skills (literacy, ICT and numeracy) in parallel with the emotionally literate skills to manage their adult lives in an increasingly complex world.

Most recently, the range of reforms proposed in the government white paper, *Higher Standards, Better schools For All* (2005), focus on reducing social disadvantage and ensuring that “this happens in an environment where behaviour is well-managed and integrated services support the wellbeing of the whole child” (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hottopics/summary06.shtml>).

There is a need, therefore, to engage in thinking and researching current successful practice in developing an appropriate emotional climate for effective learning in organisations and disseminate findings. Overall, the aim of this study is to provide secondary school leaders with:

- access to the latest thinking in the field
- exemplars of interesting practice from three case study schools (referred to as schools A, B and C)
- summary of the currently available resources

## **Why a focus on emotional literacy?**

What follows is a summary of the reasons and current thinking to demonstrate why schools should be developing themselves into emotionally literate organisations for greater effectiveness. Consideration needs to be given to such aspects as:

- schools as learning organisations
- current context
- aims of education
- adolescence – a time of challenge
- improvements in outcomes
  - improving standards
  - inclusion
- learning communities
- future employability
- national perspectives
- multi-agency approaches

### **Schools as learning organisations**

Schools are very complex organisations and are increasingly becoming more so. The demands on schools, in a rapidly changing and unpredictable world, are manifold and reinforce the importance of relationship-based approaches. To operate effectively depends on the existence of quality interpersonal relationships between all in the school community. Dealing with emotions helps to develop better relationships and as Park (2004, p.11) asserts: “It is only through our capacity to build relationships that we become fully engaged in learning” and thus into a fully developed learning organisation.

### **Current context**

Schools are not homogenous places; each and every member of the school community brings with them their own preconceived ideas, their learned responses and behaviours that could be a source of potential challenge and conflict. To address these challenges requires both emotional and social competence, a high degree of trust and a willingness to engage in open dialogue – all features of an emotionally literate approach.

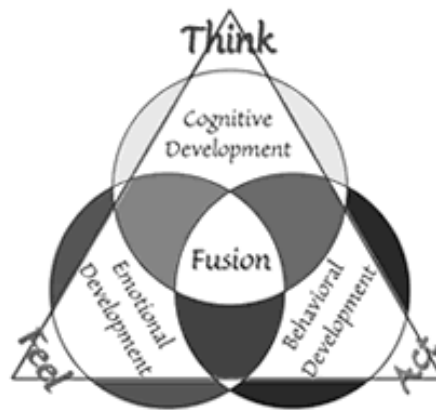
The advances in technology, including television, access to the internet and music stations mean that the students of today are the most globally conscious generation thus far. But there is a dichotomy between what is an increasingly connected global world and the increased potential for isolation and disconnectedness, which must be counterbalanced by a focus on dialogue, collaboration and relationship-building. As Otero et al (2001, p.12) assert: “Whilst driven today, by the necessity to acquire new skills in an increasingly, rapidly changing society, we are also more in

need of the human relationships.” And with specific reference to schools, Williams (2002, p.15) emphasises that: “Relationships that exist in schools make everything happen... or otherwise. Poor relationships lead to difficulties over communication, frustration, conflict in values and... deterioration in the effectiveness of schools.”

### **The aims of education**

Education, in the broadest sense, is about helping young people to become effective human beings and rounded individuals, able to make a positive contribution throughout their lives. It is about preparing them for their role in society, to be able to know and manage themselves. Schools have a pivotal role to play in developing capacity within our young people if the “ability to understand oneself and make conscious decisions about one’s responses to others is seen as the central outcome of an educational process” (West-Burnham, 2005, p. 3).

“The significance of emotional literacy, reflects a growing concern that schooling has... focused almost exclusively on academic and behavioural aspects and neglected the importance of the third dimension of human development, the affective aspects” (Faupel, 2004, p.1) that are intrinsically linked to learning and behaviour.



Salovey (2002, p.1)

Salovey (2002) offers a simple diagrammatic representation that demonstrates that development across all three domains: cognitive; behavioural; and emotional development are symbiotically interlinked and, addressed collectively, provide the optimum conditions for the development of the whole person.

Therefore, as education is concerned with the development of the whole person, it must involve the neglected area of young people’s emotional education. McCarthy (1998) states that schools need to equip students not just with academic success – although no one can deny this important aspect of our work – they also need to help young people find their identity, how they can positively relate and interact with others and find their place in the world. In essence, to become an authentic person, self-fulfilled and happy, one needs to be emotionally literate.

### **Adolescence – a time of challenge**

The stage of personal development of secondary-age students leads to a greater flexing of the ‘adolescent muscle; to increasingly push and test the boundaries; to take a more questioning and challenging stance with regard to behaviour and relationships with adults and their peers; and trying to find their place in what, at times, is a bewildering world. There need to be strategies to help address these issues and help students develop meaningful relationships with peers and adults, operate in an atmosphere of mutual respect, become self-aware and be able to understand and manage their emotions and responses. “Without social competence,” Schilling (1999, p.7)

asserts, “teens can easily misinterpret a look or statement and respond inappropriately... They may lack empathy and be relatively unaware of how their behaviour affects others.”

In the secondary setting, the large majority of schools have tended to concentrate on the academic and behaviour agendas and have not placed as much emphasis on the social and emotional development of adolescents as their primary counterparts (Faupel, 2004). Weare (2005) supports this view and observes that work on social and emotional development is relatively rare in secondary schools. She suggests three interrelated reasons for this lack of emphasis, stressing:

- that secondary schools have an ethos that focuses on academic subjects rather than on children
- the larger size and more impersonal nature of secondary schools
- the reluctance of staff to tackle emotional issues with adolescents who may be seen as more resistant and challenging (Weare, 2005, p.6)

However, this picture is changing with 40 secondary schools currently piloting a social, emotional and behaviour skills development programme prior to an expected rollout nationally throughout the UK for 2007–2008 (Weare, 2005).

## **Outcomes**

Emotional and social competences have been shown to be more influential than cognitive abilities for personal, career and scholastic success. Work in this area can improve educational and life chances (Goleman, 1996, quoted in *Wired for Health*, 2003, p.3).

## **Improving standards**

One of the central goals of schools is academic success and a focus on raising standards. There is a continual pressure to drive up standards and find strategies to improve student performance. In addition, there is a focus on addressing low-level disruption and more challenging behaviour in schools, which currently tend to focus on reactive intervention rather than proactive measures. Ofsted (2005) report that behaviour in secondary schools has declined from 75 per cent at good or better to 66 per cent since 1997 to date; the most common form of poor behaviour identified by the Elton Report (1989) is low-level disruption.

Promoting a holistic view and engendering positive relationships with an emphasis on developing social and emotional competence within schools, the heart of emotional literacy, has been reported to improve the school climate, promote more effective learning, better behaviour and attendance and an improvement in results for students. In the case study material within this report, school B, five years after writing emotional literacy into its strategic aims, reports significant increases in their GCSE A\*–C performance and a raising of their attendance rates. (See the section below entitled *The potential impact of emotional literacy* for details).

## **Inclusion**

Every single child should be given the chance to be the best they can be irrespective of their talent or background. This, or a variation on this theme, is seen in most school aims and mission statements across the country and is a fundamental component of the Every Child Matters and inclusion agenda. Whilst one would not argue with the principle, one of the consequences is that mainstream schools are expected to find ways to work with disruptive, behaviourally challenging and disaffected students without disrupting the education of the majority. Many schools are finding this a major challenge and are using emotional literacy as a tool to address the issue and make inclusion easier. For example, Southampton LEA, which made emotional literacy one of the three key strategic aims at LEA level in 1997, reported a significant year-on-year decline in their rate of

exclusions following the introduction of emotional literacy into schools. (See the section below entitled *The potential impact of emotional literacy* for details).

### **Learning communities**

There is reported evidence that work on emotional literacy can bring benefits to the whole school and community. Research by Hay McBer (2000) has shown that the characteristics of really successful schools are those that have built an effective learning community rooted in:

- high quality collaborative working relationships
- valuing dialogue and building trust
- the promotion of a sense of belonging

And, within its members, there is a desire to be a part of the community and make an active contribution. To be effective in our personal lives and our communities, there is a growing acceptance that we need to be emotionally literate.

Against a backdrop of changing social structures associated with the breakdown of the traditional family unit, high divorce rates, and the fragmentation of society, schools, along with other agencies, are increasingly being asked to tackle social problems and support the social and emotional development of children. Where young people experience an extended family scenario, with step-parents and half-brothers and half-sisters, this may raise issues for identity and their sense of belonging. Increasingly, therefore, schools have a role to help foster a sense of belonging and nurture a sense of identity for the students in their care.

There is a moral imperative to promote tolerance and acceptance of all in a society that is increasingly facing a turbulent future. In the aftermath of the London bombings and the real and perceived rise in the risk of terrorism, it is evermore important for schools to promote a climate of openness, to help all to understand each others' viewpoint and to have the ability to demonstrate empathy. Evidence suggests that emotional learning enables students to embrace cultural diversity and be more tolerant of social, cultural or racial differences (Weissberg, Greenberg and school, 1998, in McCarthy, 1998).

It follows that schools must provide opportunities to enable students to become emotionally literate and, indeed, all other members of the school community as it would be impossible to develop this capacity in students if all others were not enabled to do the same.

### **Future employability**

Schools are about preparing young people for a successful economic future for themselves, to prepare them for the world of work. Employers are asking for more than academic prowess, they want employees who demonstrate a capacity to respond positively to changing circumstances in an increasingly technological world; to be resilient, self-sufficient, flexible and manage stress; to manage themselves and relate positively to others (Goleman, 1996). Increasingly, there is a focus on relationships, teamwork and communication in the 21st century world of work. Students need to be prepared for an adult life where they will experience fluidity and the likelihood that they will face several changes in direction during their working life. In essence, many employers are seeking people who demonstrate high emotional literacy.

### **National perspectives**

The personalisation agenda, by its very nature, will increase the number of significant personal interactions and reinforce the centrality of effective relationships. West-Burnham (August 2005,

p.11) asserts that successful personalisation relies on “the integrity of interpersonal relationships that exist between teacher and learner, learner and learner, teacher and teacher, and leaders with everybody” and that organisations must move to a new culture around principles, process and relationships to make this a reality. In essence, “this is about the creation of emotionally intelligent [literate] learning communities”.

Promoting emotional literacy is a fundamental tenet of the *National Healthy Schools Standard* and is stated to be “critical in developing a healthy and successful school community” (DfES/HDA, 2004, p.7). The government is putting increasing emphasis on creating environments that promote the well-being of teachers and students and the national curriculum has long stated the view that the personal development of students underpins academic achievement. The importance attached to Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) and citizenship development, and the current national emphasis on promoting emotional and social competence through the Social, Emotional and Behavioural Strategy (SEBS), along with the emerging focus on developing Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) currently being piloted in the primary sector, are all variations on the development of emotional literacy and are entirely congruent with its ideals.

### **Multi-agency approaches**

Schools are unlikely to be able to achieve emotional security in isolation and without the guidance of services such as those provided by education psychologists and other student services. It is necessary to consider the role of educational services and the notion of the extended school, with co-ordinated, multi-agency input, to support the ideal where every child matters and can flourish. Integrating all services, under the role of director of children’s services, moves towards a coherent approach recognised in the Children Act and in response to the Victoria Clumbié case. This is an example of some much needed joined-up thinking, so that young people and their families will have access to extended school services, and agencies such as health and social care support services on school sites; and improved access to other support services such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and multi-disciplinary teams.



## What is emotional literacy?

Having established a rationale for developing emotional literacy capacity in schools and individuals, this section considers the current terminology and provides a summary view of the generic definition of emotional literacy derived from models of emotional literacy that have been developed over recent years.

### Terminology: clearing up the potential confusion

There has been an enormous amount of work in the field of emotional literacy development and it is necessary to clarify terminology. As Weare states: "The area is something of a linguistic minefield" (conference, 2005). There are multiple terms being deployed for the same or similar processes. These are: emotional intelligence; emotional security; self-science (USA); emotional literacy; emotional health and well-being; interpersonal skills; social, emotional and behaviour skill.

There are a variety of government initiatives and independent bodies working in the field of emotional literacy and emotional intelligence. The range of government initiatives that involve or refer to the above terms are: the National Healthy Schools Standard (NHSS) emotional health and well-being strand; the Key Stage 3 (KS3) National Strategy; the National Strategy; and most recently, the DfES Social, Emotional and Behavioural Strategy (SEBS) developments, soon to be renamed the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) curriculum.

For the purposes of this study, I propose to consistently use the term emotional literacy and the emotionally literate school. Weare (2004) argues that emotional literacy is concerned with the learning and practice of emotional and social competences. Emotional literacy is an integral part of emotional and social well-being and overlaps closely with emotional intelligence.

### Summary view of emotional literacy

There are many models and alternatives surrounding the concepts of emotional literacy, intelligence and interpersonal intelligence (Appendix 1). What all these models have in common is an emphasis on the following two dimensions: the intrapersonal and the interpersonal. The former refers to self-awareness, emotional management, motivation and empathy, while the latter refers to handling relationships.

A generic view of emotional literacy could be:

- self-knowledge
- self-management
- motivation
- empathy
- interpersonal skills

For readers who want further details on the above aspects, Appendix 1 offers a detailed exploration and amplification of this summary by considering, in detail, various models of emotional literacy that contribute to the generic view offered. In addition, the appendix also offers a consideration of each aspect of emotional literacy. Appendix 2 explores how aspects of emotional literacy impact and promote effective learning.

## **The potential impact of emotional literacy**

As stated in the introduction, work on emotional literacy is rare or in its infancy in the secondary setting. As a result, Judith Harwood, who is leading the DfES secondary SEBs pilot, states that “few secondary schools can demonstrate its impact” at this early stage. There are, however, a small number of secondary schools in the UK which have been working in this field in the last 4–5 years and which have attributed improvements in their schools to the implementation of emotional literacy approaches (Park, 2003), as well as evidence from the USA (Jensen et al, 2001).

This section considers the potential impact of emotional literacy and developing the emotionally literate capacity within schools by presenting findings from both current literature and the case study schools.

Sharp (2003, p.1) asserts that emotional literacy “is a relatively untapped lever in raising and promoting the national standards agenda in the secondary phase. Building on and reinforcing current teaching and learning strategies and providing a focus on the affective domain, emotional literacy is a powerful added dimension to raising standards, improving behaviour and increasing attendance in a sustainable and humane way”.

Evidence from the case study schools involved in this report and from the literature suggests there can be potential impact in several areas:

- improvements in learning
- improvements in standards
- improvements in attendance
- improved behaviour and relationships
- reduced exclusion rates
- increased social capital
- staff retention

### **Improvements in learning**

School A focused on developing high quality relationships between learners and teachers who taught them as part of their emotional literacy work to ensure that the effective conditions for learning exist. The impact on learning is highlighted by Ofsted: “Teachers have benefited from the work they have done on the importance of healthy and positive relationships between teachers and students if the right conditions are to prevail for learning to take root” (quoted in Park, April 2005, p.8).

Developing aspects of emotional literacy has enabled “the school to develop a deeper and richer understanding of learning in the community, which includes an appreciation of emotional well-being as a prerequisite to deep and sustained learning” (headteacher A).

Southampton LEA stress that their work on educational and social competence and well-being is directly linked to education and learning and has had direct educational benefits (Weare and Gray, 2003, p.34).

### **Improvements in standards**

School B, an 11–18 inner city school has been engaged in developing emotionally literate capacity since 2000. Headteacher B is convinced this emphasis is inextricably linked to improvements in GCSE A\*–C passes, which have risen by 15 per cent over the five-year period to 78 per cent in 2004, in a school with 13 per cent of students on free school meals (FSM).

Indeed, headteacher B was delighted to recount that the 2005 maths Key Stage 3 SATs results had “exceeded Fischer Family Trust targets, so put our maths results in the top 25 per cent nationally and 20 students got level 8 in maths in a year group of 189, 85 per cent got level 5, 69 per cent got level 6+”.

The headteacher of school A feels that emotional literacy approaches, closely aligned with an emphasis on learning, has impacted upon their GCSE results with the 2005 cohort achieving 47 per cent A\*–C, their best ever results in a school with an FSM figure of 51 per cent and 82 per cent of students with English as an additional language. Emotional literacy “has had a profound effect on our learning environment. For three years, our results have stayed at 36 per cent, but last year’s Year 11, the first to benefit [in engagement in this work], scored 47 per cent” (headteacher A).

### **Improvements in attendance**

Both school A and school B report consistently high attendance rates. Headteacher B attributes improvement in the school to their work on developing emotional literacy and states: “Our attendance has gone up from 89 per cent to 94 per cent in five years, which for an inner city school is quite an achievement and the unauthorised attendance is at 0.2 per cent... There is something really powerful about students wanting to be here... You could talk to nearly any child in this school and they will say that they love this school, that they want to be here and they feel part of it and they feel that it is their school and that [school] is here for them, and it is a good place to be.”

Headteacher A reports similar improvements, reaching “97 per cent for autumn 2005” at school A.

### **Improvements in behaviour and relationships**

Historically, schools have tended to use reactive methods to tackle behaviour issues, rather than working with the underlying emotional problems that generate it. For school B, initially some of the work on emotional literacy developments started around “angry, upset frustrated students being unable to learn and... there was no point just saying, get on with the work”, states headteacher B. The impact of these developments has been “the way that difficult and challenging behaviour is understood and responded to by staff” and “the level of understanding students now have about their own feelings, and how their emotions impact on how they respond, behave and learn” (co-ordinator, school B).

One of the most significant changes at school B, over the last five years, is “student attitudes to the school... tolerance and understanding of one another is measurable, 30 per cent of our students come from different ethnic minority backgrounds, and the social mix is interesting in that 13 per cent of the students are on FSM... so it is quite an unusual place given the location, yet there is a real sense of working together in partnership” (headteacher B).

One of the key drivers that prompted school A to undertake work associated with emotional literacy was “behaviour, behaviour, behaviour”, states the assistant headteacher, who follows on to say the school has “got calmer and calmer every year and emotional literacy work has played a part in that”. The deputy headteacher adds: “From five years ago, when behaviour was such an issue, the improvement in behaviour of students, and the relationships of the adults with the students have been the benefits.”

In another example from school A, targeted interventions with particular groups whose behaviour was unacceptable, working with both students and their teachers has brought about “marked improvements in drama and English, where the greatest difficulty had previously been experienced and less complaints about behaviour from other teachers”. One class was “almost unteachable”, in the view of their English teacher, but after intervention “I now get 50 quality minutes out of each 60” (reported in Sunley, 2003, p.13).

Sunley (2003), who carried out a three-year evaluation of emotional literacy developments at school A, states that the changes have been attributed to providing opportunities to create new relationships between students and teachers; students being given the opportunity to talk freely and openly as equals; and opportunities for teachers to understand and empathise with students through collaborative group work. Taking a wider perspective on emotional issues has benefited both staff and students and targeted interventions of this type “have proved to be a reusable model” (Sunley, 2003, p.14).

In a small-scale study in the USA in 2000–2001 involving 17 schools with 400 students, a pilot programme where students studied a curriculum called self-science over a six-month period was undertaken. Self-science is described as a curriculum for creating a schoolwide culture of emotional literacy and teaches skills related to self-awareness, self-management and self-direction. Impact on learning, classroom relationships and co-operation were measured using an accepted survey instrument, SEQI (Student Emotional Quotient Inventory). The published results were:

<b>As a result of doing self-science:</b>	<b>Teachers who agree (%)</b>
Co-operation increased	100%
Conflict decreased	75%
Collaborative work is improved	63%
Positive verbal statements increased	75%
Students have become more focused/attentive	88%
Put downs decreased	88%
Violence decreased	63%
My relationship with my students has improved	100%
My relationship with my students' parents has improved	63%
Learning in my classroom has improved	88%
Relationships in my classroom have improved	100%

In summary, teachers noted: a positive impact on learning and enhanced collaborative work; improvements in behaviour and less conflict; improved teacher–student and classroom relationships; and increases in student attentiveness and engagement in learning (Jensen, Freedman, Rideout and Stone, 2001).

### **Reduced exclusion rates**

In 1998, Southampton LEA prioritised the work on emotional literacy, alongside literacy and numeracy across its schools. The data showed that there were 113 permanent exclusions in 1997; by 2001, this had been reduced by 60 per cent with no corresponding increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions. In addition, attendance rates had increased (Weare and Gray, 2003, p.22).

## **Increased social capital**

Ofsted (2005, p.4) states that “behaviour is significantly better in settings which have a strong sense of community” and “A school’s ethos provides the context within which children feel secure, know they are valued as individuals, are safe from emotional and physical harm and are able to discuss their interests and voice their fears in a supportive atmosphere” (Ofsted, 2005, p.10)

In schools where emotional literacy is nurtured alongside cognitive development, students “tolerate frustration better, get into fewer fights and engage in less self-destructive behaviour” (Schilling, 1999, p.6).

Evidence suggests that becoming more skilled in emotional and social competences can help people to become more effective in their communities and workplaces and make communities safer (Weare and Gray, 2003, p.35).

School-based projects in the United States, such as the Seattle Social Development Project (1998), which involved student, teacher and parent education on positive behaviour management and resisting negative social influences, have demonstrated impact. Long-term evaluation of the 800 students tracked to age 18 demonstrated reductions in involvement in criminal and violent acts and a lower rate of alcohol abuse (Weare and Gray, 2003).

## **Staff retention**

DfES/HDA (2004) suggest that schools that promote emotional literacy positively impact staff retention and improved morale, a view supported by the headteacher of school A, who stated that “it [emotional literacy] had helped with stability of staffing because if you ask people, the majority would say this is an improving school and it is not a bad place to work”.

## **What is emotional literacy and what does an emotionally literate school look like? – case study perspectives**

In the first part of this section, views from the case study schools have been taken about what it means to be emotionally literate.

The following section contains insights gained from leaders, teachers and staff working in the case study schools about the typical characteristics of a well-developed emotionally literate school. These perspectives are then compared with views of the characteristics of emotionally literate schools gained from the literature to form a matrix view (Table B) which is finally pared down to provide a consensus view of the characteristics of an emotionally literate school.

### **What does being emotionally literate mean? – school leader viewpoints**

An overview of emotional literacy offered previously defines it as consisting of five components within two main strands, that of intrapersonal and interpersonal. To seek further clarification of the ideas associated with emotional literacy it may be useful to consider the viewpoints and interpretation of people who are working with the concepts in schools.

#### **To be emotionally literate:**

...is the understanding the students have about their own feelings and about how their emotions and feelings and what is going on for them impacts on how they respond, behave and learn (co-ordinator, school B).

...is around emotional well-being, feeling confident and calm, listened to, understood, heard, held, nurtured (headteacher, school B).

...is having a language and perceptual framework to understand how emotions impact on how we live our lives and, in particular, on how we learn”, and “emotionally literate students can talk about their feelings... about their relationships... how these impact on their learning and because they have the conceptual framework and the language they are empowered to do something about it (headteacher, school C).

...is the capacity of an individual and, significantly, in the school context of an individual within a social grouping to feel a sense of well-being, self-confidence, the capacity to move forward and the ability to relate to others as central components of any human being's growth. The ability to reflect about the emotional components of one's life and the impact it has on other elements that affect the cognitive development of a person (headteacher, school A).

...is learning how we [the staff] deal with our emotions and how our emotions affect us in every sort of setting in a school, and it is about helping students learn about their emotions and how to deal with them effectively. This translates into the classroom having a calmer learning environment (co-leader, Emotionally Secure School project, school C).

...is giving the students the language and the understanding of how they are feeling in different situations... we are talking about emotionally literate learners who can understand how they feel about learning... can understand the blockages and be able to get over them. Resilience as opposed to giving up (assistant headteacher, school A).

## **Emotional literacy:**

What is particularly important is that it [emotional literacy] applies to all people in the organisation... how staff work with other staff... we are aware of emotions... aware of relationships... aware of the need to sustain and nourish relationships (headteacher C).

...will help the [students] be better in society when they leave schools that we [staff] are not just educating them in the sense of giving knowledge but also social skills, how to deal with the workplace and situations that will arise outside school (co-ordinator).

The thing about emotional literacy is, of course, that you don't just need it in terms of running the organisation, but you need it in terms of life (headteacher C).

Summarising, the views expressed here have common themes. In essence, to be emotionally literate is each individual's capacity to know and manage self, to be able to form positive relationships (using a range of social and interpersonal skills), to be able to communicate and listen effectively, to be self-confident and to understand how this can impact learning both at school and in life. Emotional literacy is for all, not just the students but also the adults within the school and its community.

### **Emotional literacy is not a soft option**

Respondents were keen to emphasise that work on emotional literacy is not 'touchy-feely', a view endorsed by Weare and Gray (2003, p.62). "Work on emotional and social competence is not a soft, woolly option, but a hard-edged and rational strategy that needs clarity and strategic thinking to implement."

The language we [school B] use is around nurturing, coaching, enabling, challenging, but with the very highest expectations as well for the students in terms of their behaviour and their attitudes to their work (headteacher B).

The co-ordinator at school B, states emotional literacy "is about how behaviour is responded to in school as well as having sanctions and boundaries set up".

It is about having very clear, very well communicated boundaries for students, so it [emotional literacy] is not a soft touch (deputy headteacher).

To be truly emotionally literate, schools must provide opportunities for all to develop skills and competencies, and, at the same time, create and promote the appropriate culture and environment within which emotional literacy can be nurtured. It is the integration of these two critical aspects that is the most effective way to grow emotionally literate organisations, which place the emotional dimension of learning alongside the cognitive (Weare, 2005, conference). Therefore, it is necessary to explore what the characteristics of an emotionally literate school are and then to consider how an organisation may move towards the model.

## **What are the characteristics of an emotionally literate school? – school leader viewpoints**

Instinctively, it is possible to gauge the extent to which a school is emotionally healthy almost as soon as you walk onto the campus. On appointment to her new headship, Penny Bentley, Columbia Primary School (DfES/HDA, 2004, p.11) recounted that she heard lots of shouting, children shouting and swearing at other children, teachers shouting at children in the classroom and around the school, rarely smiling and parents anxious about coming into the school. The school “felt” anything but emotionally healthy; but what does an emotionally literate school look like? What follows are some thoughts expressed by school leaders of their understanding.

### **An emotionally literate school is:**

...about promoting good relationships... promoting a positive culture which builds on reward, a culture which is reflective and analytical... a sense of knowing individuals but, within that, a continued focus on high attainment and quality learning (headteacher C).

It is about good-quality communication... participation... distributed leadership, it is about building in enough time for people to relate through structure and organisation... it is, critically, about allowing the institution to be able to reflect as a whole... finding a manageable set of priorities that are challenging but achievable... and it is about relationships as well. I am not saying we have achieved all those, but I think we are trying to make those things more explicit to ourselves because we do believe they are the fundamentals of making a successful school (headteacher A).

One of the main things would be communication... people would have access to a vocabulary to describe their emotions and how they are affecting them... to lead to happier interactions, less shouting, less confrontation... as disagreements can be dealt with effectively. I think this is true between students and students, and staff and students, definitely... and it is about making students feel happy in the classroom, secure their ideas will be listened to... making them more willing to learn and easier to learn (co-ordinator).

Calm and purposeful and relationships between student and student, student and staff, staff and staff, are mutually respectful and strong (headteacher B).

In terms of lessons, it is about learning and the way the groups are relating to each other... actually it is about co-operation, working together (deputy headteacher).

It [the atmosphere] would be calm... staff are open, friendly and supportive” and in the classroom students “would be able to work together collaboratively, they would understand each other’s needs more, notice people struggling and go across and help... and relationships would be positive (assistant headteacher).



## **What are the characteristics of an emotionally literate school? – staff viewpoints**

When asked what an emotionally literate school would look like, a focus group of 20 staff (including teachers, support and associate staff) from school C shared their ideas. Reproduced below are their ideas about the characteristics of an emotionally literate school.

### **An emotionally literate school is a school:**

- that is a welcoming community for all
- that listens
- where learning is fun
- with high quality learning
- with high expectations of staff and students
- characterised by happy people and smiling faces
- with an ethos characterised by celebration and reward, with an emphasis on the positive
- where relationships would be characterised by respect and a tolerance of differences
- where all are able to express views in a safe environment
- with a highly engaged leadership team with staff and students
- where staff are emotionally literate
- where all staff are approachable
- which is supportive, with access to counsellors for staff and students
- with a calm, safe, stimulating, rich, secure environment
- used to celebrating student work
- where teaching environments are VAK friendly
- that is involved with the local community and external agencies

Using the above views from the staff of school C, views expressed in interviews with respondents in case study schools A and B, and comparing them with the views of Weare (2005) and McCarthy (1997) from the literature, it is possible to create a comparative overview matrix that represents the characteristics of a well-developed emotionally literate school. Table B represents the views of each case study school in turn and compares this with the views of Weare and McCarthy.

**Table B: Characteristics of emotionally literate organisations – comparative analysis of case study school, literature and staff views**

Case study school A	Case study school B	Case study school C	Weare (2005, conference) Weare and Gray (2003)	McCarthy (1998)
High quality relationships	Emphasis on mutually respectful relationships	High quality relationships	Relationships: fosters warm relationships based on social competence/empathy/respect/listening and respect.	Good relationships across all
Listening school	Listens to the staff, student, and parents	Listening school		Listening and to be listened to
Good quality communication	Communication – nurturing, enabling environment	Open communication and trust		
Collaborative group work				
Involves all	All	For all	Participation: Involvement of all. Shared values and goals. Open. “Students want to be here.”	For all, shared language about emotion and learning
Culture of reflection	Positive, safe and secure but challenging culture	Culture of analysis and reflection		Reviewing and reflecting what has been learnt
Challenging and high expectations	High expectations of behaviour and attitude	Focus on high attainment	Clarity: very high expectations with boundaries/structures/rules. Autonomy: independence and responsibility. Weare (2005) stresses that the four key areas of relationships, participation, clarity and autonomy must all be evident to give a balanced school environment.	Clear, secure boundaries
Clear, well communicated rules/boundaries	Clear boundaries and sanctions included	Ethos that builds on reward, clear boundaries		
Calm classrooms and corridors	Calm and purposeful environment	Positive, calm, secure, safe		
Focus on quality learning	High expectations of work	Quality learning and impact in the classroom		
Leadership at all levels, community of learners	Involves parents		Working with parents and the community	Build a feeling of community and responsibility

## **The characteristics of an emotionally literate school**

Using the range of views represented in Table B from both the case study schools and the literature, it is possible to synthesise a consensus view of the typical characteristics that a well-developed emotionally literate school would demonstrate.

### **Characteristics of an emotionally literate school**

Positive, safe and secure environment  
High quality relationships, which are mutually respectful  
A culture of high expectations and reward within clearly defined boundaries  
A shared language and understanding of emotional literacy  
Dialogue and open communication in an atmosphere of trust  
A focus on the whole child  
High quality learning for all  
A culture of reflection and analysis  
High collaboration and interdependent teams  
A learning community for all, owned by all

It is worth reflecting that the characteristics of an emotionally literate organisation, described above, reflect much of what makes a school really successful based on research. Successful schools “are characterised by a strong ethos which supports good relationships with clear and secure boundaries” (Sammons, Thomas and Mortimer, 1997, quoted in McCarthy, 1998 p. 4). In addition, Hay McBer (2000) has shown that the characteristics of really successful schools are those that:

- have built an effective learning community rooted in high quality collaborative relationships and value dialogue
- build trust and promote a sense of belonging
- have, within their members, a desire to be a part of the community and make an active contribution

It follows, therefore, that to become as effective as possible schools need to develop into emotionally literate organisations.

## **Growing the emotionally literate school – case study findings**

Although it is helpful to try to define emotional literacy and what an emotionally literate organisation looks like, it is “engagement with emotional literacy that is the critical element” (Headteacher A). With this in mind, what follows are three case studies from secondary schools at various stages in their work on developing emotional literacy and the journey to becoming emotionally literate organisations.

The schools are all very different in their characteristics; two of the organisations, school A and school B, have been working in the field for several years, whilst the third school, school C, is at an emergent stage in its work on emotional literacy.

Each case study school is considered under the following broad headings:

- context
- starting-points
- leading the approach to emotional literacy
- principles into practice – building emotional literacy capacity in staff
- principles into practice – building emotional literacy capacity in students
- principles into practice – student voice to build social capital and community
- reorganising the school to promote emotional literacy
- emotional literacy and the extended school
- barriers
- next steps

## **School A – context**

School A is an oversubscribed multicultural, inner city London school in one of the five most deprived boroughs in Britain, with 1,200 students on roll, an FSM figure of 51 per cent and 82 per cent of students with English as an additional language (with 44 languages in the school). Some 30 per cent of students are identified as having SEN under the Code of Practice, with 5 per cent of students with statements of special needs. Some 11 per cent of students are from refugee or asylum-seeking families. The school is resourced for the deaf and partially hearing and is exceptionally resourced for students with physical disabilities and autism. The school has been a specialist performing arts college since 2002. For three years, the A\*–C GCSE results stayed at 36 per cent, but in 2005, results improved to 47 per cent, with attendance for the autumn term of 2005 at 97 per cent. Its Ofsted inspection in February 2004 stated that school A was “a good school with some features of a very good school”. From 2005, the school has been designated by the DfES as a high performing school.

School A has a well-developed emotionally literate approach in that it demonstrates many of the core values in the matrix that represent an emotionally literate approach. It aims to promote a safe, open environment where all are valued and allowed to flourish and are also given time to reflect on what is happening in the organisation (Sunley, 2003). In the leadership and management of emotional literacy, the school states its commitment to a coherent strategy of developing interrelationships between organisational factors, communication and relationships, with a focus on student learning and achievement and professional development modelled through reflection and review; performance management; and coaching, mentoring and guidance.

## **Starting-points**

For school A, the starting-point in 2001 coincided with the loss of 35 per cent of the teaching staff, 20 per cent of support staff and an approach from a third party, Antidote (the organisation which campaigns for emotional literacy), which was looking to work with a school over a sustained period of three years on building emotional literacy capacity in secondary schools. As the headteacher explains, the reasons for embarking on this journey “were both personal and institutional and by both design and necessity” and “someone wanting to work over a sustained period as opposed to quick fix, and simply looking for quantifiable answers to quite complex issues was a very strong motivating element”.

Initially, there was no explicit communication to staff about the aim to build an emotionally literate school, as recruiting staff was the overwhelming priority. The school approach was “smaller scale, less whole-school oriented”, (headteacher) and started with beginning to understand the construct and how it could be applied. School A went for “an evolutionary model to get this [emotional literacy] into school then it grew organically in all sorts of ways... You have to let people feel, ‘hey this works, I would like to find out more about it’” (deputy headteacher).

The leadership team, with Antidote, worked together on the emotionally literate developments, but, although committed to it, emotional literacy was not written into the school development plan. Emotional literacy has developed in parallel with a clear and consistent focus on learning-centred leadership and an emphasis on effective pedagogy. Developing emotionally literate leadership was recognised as a vital area, but not in isolation, and these approaches need to be combined with other areas of leadership development for the greatest impact on standards and improvement.

## **Leading the approach in emotional literacy – the route to whole-school development**

The headteacher held clear, long-term objectives for establishing a whole-school framework on emotional literacy (Sunley, 2003, p.17).

### **First steps towards an emotional literacy whole-school policy**

At the outset, “we did talk a lot about teaching and learning... and basic relationships in an explicit language” (headteacher), although there was no explicit reference to emotional literacy. The headteacher suggested a reason for this – in the early days – was that he had “inadequately reflected on what it meant then for the institution and for the adults in the institution to be able to get anywhere near delivering that [emotional literacy] if they themselves were not sufficiently emotionally centred in their own emotional well-being. I could intellectually talk about it [emotional literacy] but I hadn’t integrated it into my everyday psyche and practice to enable me to make that writ so large that, every time I was talking to someone, I was engaged in that [emotional literacy]”.

During the first stages of the initiative, small, separate developments began to take place.

- Interventions facilitated by Antidote, where the school targeted groups that had been causing major concerns regarding unacceptable behaviour and worked on emotionally literate ways to promote positive collaborative group working.
- An emotional literacy strategy staff group was formed from interested staff and they began working with Antidote.
- An enthused member of staff identified a particular need for his tutor group and “developed his own unit of work based on emotional literacy, which has now gone out for the whole year group to use” after training the tutors (assistant headteacher).

The project gathered momentum in the second year and “began making a direct contribution to the school culture and ethos which values participation, shared leadership, respect and the student voice” (Sunley, 2003, p.12). By 2003, the school development plan made specific reference to emotional literacy development combined with a clear and consistent focus on effective pedagogy, instead of separate developments in learning and emotional health.

### **Emotional literacy and learning**

We began, in Year 3, to make the link more explicitly between emotional development and learning (headteacher).

The school embarked on pilot work using the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI, University of Bristol, 2002) with the support of Antidote. The results demonstrated development of students in their learning outcomes at an affective level as well as at a cognitive level and helped students to reflect and think about themselves as learners.

### **Emotional literacy and funding**

Work continued to develop across the ELLI project with the involvement of the humanities and English faculties, but the school struggled to fund further developments. However, existing whole-school emotional literacy developments were able to continue as the school gained funding from the DfES for April 2004–2005.

## Emotional literacy development – a whole-school development – the picture now

We have tried to achieve coherence between six different elements that... make up a whole-school emotional literacy strategy (headteacher).

We talk about emotionally literate learners who can understand how they feel about learning and have resilience (assistant headteacher).

Today, the school is explicit about its commitment to emotional literacy combined with a focus on pedagogy under one strategic umbrella to encourage greater awareness amongst staff and students. (See Diagram 2 below). The school has clear expectations about the commitment of its leaders to extend distributed leadership, their own emotionally centred leadership and to reflect on their own professional and personal emotional centeredness within a strategic approach. Two other stated key aims are to diffuse leadership and increase student participation.

Staff are expected to commit to the development of the whole child, as well as being effective teachers who are prepared to reflect and engage in enquiry with young people, model adult learning and share that with the children. The school concentrates on building high expectations that “despite the cultural, environmental and family differences, you should not have to lower your expectations of what kids can achieve; that should be the same wherever you are” (teacher involved in EL strategies group, Sunley, 2003, p.3).

## Emotional literacy development – a leadership perspective

[The headteacher’s] explicit and implicit support of initiatives associated with emotional literacy validate this area of the curriculum for the staff and students. Approval and endorsement for the work by the leadership team has empowered teachers to really engage (Sunley, 2003, p.16).

The commitment of the leadership team to strengthening relationships and encouraging reflection across the school has promoted progress in developing emotional literacy capacity (Sunley 2003). The headteacher states that “the role of the leader is to show fallibility and model outwardly reflective learning” and adds that leaders need to be prepared to encourage open feedback, listen deeply, respond honestly and resist the pressure to find all the answers.

The vision of distributed leadership held by the headteacher and his view that all are leaders of learning, across the organisation, is well known. “He is the lynchpin... He believes it should be leadership from the middle, well leadership everywhere. We have to take that equal role, middle managers, directors of study, heads of faculty... and even within the faculty. He [the headteacher] is always trying to encourage people to take on things like KS3, gifted and talented...and then, of course the students... the student council, the senior students and peer mentors” (assistant headteacher).

## Developing emotional literacy – key learning points from a leadership perspective

- **Space and time.** One of the key things that the school has learnt during its involvement in emotional literacy development is to give space and time. Overpressurising people in the first two years led to some resentment and less engagement. As the head explained: “We have learned that if we slow down the pace of change, take some intensity out of it, deepen our reflection and understanding and ways to move forward, slow down the time we spend planning and create more opportunities for staff to talk to one another and empower those at different levels, then we will move faster. In there is the paradox: we move faster because we are spending more time reflecting before we act” (headteacher).
- **Role of critical friends.** In working to develop the emotionally literate school and emotional literacy, Antidote was able to offer “a learning framework and a language that encouraged emotional development as more than just behaviour management” (Sunley, 2003, p.12).

Antidote has helped the school to find routes through the small-scale developments that have been bought into a coherent approach and, as the headteacher explains: “Our collaboration over the last four years with Antidote has focused on putting relationships at the heart of everything we do.”

### **Monitoring developments**

The school has engaged in both internal and external evaluation to assess the impact of its emotional literacy initiatives. At the outset, a year group and the whole staff were asked to engage in an online audit, which focused on elements of the school in the areas of communication, organisation and relationships. This was used to inform the leadership about what it felt like to be part of the school community. The audit suggested work was needed on improving communications, relationships and the organisation of the school. A further audit was planned for autumn 2005 to assess the impact of the work over the time of the project. (The audit tool used was SEELs – see Appendix 3).

Internally, regular reviews and reports have been prepared and presented to staff and the leadership team, and also independent evaluators from university have conducted and published their own evaluation of the developments.

### **Principles into practice – building emotional literacy capacity in staff**

#### **Staff well-being**

The school recognised that “you cannot ask adults to talk about emotional maturity with students without offering opportunities for them to explore it themselves in smaller groups or collectively” (headteacher A). One of the key functions of the staff group was to provide opportunities where people could express things about their own learning and teaching. This emphasis on collaborative teamwork “is about helping people to support each other in teams” (deputy headteacher). Over time, it was possible to observe changes in culture as a result of this. “Staff conversations began to change; they [the staff] felt able to challenge their own understanding of emotional well-being in an increasingly safe environment” (Sunley, 2003, p.13).

#### **Increasing staff emotional literacy capacity by distributed leadership and coaching**

I think, in a sense, we have always worked with the right people... the interested people. We have done the classic ‘you start there and then move out’, but, in truth, staff saw the sense in the arguments being put forward... so teachers were quite inquisitive about that (deputy headteacher).

We got a volunteer group to begin with... and then they were inspired and carried on (assistant headteacher).

- Building capacity in staff began with the emotional literacy staff group, which was provided with opportunities to engage in dialogue about the emotions of learning, student attitudes to learning, reflect on the message from leadership and consider the constraints. The group self-directed its work and decided to concentrate on both cognitive and affective approaches in the classroom. This work helped teachers to move from the teacher paradigm to learner paradigm and engage in developing learning to learn approaches.
- Staff who had been working on emotional literacy developments shared their expertise with other staff through dedicated professional learning time and have taken the lead in disseminating their work throughout the school. “I think it is a more powerful tool” [than using leadership team members and] “is something the head is very hot on. Leadership right the way through, underpinning the substructure” (assistant headteacher).



- The school has developed an in-house model for professional learning to promote emotional literacy, by structuring time into teachers' timetables, whilst at the same time expecting a higher accountability for sharing their practice, coaching other staff and running school conferences throughout the school day.

### **Increasing staff opportunities for reflection**

Its [emotional literacy] impact has been most directly to allow a good cross-section of staff to reflect on their practice and to reflect on their own emotional well-being" (headteacher). Staff have been able to reflect deeply and look at their practice and this has resulted in the offering of a range of creative strategies for engaging students more effectively. "I started teaching in 1980 so this ELLI model makes you rethink your whole outlook on teaching and kids and you really have to keep reviewing yourself. I really reflected on my own practice (assistant headteacher).

### **Principles into practice – increasing student emotional literacy**

For the student body, explicit emotional literacy capacity is delivered in a variety of ways.

Expressive arts is used as a vehicle to build a sense of community and mutual learning in tutor groups based on the success of in-house developed PSHE work, which is built around fantasy and role play.

- Work in humanities and English, co-led by the heads of faculty, is focused on using the ELLI framework to introduce students to the dimensions of learning, which considers the affective and cognitive aspects of learning and encourages staff and students to reflect on their learning and develop the skills of emotionally literate and independent learners. Work in this area has helped embed emotional literacy into the learning. "ELLI work led by English and humanities has been quite interesting in that we thought it would be the hardest nut to crack. Getting it into the learning is actually the bit that has been embedded" (deputy headteacher).
- It has had the added benefit with staff, as explained by the humanities head of faculty: "Since running staff professional learning activities, I have noticed teachers talking about their own teaching and how students learn – becoming reflective. There was dialogue about learning and incorporating these approaches with other year groups to the extent that staff talk about 'ELLI lessons'" (head of department).
- Philosophy for children is being used with Year 7 and Year 10 tutor groups. Philosophy for children uses dialogue as a way of teaching students to think, question and interact in an emotionally literate way. "I did philosophy for children – do it! I think it is wonderful, absolutely wonderful. I trained Y10 and Y7 tutors... I asked students what they thought of it and they said they thought it was great...and really interesting" (assistant headteacher).

## **Principles into practice – student voice to build social capital and community**

Emotional literacy work has “helped us to put student voice fairly centrally in the life of the school” (headteacher)

### **Students involved in decision-making**

As part of the school’s commitment to student participation, the school has active year forums with representatives from each tutor group. Initially, work with the student council was developmental and explored collaborative group working. Now, members of the school council take part in decision-making; for example, they are trained in interviewing staff and take part in staff recruitment processes and parent evening responsibilities.

### **Students as lead learners and modelling appropriate behaviour**

Senior students create opportunities for younger students by running clubs during lunch-times. Senior students are also expected to take responsibility and carry out duties such as lunch-time queue management and library duties. “Senior students are getting more effective. I’ve observed situations where they are often more effective than staff in dealing with conflict” (teacher involved in EL strategies group, Sunley, 2003, p.7). Students also support the organisation and management of student learning days and support days. “They [senior students] are our window on the world... always showing parents around on open days. They do freshers’ fair and parent evenings” (assistant headteacher).

### **Students as mentors**

Peer mentor programmes have been specifically developed to support students through transition and SATs. The peer mentors work with the directors of study and tutors to identify students in need of support. Peer mentoring helps to promote the development of high quality relationships. The peer support is evaluated every year for both mentees and mentors and has prompted comments like “I feel really proud”, “I have succeeded”, and “I understand more about people now.” “So this [peer mentoring] has really been a success and I would advocate it” (assistant headteacher).

### **Students as researchers**

Students have had the opportunity to work with a local university and three other schools on aspects of cultural and racial harmony as a further commitment to widening student participation. This has engaged them in reflection and research about learning communities and, after visiting the USA, students were involved in writing the report. As a result of this work the “students were enriched and empowered and it reinforced in students that the school wants to listen to what they have to say” (headteacher).

## **Reorganising the school to promote emotional literacy**

If you have distributed leadership with a focus on learning and self-learning for the leaders, then you have got to be dealing with systems, structures and relationships and all those characteristics that reflect emotional literacy. You can’t have an emotionally literate school unless you build it into the way you operate (headteacher).

If the structures do not lend themselves to developing emotional literacy strategies, then structures and the organisation have to change. As part of the school’s explicit relationship agenda, the school reorganised the curriculum groupings at KS3 so students were taught by a small number of teachers to enable stronger relationships to develop.

## Emotional literacy and the extended school

Under the extended school development, the school has access to a wide range of non-teaching professionals on site, which include learning mentors, a home family liaison officer, refugee co-ordinator and resident education welfare officer (EWO) to support the work of the school and develop positive relationships with parents. “In terms of parents coming to a place they already know again and again, the school actually reaps the rewards in terms of the learning” (deputy headteacher). The school has also strengthened links with parents by creating more opportunities for them to visit the school, through regular review days, to discuss their child’s progress.

## Barriers

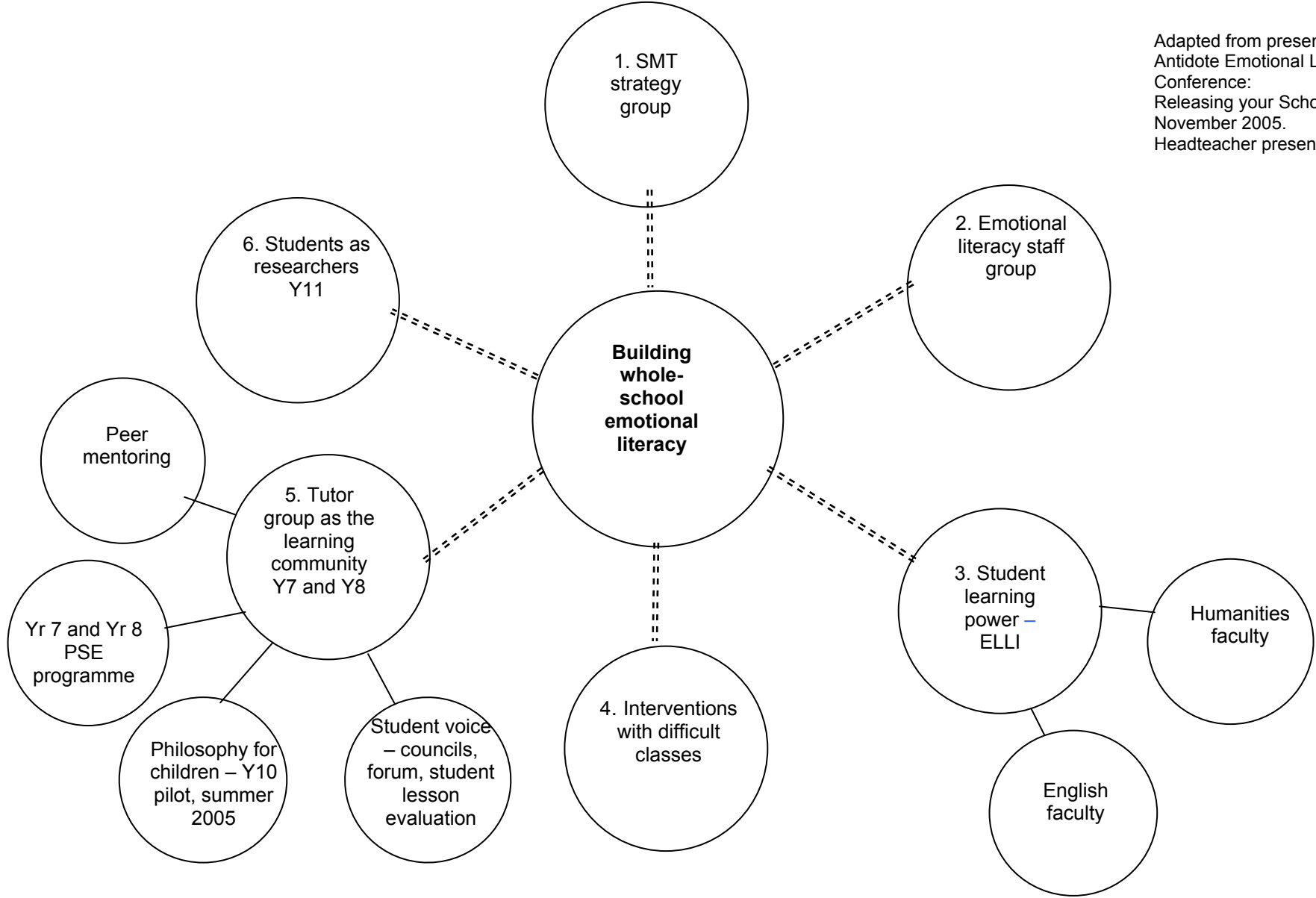
The key barriers the school faces are:

- **Funding.** “We want to carry on with our work with Antidote, but the funding has come to an end” (headteacher A). “ELLI work is key really, and had we got some money we would have moved it out to creative arts and science this year” (deputy headteacher).
- **Content delivery versus educating the whole child.** The amount of curriculum content that is required to be delivered currently does not give the necessary space to focus on the whole child that is at the heart of the Every Child Matters agenda. As the headteacher explains: “To build relationships and understand the totality of the whole child... it cannot be done on the back of such an intense, organised curriculum that we have been asked to deal with over the last three years.”

## Next steps

The school wishes to continue with its emphasis on distributed leadership, focus on teaching and learning with an emphasis on emotional literacy, using the ELLI framework. In addition, the school wants to focus on student self-reflection, student empowerment and student evaluation. “I have been tasked with extending student voice into the classroom, as well as through the council, so students will evaluate units of work” (assistant headteacher).

**Diagram 2: The evolved model for building whole-school emotional literacy at school A – the six elements and associated emotional literacy developments**



Adapted from presentation notes:  
 Antidote Emotional Literacy  
 Conference:  
 Releasing your School's potential  
 November 2005.  
 Headteacher presentation

## **School B – context**

School B is a highly oversubscribed multi-faith, inner city 11–18 school with 1,285 NOR, with 13 per cent FSM and 30 per cent of students from different ethnic backgrounds. The school moved to comprehensive status in 2000, prior to which it was a selective grammar school. The school is a specialist performing arts college and has been working towards becoming an emotionally literate organisation since 2000 – initially with Antidote. It makes explicit commitment to emotional literacy development in its school development plan.

School B set out a statement to find new ways of working to raise standards and to build a distinctive ethos for its school community around “courtesy, honesty, tolerance and calm”. The school was recognised for its achievements in developing the emotional dimension when it became the Teaching Awards regional winner for the *Healthy Schools Award* in 2005. Since engaging in this work, the number of students achieving five or more A\*–C passes at GCSE has risen from 63 per cent to 78 per cent in the five years since 2000. Overall attendance is 94 per cent, representing an increase of 5 per cent over the same timeframe.

## **Starting-points**

The school has changed from a being a grammar school; the current Year 11 are our first non-selective intake, so we have had a change in culture and school community (headteacher).

At [school B], we stress the importance of feeling as a counter to the fear that schools may become too rational, too instrumental, full of accountability – efficient rather than effective (headteacher at Emotional Literacy Conference, 2002).

The school, initially as a result of its changed status, did a significant amount of work on ethos and vision and stated publicly that it would be successful if it listened to the staff, student and parent voice and acted on it. The school made explicit reference to developing the emotional literacy capacity of both staff and students, along with a commitment to develop more positive relationships across the school at every level in an effort to raise standards.

Another starting-point for school B was recognising that for distressed students, their emotions made it impossible for them to access the curriculum and therefore they were unavailable to learn. The school recognised the need to build capacity to support these young people and help them feel safe, confident and have the opportunity to be listened to and helped to reaccess the taught programme. In essence, to provide them with emotional security and develop their emotional literacy.

## **Leading the whole-school approach to emotional literacy**

A clear vision with explicit expectations was communicated to staff at the start of the whole-school initiative. The headteacher “talked about the ethos of the school we were trying to create and how the ethos would affect the standards. We did work with the staff about the way we were going to work... the type of language we were going to use... so we weren’t going to do shouting... It was written into job descriptions that everyone was entitled to mutual respect... and to work in an inner city school, we have to skill ourselves up to work with young people.” Through established systems, staff were engaged in dialogue about emotional literacy in relation to the school improvement plan. Questions arose, such as “are we committed to this [creating an emotionally literate organisation], do we believe in this, is this going to make a difference, what does it feel like, and how can we support each other” (headteacher).

## **Reinforcing relationships**

School B recognised that to focus on relationships to improve results meant ensuring that relationships at every level (leader–staff, staff–staff, staff–student and student–student) are characterised by respect, interest and trust, and the school has done much to develop positive relationships. There is a continual reinforcement of this aspect by the headteacher who states: “I often talk to staff about using every opportunity to build relationships with students, particularly the most challenging and difficult. So that is in the dinner queue, out on the field, when you are doing your duty... use every opportunity to generate and build relationships and aspirations.”

## **Monitoring health of relationships by staff – listening to the staff voice**

Staff and governors complete a half-termly audit to rate their relationships with the students; with their subject leader; their year head; the admin support team; the site team; and the leadership team. Subsequent analysis of the data is published and communicated to staff to demonstrate the value the school places on maintaining high quality relationships. The leadership team uses the feedback to assess the quality of relationships, to assess how well supported colleagues feel and to identify areas for future development.

## **Principles into practice – building emotional literacy capacity in staff**

Work started from the premise that if staff feel valued and supported by being listened to, then they in turn will listen more attentively to students and develop positive relationships.

## **Staff well-being**

Research evidence (HAD, 2004) suggests that teachers are highly affected by troublesome students and may need to have emotional and practical help. School B acknowledged that staff may need to access personal support to be able to work in emotionally literate ways with students and implemented a practical strategy for staff by “setting up an off-site confidential counselling service for staff and developing a menu for staff to access, such as secondments and sabbaticals, careers guidance and an entitlement to counselling support... It was about just saying that you are going to work here; you have got to take your own personal well-being seriously and look after yourself so that you can look after the children” (headteacher, school B).

The student and family support co-ordinator also made reference to the “staff health and well-being programme, which has been running for the last five years”, which recognises the staff’s stress and their needs and goes on to say that “if they [the staff] are not feeling good in themselves, then obviously they are not going to be any good to the students”.

## **Increasing staff emotional literacy capacity by distributed leadership**

At the beginning of the work to develop emotional literacy, several strategies were used to “drip, drip, drip... get the optimistic on board first... then challenge the next level” to reinforce the developments:

- A group of interested and committed staff were used to spearhead the development. These were generally from the care and guidance team and included the year heads.
- The year heads were given equal status as the curriculum leaders and were able to lead, challenge and help develop emotionally literate approaches across the curriculum teams. “When colleagues of a similar level are able to challenge one another, it is much more powerful” (headteacher).

- External professional learning for the whole staff body was provided by external agencies and the authority, although the approaches were discussed with the school prior to implementation to ensure the training was in line with the school's philosophy to ensure coherency and consistency. The areas covered comprised emotional aspects of learning, developing emotional literacy approaches, the impact of childhood experiences on children and how children learn.

Part of the focus of the staff training was aimed at looking past the behaviour itself and understanding the underlying emotional, social and contextual causes of the behaviour; not work on the behaviour alone and punish it. A major impact of working with staff on emotional literacy has resulted in them having a greater ability to address behaviour issues in emotionally competent ways. "Difficult and challenging behaviour is understood by the staff... as a way of communication rather than as the students being difficult because they choose to be, and how that behaviour is responded to within the school as something that the child is communicating and might need supporting with" (co-ordinator).

### **Principles into practice – increasing student emotional literacy capacity**

For the student body, explicit emotional literacy capacity-building is delivered in a variety of ways.

- Dedicated health and social care teams have developed the PSHE programme, which has specific units to develop emotional literacy, together with trained learning tutors for consistent delivery through the tutorial time.
- The visual and performing arts help to ensure that feeling and thought, and emotion and logic become partners in curriculum provision. As a performing arts specialist school, the school took the stance that performing arts should be an equal player alongside maths, English and science.

Performing arts is a way of inspiring and enabling children to have a voice, a platform to perform, increasing self-esteem – the affective curriculum as well as the national curriculum... to encourage participation, recognition and success (headteacher).

### **Principles into practice – student voice to build social capital and community**

#### **Students as part of the decision-making process**

The student council is very instrumental; they are consulted and involved in major decision-making that goes on (co-ordinator).

The student council is about sharing "what we are trying to do and responding... in an attempt to create a calm and more purposefully engaged student body" (headteacher).

As part of the school's commitment to listening to its students and getting them involved in open dialogue and decision-making, there is a very active student council of around 70 delegates divided into subgroups. The subgroups, or action teams, with representation from all year groups, are chaired by post-16 students and supported by a member of staff. Action groups are encouraged to raise issues and develop solutions that are implemented. An example of this work is "the [school B] student communication system... The students designed for themselves their own communication card, with action to be taken/no action/praise needed" (headteacher).

#### **Students as lead learners**

Post-16 students are used to support the learning of younger students. The scheme helps to promote the sense of community and responsibility for the post-16 students and has helped to strengthen student relationships across age boundaries. Post-16 students are paid for their work

but have the responsibility to liaise with the curriculum area to devise a programme of study and to lead the learning with the younger students in after-school time.

### **Monitoring health of relationships by students**

Student interviews involving students from each year group are completed regularly with questions about relationships with their tutor, year head, class teachers and other students; about the school; how safe they feel, how they work with others; and what things would make a difference. The resulting analysis is used to create an action plan, which is taken back to the students and used to resolve issues identified by students.

### **Reorganising the school to promote emotional literacy**

#### **Creating appropriate structures to support students**

Early on, the school recognised that efforts to support students with learning difficulties were being hampered by the demands made on the SEN team to deal with EBD students within the single SEN department. In response, the school reorganised its provision and created two separate teams with their own accommodation: the learning support team and a new student and family support team. A clear division, with well-defined roles and responsibilities, was made between learning needs and support for emotional, behaviour and social needs.

#### **Creating appropriate teams to support students**

The learning support co-ordinator and team focus on programmes to support students with learning difficulties: literacy, numeracy, differentiation and support for curriculum teams, whereas the student and family support team supports students with emotional and behaviour difficulties.

Before, there was just a huge classroom where people were trying to do one-to-one work with a dyslexic child and then suddenly someone walked in needing time out and was angry and disrupted, so there was a real need (co-ordinator).

Regular meetings and close collaboration between the teams ensures that students receive the most appropriate provision. A further increase in provision, a dedicated inclusion centre, is currently being piloted to offer a different style of provision that will re-engage students in learning and address issues of poor attendance or reintegration post fixed-term exclusion.

#### **Interventions to support students and help develop emotional literacy**

- An established student counselling service is offered to students.
- Students can access learning mentors for short-term interventions on referral.
- Students can access art therapy for short-term interventions on referral.



## **Accessing specialists to develop emotional literacy – a ‘just in time’ model**

A further reason for creating the student and family support team was to co-ordinate the work of a growing number of specialists who were working within the school to support students and address needs as and when they arose. Faced with increasing frustration about being unable to access specialist support from external agencies for students and their families in a timely fashion, the school decided to commission the work itself. “If we are going to be successful and do this properly, we need to build capacity internally to do it” (headteacher). As a result, the school now employs specialists, including an art counsellor, clinical child physiologist, art therapist, learning mentors and student receptionists on annualised hours whose work is co-ordinated by the student and family support co-ordinator.

## **Emotional literacy and the extended school**

The school has been a forerunner of the extended school notion in its work on emotional literacy. As the student and family support co-ordinator explains: “We have tried to see a student in crisis as a representative of a family that may be in crisis, so extending out and seeing the school as a central hub of the community, and extending the support and work with parents.” Working with the families, using proactive interventions to address issues with the child and family involvement and with a dedicated known school contact has helped to reduce parents’ anxieties and improve relationships between parents and the school. An advantage of centralising services has been to reduce the number of missed appointments. Parents feel supported and are more likely to attend the school than an impersonal office elsewhere, while the student and family support co-ordinator is crucial to the process of co-ordinating interventions and contact between home and school. “[The student and family support co-ordinator] is there to meet and greet. She is the known face and the relationship is much improved [between the parent and the school]” (headteacher).

In each year group, the school has set up a parent interest support group which meets regularly and contributes to the school’s development through dialogue.

## **Barriers**

The school has been creative in accessing funding to support its emotional literacy development and has used funding from EIC, LIG and specialist school funds. Future funding, if these initiatives cease, may prevent further development of the emotional dimension at school B and could result in a contraction of some of the areas of provision.

The school is oversubscribed by over 250 students compared with its net capacity. Accommodation and facilities management at the site are very difficult. This is why “tolerance and calmness is very important around the site. There really isn’t enough room for the students” (headteacher).

The student and family co-ordinator has identified a need to promote emotional literacy developments at the start of Year 7, but noted that “it is difficult to find the time or the money to get a flexible pattern into the timetable,” so “there needs to be a change in the curriculum because of the lack of flexibility” to facilitate these further developments.

## **Other related work**

During the visit, I was able to meet with students, and the following comments provide some insight into their view of school B.

- “Other students do not disturb you in lessons.”
- “There’s always someone to tell.”
- “You can talk about how you feel.”
- “Teachers encourage us to express our feelings.”
- “Teachers treat you different, they don’t patronise you.”
- “You can get problems off your chest.”
- “The school is perfect.”

## **Next steps**

Owing to the promotion of the current headteacher, school B will have a change of leadership in the next academic year. It is therefore difficult to gauge what the next steps will be. Two key areas highlighted are the need to look at appropriate options for students and alternative provision at KS4 and the further development of the inclusion centre.

## **School C – context**

School C has almost 2,000 students aged between 11 and 18. The school shares a greenfield site with a partner primary school and a newly opened special school. The school serves a large catchment area of 186 square miles, which encompasses a market town and a wide range of small communities in a discrete geographical area in the East Midlands. The intake is fully comprehensive and largely white. The ethnicity measure is 5 per cent, with 5 per cent FSM, 9 per cent on the Code of Practice and with 3 per cent of students having a statement of special educational needs. The school is a third-phase specialist technology college and has been operating as a training school since September 2004. The school is unusual in that it combines a former 11–14 high school and a 14–19 upper school which amalgamated in 1999. The school limits intake at Key Stage 3 (KS3), in a discrete centre, to 100 in each year group. KS4 students then join the school in Y10 from three partner high schools in addition to those who move from the school's KS3 centre. The school currently has 1,120 students at KS4 and a sixth form of 520 students. The school is in the emergent stages of its work on emotional literacy developments.

## **Starting-points**

With the arrival of a new head in January 2004 a full review of the school was undertaken involving the whole staff. The review identified the school's many strengths but also some key interrelated areas that required development. The headteacher states: "When I came here, somebody said to me that some students here become physically, emotionally or intellectually lost, so therefore it seemed a high priority to create a sense of smaller communities."

There was concern that KS4 results had remained static over the previous three years against an improving national picture, although KS3 and five standards were good. A related area of concern was the quality of relationships and behaviour across the school. As the headteacher recounts, he witnessed incidents and an ethos on the upper school campus that pointed to a need to strengthen relationships across the organisation. And there was a sense that "unless we [the school] improved relationships at every level, nothing would really change." In addition, "one thing the school needs is to be more open in our communication, staff to staff, students to students, staff to students" (co-ordinator).

"Given that raising attainment is inextricably linked to effective tutoring and the emotional well-being of each student" and "there was a need to foster more of a sense of identity and community and to help secure more positive relationships" (Lee and Williams, 2005, p.45), organisational change at KS4 was seen as critical to create the conditions for effective learning. In parallel to this, to help develop better relationships that support learning, a further area of work was to engage a staff development focus group in exploring emotional literacy and the development of the emotionally literate school, as well as other development themes focusing on curriculum issues such as lesson design and pedagogy.

## **Emotional literacy – a leadership perspective**

Leaders have key roles in developing and sustaining relationships and being able to reflect, being able to understand... As a leader, unless you model the attention to relationships and feelings within your team, it won't happen across other teams (headteacher C).

In terms of leadership the school is focusing on the key responsibility of leaders to develop and sustain relationships. Promoting a model where the leadership group reflect together on how they use emotionally literate approaches in their own team, the headteacher believes, helps to build capacity within the leadership team. In turn, this enables the leadership team to replicate the model in its work with other teams and develop further capacity across the school. All staff within teams have completed a relationship 'health check' and analysed feedback has been used as a basis for dialogue and change. This approach highlights the importance that the school places on the development of healthy relationships and the accountability that leaders have for this area.

## **Principles into practice – building emotional literacy capacity in staff**

### **Rationale**

This initiative focuses on developing emotional literacy to support the creation of conditions for effective learning, providing opportunities for students and staff to build capacity in emotional literacy, fostering more positive relationships at all levels, building a culture of reward and, by doing so, positively impact upon attainment. Although developing the emotionally literate school and creating opportunities to develop emotional literacy feature in the school development plan, the approach adopted for implementation has been low key. This decision was taken by the co-leaders at the outset of the work as the best way to proceed so that the ideas grew from grass roots and was not greeted during the launch “as just another one of those initiatives... I do think in teaching there is a sense it’s just another thing to do on top of every thing else” (co-leader for the Emotionally Secure School project).

### **Increasing staff emotional literacy by professional learning**

To create the culture, you have to develop the language and the understanding (headteacher C).

As with any development, getting the interested and enthusiastic on the focus group to spearhead the development was the first aim. A professional learning activity, run by Professor John West-Burnham, was advertised to all staff. From this stimulus activity, staff, including support staff (an important dimension to ensure a clear message that this was a whole-school staff issue) volunteered to take part in the school-based work. Several professional learning sessions were held during the summer term where the group explored and reflected on the concepts of emotional literacy, the language of emotional literacy, the characteristics of emotionally literate organisations and the importance of modelling behaviours.

In addition, further external professional learning was bought in to give the group access to skills-based training for themselves on successful learning and the role and management of emotions in creating successful learning activities. Attending to the group’s professional learning was a valuable strategy. When asked about the best things so far, group members stated:

- “working with a very committed group of colleagues that will make a difference”
- “collaborative working”
- “being properly invested in terms of my own learning”
- “strategies that can be used in and out of the classroom”
- “brain science and learning styles”

### **Increasing staff emotional literacy by distributed leadership**

The group self-directed the next stage of the developments, determining for themselves the areas of work and choosing who to work with. Additional time was allocated for each subgroup to meet and action-plan their work; budgets were allocated to each team and implementation began in the last academic year. The group continues to meet together approximately every month to review progress, share practice and reflect collaboratively.

The areas of work of each focus subgroup are:

- Developing the emotionally literate hall (each hall is a vertical group of approximately 300 Year 10 and Year 11 students) – active strategies to promote identity and belonging.
- Establishing peer support at KS4 by involving students and additional volunteer staff.

- Using the arts and drama curriculum to promote emotional literacy.
- Intervention – the use of role-play to impact challenging behaviour with targeted students.
- COGS (Communication Opportunity Group Scheme) – “We need to learn through talk.” Project development linked to a local university, based on developing personal, social and academic success through developing communication skills for staff, students and parents.
- Promoting emotional literacy with Year 7 SEN involves students evaluating their own learning and a focus on self-esteem and reward ethos, with an emphasis on relationship-building.
- Professional learning with staff particularly targeting newly qualified staff and providing practical ways of using emotional literacy in the classroom.
- Developing PSHE KS4 work units to provide the language and skills for emotional literacy.

The group continues to be supported in its activities by Professor John West-Burnham, who brings objectivity and reflection opportunities and supports the group’s professional development.

### **Reorganising the school to promote emotional literacy**

If you are going to develop emotionally literate ways and forms of leadership you have to provide the structures that will allow things to go forward. Structures will achieve nothing, but structures alongside understanding will work together (headteacher C).

School C ...seeks to create conditions for effective learning through forming small communities within a large organisation where students are valued, known and have a sense of belonging and pride (School mission statement, 2004).

### **Rationale**

To each new intake in Year 10 from the local high schools and to a lesser extent, the school’s own KS3 students, School C upper school appeared big and anonymous. In addition, although there was evidence to suggest that the system met the needs of the motivated and self-disciplined students, it was not providing enough support for those who needed more structure and guidance.

### **Analysis-enhancing structure for promoting effective emotional literacy**

Initial work by members of the leadership team began to explore possible structures at KS4. There was an analysis of the successful organisational and leadership structure at KS3, which occupied a discrete area of the school. KS3 was a recently established learning community led by an assistant head, with year groups led by learning co-ordinators. The learning co-ordinators successfully brought together traditional pastoral and academic roles for their year groups. They worked with teams of tutors and developed the role of the academic tutor, implemented a programme of learning how to learn, and placed great emphasis on positive relationship-building facilitated by a dedicated tutorial in addition to registration activities. Students in KS3 identified with the ‘[KS3] Centre’.

### **Hindering structure for promoting effective emotional literacy**

In contrast, the KS4 structure consisted of two very large year groups (approx 560 students) led by a single head of year, who was supported by two lead tutors and led by an assistant head of KS4. For the head of year, leading and managing a large tutor team of 26 was a difficult challenge. Tutors did not have a regular dedicated weekly tutorial each week and relied on the daily registration to forge relationships and identity. Clearly, the organisational and leadership structure

at KS4 was not fit for purpose, resulting in inadequate support for some students and effective leadership and teamwork being compromised.

### **A re-engineered structure at KS4**

Based on this analysis, the organisational structure was re-engineered to create four smaller learning communities (or halls created by grouping pairs of curriculum areas together) with equal numbers of Year 10 and Year 11 tutor groups in each hall, based on the successful KS3 model. The guiding principles for establishing the halls were that they provided a clear focus on learning to create a stronger sense of community. The hall system was seen as a beginning to the work on developing an emotionally literate school which promoted a strong sense of identity, belonging and ownership. In addition, leadership capacity at KS4 was enhanced and had a clear focus on learning development and student progress.

### **Increasing leadership capacity**

Increased leadership capacity across KS4 was achieved by establishing a director of learning and head of hall as co-leaders for each hall learning community, co-leading seven Year 10 and seven Year 11 tutor groups. This facilitated more cohesive team work. The hall leaders are able to get to know students through the vertical arrangement of tutor groups. Changes to the school timetable created a dedicated weekly session for tutors for academic monitoring and tutor group. Halls are now seen as discrete units in KS4.

### **Professional learning to enhance understanding of emotional literacy**

For the successful implementation of the above model, professional learning was undertaken by the newly created hall leadership post-holders to ensure they developed a clear understanding of their roles, to work together on establishing the team ethos and high expectations, and to develop strategies for building and sustaining hall identity and forging positive relationships. They, in turn, met with their hall tutor teams prior to implementation to promote team identity and to develop an academic tutoring model. They continue to meet on a rolling programme every four weeks to reinforce and develop practice. The hall leadership teams had explicit responsibility to lead this initiative. By adopting this high-trust approach and distributing leadership the school reinforced its commitment to developing emotionally literate ways of working.

### **Barriers**

The work of the focus groups was financed from funding provided by the LEA, with a small amount coming from the school budget. Funding for the continuation of this development for the future is not guaranteed: the LEA funding was for one year only and the school is experiencing budgetary issues. Although the school is committed to making these essential changes to its ethos, there is a potential barrier to continued development if further funding is not made available.

### **Co-leadership models**

The school appoints co-leaders to drive development forward in an effort to encourage a greater distribution of leadership activities and to help less-experienced leaders to develop their skills in a collaborative working partnership. It also helps with coherency when staff leave, retains a knowledge pool of expertise and ensures initiatives do not stall.

### **Next steps**

The hall system has shown considerable benefits, largely due to the energy and commitment of the hall leadership teams. Student perceptions have changed; there is a sense of belonging to a hall, while each hall student council is active and helping to develop student voice. The hall system is still in a formative stage, but the school is considering using students to lead a range of clubs and

activities in their hall and is arranging tutor groups vertically across Year 10 and Year 11 and by students' interests within particular halls.

The emotional literacy group has begun to drip-feed its activities out to staff and has showcased its work to other staff and run professional learning activities for other staff groups. Further dissemination is planned through additional showcasing to show impact to the whole staff at a whole-school launch being planned for the next academic year. Comments would suggest that there has been an impact even within the timeframe. As a couple of examples: "I think that some of the actions that staff are now taking suggest things have changed... The peer mentoring systems now emerging are built on principles of emotional intelligence and dialogue" (headteacher). [Work with the Year 7 group] "has made a real difference to how students feel about themselves – much more positive" (co-ordinator).

## Key messages for developing emotional literacy and the emotionally literate school

Using both case study evidence and research literature, several key messages emerge for developing emotionally literate schools and emotional literacy. These include:

- knowing thyself
- vision and high expectations
- relationships for learning
- modelling at all levels
  - leader
  - adult
  - student
- distributed leadership
  - learning-centred leadership
- dialogue
- staff voice
  - emotional needs
  - professional learning
- student voice
- monitoring

### Starts with knowing thyself – the intrapersonal

The leader's mood and behaviours drive the moods and behaviours of everyone else. A cranky and ruthless boss creates a toxic organisation filled with negative underachievers who ignore opportunities: an inspirational, inclusive leader spawns acolytes for whom any challenge is surmountable (Goleman, 2001, quoted in Williams, 2002, p.4).

There is a prerequisite that to develop emotionally literate organisations, first and foremost, leaders need to be emotionally literate themselves and lead in an emotionally literate way. Without personally possessing high levels of emotional literacy, it is unlikely that emotionally centred leadership can occur. If we accept that school leadership is “inherently and inescapably emotional” and that “emotions are not optional” (Beatty, 2005, p.122), then school leaders need to be emotionally intelligent about their emotions, to know and manage themselves – to possess a high level of intrapersonal skills. This is in addition to well-developed interpersonal skills.

### Vision and high expectations

It is clear from the case study schools and literature that leadership by the headteacher is fundamental to the development of the emotionally literate school. Clear expectations that reflect the vision, values and belief that emotional literacy is a central issue, and needs to permeate every aspect of school life and learning, are articulated and continually reinforced through words and actions.

In each case study school, challenge and high expectations of all in terms of behaviour, attitude and learning is evident, with an emphasis on recognition and reward, and operating within a clearly communicated framework of secure boundaries and rules. References are also explicitly made to how work in emotional literacy, with its emphasis on relationships, can impact upon the standards agenda and a commitment to educating the whole child.

My mission this year has been around creating a safe learning community (headteacher B).

The success of emotional literacy developments at school A, where “the headteacher is visionary with a strong personality and conviction who, through his endorsement of the work, gave staff



permission to relax their target-driven focus and validate the more intangible elements of school life” (Park, 2005, p.3).

### **Relationships for learning**

West-Burnham (2001) observes that: “Good relationships without focus on the core business of teaching and learning will achieve little. A determined emphasis on pedagogy is unlikely to succeed without quality relationships” (West-Burnham, 2001, quoted in Williams, 2002, p.16).

In all case study schools, emphasis is placed on the need to build high quality relationships but in association with a focus on teaching and learning for impact on learning outcomes. In one case study school, staff are encouraged to use every interaction in and out of the classroom as a chance to build positive social relationships and emphasise the whole person. In this implicit way, students are able to “learn it [emotional literacy] from the quality of relationships they have with the adults around them” (Eades, 2005, p.6).

### **Modelling at all levels**

Modelling or leading by example is a powerful way of influencing adults and students alike.

Research shows that teachers [adults] watch their leaders closely... to check if the leaders' actions are consistent over time and to test whether leaders do as they say. Teachers [adults] do not follow teachers who cannot 'walk the talk' (Southworth, 2004, p.6).

Leading by example, as described by Southworth, is not the preserve of leaders of the school. In the context of emotional literacy, modelling can be equally applied to all in the school community.

### **Modelling – school leaders**

Leaders must be emotionally literate in order to be able to model it in their behaviours. In all the case study schools, references are made to the importance of walking the talk and modelling appropriate behaviours. However, without possessing high levels of emotional literacy it would be impossible to model the kind of learning behaviours that students and staff are being encouraged to adopt.

### **Modelling – adults**

Well, of course, what you have to realise is that student behaviour is a consequence of adult behaviour (director of learning, school C).

Development studies of children's early home life show that emotional education tends to happen implicitly or indirectly through observation, modelling and reinforcement (Claxton, 2005). Adults within the school community take over the modelling and reinforcing functions, so it is essential that they are encouraged to walk the talk.

In relation to learning, adults have a key role in demonstrating resilience in the face of difficulties. If a student sees adults getting angry or being overwhelmed when they face difficulties, then this may lead them to make the same response in similar situations. “Adults can help reinforce positive behaviours such as tolerance, respect, empathy and self-awareness by modelling these in their everyday actions” (HDA, 2004, p.18).

Teachers [in school A] are clear of the need to walk the talk, reflecting openly about their own learning experiences and this is only possible in a culture where all [staff and students] feel respected and valued, and where mistakes are understood as the gateway to new learning (Park, 2005, p.7).

## Modelling – students

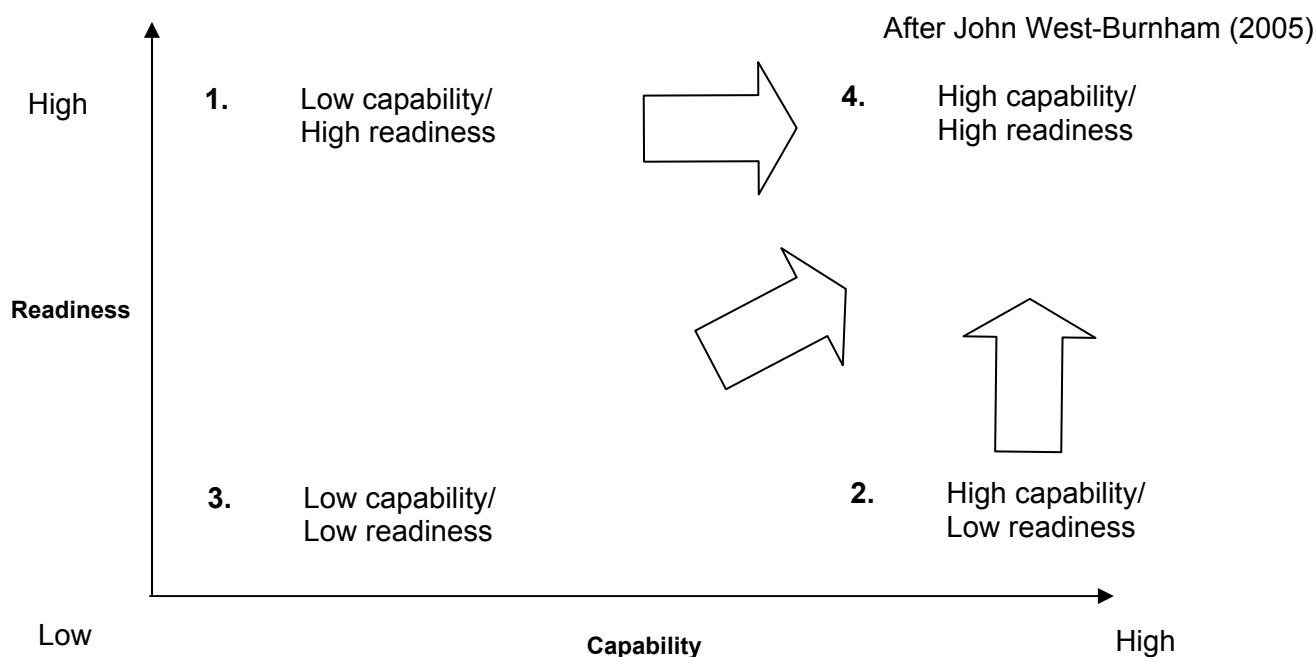
Students in all case study schools are given the opportunity to walk the talk and be role models for their peers to a greater or lesser degree. They are regularly given the opportunity to take part in decision-making, to take responsibility for helping support the daily operation of the school, to support others through peer support and to take a role in leading learning for other students through peer-mentoring programmes.

## Distributing the leadership

No one person can do it on their own! It is not heroic leadership (headteacher A).

Transforming schools is too complex to expect one person to accomplish single-handedly. Accordingly, leadership should be distributed throughout the school rather than vested in one position (Lashway, 2003, p.1).

Without exception, the case study schools chose a well-tried strategy to drive the initiative forward. The schools identified staff with a belief in emotional literacy approaches and who possess a high capability and readiness and who have the capacity to lead others to take the development forward (position 4 on diagram below). The challenge for schools is to move staff from other starting-points (position 1, 2 and 3) over time to ensure that a consistent and coherent whole-school approach is achieved.



This approach, identified as a powerful way to effect change, reflects a real commitment by the case study schools to distributed leadership, where multiple groups of individuals work at guiding and mobilising staff in the institutional change process (Spillane et al, 2001). Two case study schools, as previously stated, use co-leadership, which promotes collaborative working partnerships, to drive forward developments. Spreading the leadership and responsibility for decision-making (with its associated accountability) to others helps foster a sense of ownership and trust. This, in turn, helps to further promote the ideals of an emotionally literate organisation.

## **Learning-centred leadership**

“Learning-centred leadership needs to be widely dispersed. Schools... need as many leaders as possible in making a positive difference to what happens in classrooms” (Southworth, 2005, p.89). In school A, shared leadership across the organisation has redefined leadership of learning as the responsibility of everyone in the school and specifically refers to distributing learning-centred leadership across the organisation. In two case study schools, the role of students in decision-making, evaluation activities and supporting the learning of others helps them to take on the role of leaders of learners, as well as providing positive role models for their peers.

## **Dialogue**

For authentic, creative collaboration to become the organisational norm in our schools, all educators... need to begin to engage in active reflection and deliberate collaboration (Beatty, 2005, p.126).

Dialogue in the context of developing emotionally literate organisations is about creating opportunities and space for teachers to talk with colleagues about learning and teaching and to support their professional learning (Southworth, 2005). Each case study school stressed the importance of providing opportunities within a supportive non-threatening environment:

- to engage staff in one-to-one and collaborative dialogue
- for staff to be listened to
- for staff to take part in informed reflection to advance their understanding of emotional literacy and learning development

This has been practically supported in terms of allocated time and funding in all case study schools. Activities such as these are also seen as ways of promoting and enriching high quality relationships within the framework of emotional literacy in a culture of trust and openness.

## **Staff voice**

### **Emotional needs**

The evidence from the case study schools and in the literature suggests that adults cannot transmit emotional and social competence effectively without having their own emotional needs recognised and met. They can only respond to children if they feel valued and supported through collaboration and shared experiences. It follows that there is a need to focus on teachers' well-being and emotional centeredness as part of an overall programme for the effective introduction of emotional literacy. In case study school B, there are specific references to a proactive programme of preventative measures that can be accessed by individuals to address their needs as necessary. In others, the function of the collaborative staff groups is seen as providing the necessary network for support and collaboration.

### **Professional learning**

All case study schools acknowledge that staff need access to professional learning to build capacity in emotional literacy and to understand the principles of emotional literacy and the role of emotions in successful learning if they are to include these principles consistently within their classroom practice. This is particularly important for those staff whose teacher training emphasised cognitive aspects and which did not reference the emotional dimensions to learning. Increasing capacity is crucial, as the emotional climate and school culture is determined by how many staff possess the characteristics of emotional literacy. Therefore, developing the emotional literacy of staff is central to developing the emotional literacy of the children (Faupel, 2003).

All case study schools provide opportunities for staff to engage in professional learning on an ongoing basis through a variety of explicit training and professional learning opportunities. One case study school has developed an in-house coaching programme which aims to develop emotional literacy by structuring opportunities into the timetabled day.

### **Student voice**

Young people can only be expected to feel a sense of commitment to their schools and to the learning process if they feel that their voices are heard, that they are being consulted about what and how they are learning and how the school is run. Responsibility has to be given in order for it to be experienced (Antidote, 2003, p.1).

To a greater or lesser degree in the case study schools, students are encouraged to participate in a variety of ways that encourages a sense of ownership and belonging to a learning community where their views are heard and taken into account. They include:

- active student councils
- students as ambassadors – at presentations and parents evenings, welcoming visitors
- students as decision-makers – staff recruitment processes and the running of the school
- students as lead learners – providing learning opportunities for younger peers
- students as peer support or peer mentors
- students as evaluators of lessons and relationships
- students as researchers
- students involved in duties around the campus

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring includes analysing and acting on student progress and outcome data... Leadership is stronger and more effective when it is informed by data as well as by direct knowledge of all teaching practices and classroom dynamics (Southworth, 2004, p.7).

All case study schools use a range of monitoring tools to assess the impact of their work on emotional literacy. These include:

- online emotional literacy baseline assessments (school A)
- external evaluators (school A)
- staff and student relationship audits (school B)
- student learning evaluations (school A)
- curriculum relationship health check (school C)

Sharing progress from the monitoring process provides opportunities to reinforce the importance attached to this aspect of the school's work, to celebrate together and to make decisions for future action based on evidence. (Details of nationally available monitoring tools can be found in Appendix 3).

## **Structures and organisation**

Common to all case study schools is an appreciation that organisation and structures can help to promote the social dynamics and impact the development of positive relationships for effective learning.

### **Curriculum organisation**

Where the curriculum organisation has not been conducive to promoting positive relationships, case study schools have engineered changes. For example, the teaching team for Year 7 has been significantly reduced to ensure that students feel supported through the transition from the primary phase. In another case study school, Year 7 have their own accommodation where they are taught all non-practical subjects by small teaching teams to help promote their sense of belonging to a small learning community within a large organisation.

### **Learning communities**

In secondary schools, which tend to be much larger than their primary counterparts, case study schools have reorganised the use of space. One school has created four learning communities for its very large KS4 cohort of around 1,150 students; others have created 'safe havens' with associated teams of adults to support at-risk students, while another has created a multi-sensory room so learning is achieved in a calm, secure environment.

### **Accessing the specialists – multi-agency work within the school setting**

Two of the case study schools provide access to other children's services within the school setting, provided either by external agencies or directly by the school. For example counsellors, family support staff, therapists, educational physiologists and attendance officers are available to support the work of the school, to take a proactive role and to respond to the emotional and social needs of the students and their parents and/or carers. The benefit of an extended school approach such as this is that it offers access to services as and when they are required, in a setting where parents feel supported. As a result, relationships between parents and the case study schools have been strengthened, while attendance, behaviour and achievement have all been impacted positively.

## Critical friends

Two case study schools have worked with 'critical friends' who provide a sounding-board for development, offer advice and guidance to the leadership team, provide professional learning for staff, work with students and generally offer an objective view of the emotional literacy work the school is engaged in. Both case study schools are clear about the value of having access to an external adviser to help their progress towards becoming an emotionally literate school.

## Explicit ways to build emotional literacy

The consensus view for the successful development of emotionally literate organisations from both the literature and case study schools suggests that, as well as adopting approaches that promote emotional literacy implicitly ("the way we do things around here", as described above), there is a place for explicit skills delivery to students through a variety of strategies. It is the combination of the implicit complemented by explicit strategies that is deemed to be most successful in developing an emotionally literate organisation.

For the sake of completeness, therefore, it is worth listing the explicit taught programmes that the case study schools have developed to promote emotional literacy skill development.

There are three main aspects.

1. Through the curriculum:
  - a. The performing arts curriculum has a central role in explicitly promoting emotional literacy in the case study schools.
  - b. In one school, emotional literacy combined with reflective learning is taught through the English and humanities curriculum.
2. Through PSHE/tutorial taught programmes:
  - a. Developing specific emotional skills units of work through the PSHE and citizenship curriculum is an approach common to all case study schools.
  - b. One case study school uses philosophy-for-children approaches with selected year groups.
3. Through interventions: all case study schools provide some intervention strategies.
  - a. Specific students have access to art therapy/educational psychologist.
  - b. Specific students have access to learning mentors.
  - c. Groups of students engage in role-playing to impact challenging behaviour.
  - d. Students have access to anger management/counselling.

## Barriers

- Space and flexibility in the curriculum
- Funding
- Staff resistance and professional learning
- Time and facilitation for long-term sustainability
- The arts as a vehicle for promoting emotional literacy

### Space and flexibility in the curriculum

“The ongoing task-driven pressures of the curriculum can easily override engaged commitment to this element of school life if it fails to become an integral feature of school planning and ethos” (Sunley, 2003, p.19).

“It is difficult to find the time or the money to get a flexible pattern into the timetable” (co-ordinator, school B).

Case study schools cite being unable to engineer the space and flexibility in the content-laden curriculum of secondary schools as a potential barrier to emotional literacy development. In one case study school, the headteacher feels strongly that to be able to give this aspect of education the necessary profile would require a reduction in content delivery that is required through the national curriculum. “To build relationships and understand the totality of the whole child... it cannot be done on the back of such an intense, organised curriculum that we have been asked to deal with over the last three years” (headteacher A).

### Funding

Some of our work is very patchy because funding has run out... We very much want it to continue so we are still searching and negotiating (deputy headteacher, school A).

All three case study schools express concern about funding for continued work and reported a contraction and stalling of some planned emotional literacy developments. Research has shown that this area of work is generally underfunded (Weare and Gray, 2003).

Case study schools have been creative in accessing funding streams and successful bids to support their work. However, if emotional literacy and growing emotionally literate schools which focus on developing the whole child and optimising learning are to be expanded, then sustained, long-term funding is required.

### Staff resistance and professional learning needs

Schools and staff can be resistant to the idea that the school environment and teacher behaviour may be contributing to the problem behaviour (Weare and Gray, 2003, p.23).

Beatty (2005, p.140) believes that leadership preparation programmes have a responsibility to address the issue of collaborative emotional meaning-making and then “emotion will find a more integrated, respected and dynamic place in educational leadership practice”.

Until recently, emotion was not part of the mainstream of cognitive science. As a result, most teachers have not had adequate preparation in how to use emotions productively in their classrooms (Sousa, 1998, p.1).

Time and training are required for teachers to be able to learn about successful practice with regard to emotional literacy and to incorporate it into their professional practice. Providing opportunities for staff to engage in reflective analysis is fundamental if emotional literacy is to

become fully embedded into the culture. The main barrier is being able to provide the quality time and the funding to support it.

Teacher training has, until recently, emphasised the cognitive without focusing on the emotional dimension of the learning process. It follows, therefore, that it is not just secondary schools that must provide opportunities for this area of development: teacher training establishments must also give weight and credence to the emotional dimensions of learning – in parallel with the cognitive – in the programmes it offers to future teachers. The SEAL programmes currently being piloted by the DfES are a start in this direction, with a planned national roll-out in 2007 in secondary schools. However, if these programmes are not approached within a whole-school framework over time, then their success in helping to develop emotionally literate organisations will be limited.

### **Time and facilitation for long-term sustainability**

It is worth remembering that there are no quick fixes for achieving the full benefits... it takes time to develop whole-school practice... and programmes need to be implemented continuously and in an emotionally literate way (HDA, 2004 p.10).

Education is full of short-term initiatives which are focused on immediate results. However, it needs to be recognised that the impact of promoting emotional literacy and growing emotionally literate schools needs time to develop and effect change. The sustainable benefits of emotional literacy depend on how it is implicitly and explicitly incorporated into the life and culture of the school. Opportunities for emotional literacy development are not necessarily sufficient in themselves to produce any ongoing change. What really matters is the quality of facilitation that the school and its leadership provide to embed it into the culture (Sunley, 2003).

### **The arts as a vehicle for promoting emotional literacy**

The arts have a central role in delivery of emotional literacy. The performing and visual arts offer the possibility of developing listening, observation, awareness of others and respect for all cultures (McCarthy, 1997, p.4).

It is suggested, in the literature, that a school culture that fosters the expressive arts, such as those schools with performing arts specialist status, explicitly values and encourages more than cognitive understanding. It may, therefore, provide more fertile ground for an overt acceptance of emotional literacy as part of the ongoing development and health of an organisation. This is because “staff and students are more accustomed to sharing diverse personal approaches to ideas and tasks, in a safe, creative space, that is not necessarily the norm in other schools” (Sunley, 2003, p.19).

It may, therefore, be more difficult to gain acceptance to develop emotional literacy in schools where the arts do not have such a high profile, although this is just speculation. There is no evidence at this stage to suggest this might be the case. In the case study schools, the two most well-developed emotionally literate organisations *do* have arts status, whilst the emergent school is a specialist technology college.



## Implications

- Leadership by the headteacher is critical to the development of the emotionally literate school.
- Leaders need to possess high levels of emotional literacy to be able to use an emotionally literate style of leadership and model the characteristics of emotional literacy in their dealings with all in the school community.
- Every opportunity must be used to build high quality relationships and create an atmosphere of trust and openness.
- A culture of high expectations for behaviour and learning that focuses on the whole child within a clearly communicated secure framework should be promoted as the norm.
- Opportunities should be built in for staff collaboration, dialogue, reflection and teamwork to develop shared understanding and the language of emotional literacy, and for the emotional dimension of learning to impact upon classroom practice and the provision of high quality learning.
- Recognition should be given that staff need to have their own emotional needs met and opportunities to develop emotional literacy capacity through access to continuous professional learning activities and collaborative group work.
- Leaders should create and encourage opportunities for participation by all staff across aspects of the school by all. This requires a distribution of leadership activities, enabling decision-making with associated accountability and promoting a culture of recognition and reward.
- Emotional literacy should be promoted holistically as “the way we do things here” and leaders should support the development of explicit programmes to develop emotional literacy through the curriculum.
- Leaders need to ensure that structures and school organisation are conducive to developing and promoting emotional literacy.

## It is not a quick fix!

You can't do it in a year... We are a shining example of turning a school round, but you can't do it overnight (assistant headteacher, school A).

That it is not about short-termism is a view shared by all the case study schools. Changes to culture take place over a sustained period and all case study schools emphasised the need for patience and resilience.

The clear message from the case study schools is to start small, with developments in one or two areas and, when that is working, to broaden out into other areas.

## And finally...

For any school wanting to embark on this work, one case study school offers the following advice:

There isn't a right or wrong way of doing it (headteacher A).

You just have to decide what is the best starting-place for you... Don't try and do it all at once; we have done all these initiatives but we have done it over three to four years and we have done different things each year which has built on what we have done the year before... Have your three-year plan then just target... and we will do this and this one, and then we will do that next year and so on (assistant headteacher, school A).

## Methodology of research

This study is based upon the findings from interviews with headteachers and others in three English secondary schools (see table below). The schools were chosen as they are engaged, at various stages, in the development of emotional literacy. Two of the schools are situated in inner city locations, the third in a semi-rural environment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in each of the study schools with the headteachers and then with staff associated with leading the initiative.

### Roles of respondents from case study schools

School A	School B	School C
Headteacher	Headteacher (acting)	Headteacher
Deputy headteacher	Student and family support co-ordinator	Director of learning (the arts)
Assistant headteacher PSHE	Art therapist	Director of learning (science)
Head of humanities	Students from Year 7	Head of drama
		Literacy co-ordinator
		Co-leader, Emotionally Secure School initiative

Interview discussions included questions designed to elicit information that included:

- respondents' background and involvement in emotional literacy developments
- understanding of the term emotional literacy
- key characteristics of an emotionally literate school
- rationale for engaging in work associated with emotional literacy
- key levers that caused the school to undertake developments in emotional literacy
- leadership approaches adopted to promote emotional literacy initiative
- ways of developing emotional literacy understanding in staff and students
- significant things that have changed over time
- impact of emotional literacy developments in the school
- external agency involvement in developing the school's response
- future developments

All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed in order to ensure that quotations used in the study were accurate. The responses were thematically analysed and respondents' views and opinions compared to check for any possible biased perspectives.

Attendance at two national conferences provided further information for consideration. These were: Emotional Literacy, Releasing your school's potential – A national secondary conference – October 2005; Emotionally Literate Leadership – November 2005. Both conferences were organised by Antidote.

In addition, the study used feedback from staff professional learning activities to inform aspects of the study. A small group of students were interviewed in one school and, although not part of the formal research, provided an added perspective.

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## Appendix 1 – Models of emotional literacy

There are many models and alternatives available for the concepts of emotional literacy, intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. Table A is a summary of some of the main models developed by key people who work in this field, along with the elements included in their description of emotional intelligence or literacy (adapted from the work of West-Burnham, 2005, Weare, 2004, Sharp, 2001, and Brearley, 2001).

What all these models have in common is an emphasis on the following two dimensions: the intrapersonal and the interpersonal. The former refers to self-awareness, emotional management, motivation and empathy, while the latter refers to handling relationships. A generic view of emotional literacy derived from these models could be:

- self-knowledge
- self-management
- motivation
- empathy
- interpersonal skills

In trying to expand each of the above it is necessary to appreciate that they are all closely interlinked and interrelated. In reality, each of the five descriptors support, overlap and interact with each other. However, it is helpful to consider each term singly within this context.

### Self-knowledge

“Know thyself” (inscription on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi).

Each of the above models uses different descriptors such as intrapersonal skills (Stein and Book), self-awareness (Goleman, Mayer and Salovey, Higgs and Dulewicz) and self-concept (Faupel, Weare). Central to all, however, is the notion that to be emotionally literate requires an accurate picture of self – to know thyself. Self-knowledge is about the capacity to feel good about oneself; having a positive self-regard; knowing one’s strengths and weaknesses; accepting one’s limitations; and developing a sense of oneself in relation to others. Self-knowledge requires an extensive vocabulary of feelings or emotions; the ability to recognise and describe emotions; and to understand the impact of emotions.

To “know thyself” is the basis of being able to learn effectively and forge positive relationships with others.

### Self-management

Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy (Aristotle).

Growing from self-knowledge is the capacity to understand and handle our emotions appropriately – self-management. Self-management is the learnt ability to manage our emotions and use strategies for coping with our emotions. Counting to ten before speaking is a well-known strategy for managing anger and thinking through an appropriate response. Goleman describes this as having the self-resolution to use emotion positively. Accepting responsibility for our response and actions is also part of self-management and is referenced as conscientiousness and integrity by Higgs and Dulewicz. In addition, Faupel and Mayer and Salovey relate the ability to self-manage as the ability to recognise the impact of emotion on decision-making and learning. With self-management comes greater emotional resilience, which improves the ability to manage the set-backs that will inevitably be experienced. (Weare and Higgs and Dulewicz models).

## Motivation

Emotions are, literally, what move us to pursue our goals; they fuel our motivations (Goleman, 1998, p.106).

The majority of the models considered identify motivation as a key aspect of emotional literacy. Motivation is strongly influenced by our thoughts and emotions, and being able to harness and use emotions to achieve a goal is a key part of emotional literacy. High levels of motivation result in being able to focus, concentrate well and apply cognitive ability and self-management skills which lead to achievement. Conversely, low levels of motivation reduce this ability, in some cases to such an extent that the individual is overwhelmed to the point of mental paralysis. Motivators are both extrinsic (such as rewards and incentives) and intrinsic (within oneself), which Goleman (1996) argues are the most powerful of motivators. Weare's model (2004) does not use the term 'motivation' explicitly, but uses 'self-determination' and 'optimism'. Self-determination is the act of moving towards an identified objective and is closely interlinked with motivation, which moves us to pursue our goals. Weare (2004) links optimism with a discussion about achievable short-term goals to produce high levels of motivation, thus demonstrating links with motivation and optimism in her model.

Considering specifically what motivates learning, it is worth taking account of the work of Maslow. In the early 1950s, he developed a hierarchy of needs and suggested that unless basic social and emotional needs are met, then individuals will not be motivated to engage in intellectual learning, nor would they move to become independent thinkers. Each stage of Maslow's hierarchy must be met before a human being is motivated to move on to the next stage. So, only when physiological, safety and social needs are met will a person be motivated to learn and move towards self-actualisation. The implication for schools, mirrored in the Every Child Matters agenda, is that it is fundamental to get health, safety and social needs met before learners can engage in activity of a higher order.



**Table A: Summary of the models of emotional literacy and the key elements of each model**

<b>Goleman (1998)</b>	<b>Stein and Book (2000)</b>	<b>Steiner (1997)</b>	<b>West-Burnham (2005)</b>	<b>Mayer and Salovey (1990)</b>	<b>Higgs and Dulewicz (1999)</b>	<b>Weare (2004)</b>	<b>Faupel (2003)</b>
Self-awareness	Intrapersonal	Knowing your own feelings	Self-knowledge	Self-awareness	Self-awareness	Self-understanding Concept of self	Strong sense of self
Self-resolution	General mood Stress management	Learning to manage emotions	Self-management	Understanding emotion and emotional knowledge  Emotional regulation to promote emotional and intellectual growth	Conscientiousness and integrity  Emotional resilience	Understanding, expressing and managing emotions  Resilience	Awareness of role and power of emotions in learning and decision-making
Social skills  Empathy	Interpersonal	Emotional interactivity  Empathy	Interpersonal skills High collaboration and interdependence  Trust  Open and honest communication  Respect and acceptance	Handling relationships	  Interpersonal sensitivity	Understanding social situations and making relationships  Trust  Communication  Empathy	Sound value and moral base  Empathetic awareness  Tolerance of diversity and difference
Motivation		Motivation	Motivation	Motivating oneself	Motivation	Self-determination  Optimism	
	Adaptability						

## **Empathy**

Empathy has been singled out and is described as “the building block for all social competences” (Weare, 2004, p.44); “the basis for all interpersonal skills” (Sharp, 2003, p.27); and a core skill for working with people. A formal definition of empathy is “the identification with and understanding of another’s situation, feelings and motives”.

Empathy is about being able to see another person’s point of view, treating them with the same respect and regard we would ourselves. It requires the ability to be able to recognise and respond to the emotions and feelings of others and to demonstrate that others are acknowledged and valued. It encompasses the ability to be compassionate and to be sensitive and intuitive towards others. Showing empathy allows us to accept and tolerate differences, which are referenced as respect and tolerance (West-Burnham, 2005) and as tolerance of diversity and difference (Faupel, 2003). Where empathy has not been directly referenced, it is included within such terms as interpersonal sensitivity (Higgs and Dulewicz, 1999), empathetic awareness (Faupel, 2003) and a component of handling relationships (Mayer and Salovey 1990).

## **Interpersonal skills**

To be emotionally literate is to be interpersonally effective. Interpersonal effectiveness incorporates many elements from all those described above but the main emphasis is on the capacity to connect with others – making, developing and maintaining positive human relationships. All the models stress that interpersonal skills are essential for developed emotional literacy and this capacity leads to the development of good relationships that are crucial for emotional and social well-being. Experiencing positive relationships helps to raise self-esteem and engender resilience. Having the interpersonal skills to form and handle relationships requires a diverse range of competences. Goleman (1998) describes these under the term social skills and includes being able to communicate openly, to possess effective listening skills, the ability to manage conflict and to be able to work in co-operation and collaboration.

West-Burnham (2005) also references explicitly open and honest communication and interdependency as key competences of interpersonal skills. Higgs and Dulewicz (1999) refer to interpersonal sensitivity, whilst Weare (2004) makes reference to the ability to understand social situations and make relationships. Steiner uses the term emotional interactivity to describe how individuals relate and connect to others. West-Burnham (2005) and Weare (2004) also explicitly state that trust is an important component of interpersonal skills. Building appropriate levels of trust with others, Weare (2004) maintains, is a key factor in helping to build and manage relationships.

## Appendix 2 – Emotional literacy and learning

Having established a model for emotional literacy it is necessary to consider the theoretical perspectives associated with how emotional literacy impacts and promotes effective learning. This appendix explores this under the following headings:

- Emotions and readiness to learn – the neurological basis
- Emotions and the processing of information – the neurological basis
- Managing emotions for effective learning
- Emotional literacy, social relationships and learning
- Emotional literacy and constructivist learning
- Emotional literacy and school climate

### Emotions and readiness to learn – the neurological basis

All learning has an emotional base (Plato, over 2,000 years ago).

West-Burnham (2005, p.1) argues that “emotional intelligence and learning are in such a symbiotic relationship that they are actually tautological. It is impossible to learn without involving the full spectrum of emotions.”

Although the concept of a link between learning and emotions is not new, neurological research and an emphasis on brain-based learning has confirmed the scientific basis. Connections between emotion and learning are bidirectional and complex and there is a greater understanding of the way emotion and cognition interrelate and affect each other.

Neurological processing and, therefore, our capacity to learn are influenced by the emotional context. That is, emotions play a crucial role in the ability to access higher order thinking and effective learning. Put another way, our emotional responses are so powerful that they can overwhelm most cognitive processes and thereby affect our ability to learn effectively. (Vail, 2001, p.2) states that “emotion is the on-off switch to learning and the emotional brain, the limbic system, has the power to open or close access to learning, memory, and the ability to make novel connections.”

From our own learning experiences, it would be possible to cite times when we were enabled to learn most effectively because the emotional climate we found ourselves in had a positive effect on learning, memory and social behaviour. Conversely, negative emotional states, such as anger and sadness, have been shown to have a negative impact on learning and motivation. Emotions can disrupt thinking and learning. (Weissberg and Elias, 1993). When we are happy we have a clear mind, but when we are upset we can't think straight. “Positive emotions such as joy, contentment, acceptance, trust and satisfaction can enhance learning. Conversely, prolonged emotional distress can cripple our ability to learn. We all know how hard it is to learn or remember something when we are anxious, angry or depressed.” (Lawson, 2005, p 2).

### Emotions and the processing of information – the neurological basis

Emotions also play a critical role in the way the brain processes and stores information. During the learning process, the brain associates what has been learnt with the emotions that have been experienced at the time of learning. Learners need to perceive their learning as important and valuable to them and be motivated to act on it and use it. In their work on how human beings learn, Caine and Caine (1994, p.5) identified an optimal emotional state for learning, which they called ‘relaxed alertness’ ([http://www.cainelearning.com/element1\\_relaxedalertness.html](http://www.cainelearning.com/element1_relaxedalertness.html)).

## **Managing emotions for effective learning**

Our emotions inform our learning at neural, personal and interpersonal levels. Developing our... capacity to understand our emotional selves has a direct impact on our neural functioning. The health of the neural network is a product of the health of the social network and vice versa (West-Burnham, March 2005, p.6).

Being emotionally aware and able to express emotions needs to be balanced with emotional management to enable the most effective learning to occur. Learning involves both neurological processes and social interaction, and emotional management is required to ensure, individually, that learners have the ability to handle difficult emotions that inhibit learning and to make sure self-expression is controlled and appropriate within the social context to promote positive relationships for learning.

## **Emotional literacy, social relationships and learning**

Throughout our lives, our brains/minds change in response to engagement with others... Individuals must always be seen to be integral parts of larger social systems... Learning is profoundly influenced by the nature of social relationships within which people find themselves (Caine and Caine, 1997 pp.104–105, quoted in West Burnham, 2005, p.1).

All aspects of school life are informed by the quality of human relationships and social interaction that takes place within them and, in the view of Williams, (2002, p.4): “Relationships are too important to be left to chance in an organisation that strives to be successful,” and the impact of a positive learner–teacher relationship “is fundamental to effective learning and school improvement... and bad relationships mar the learning experience” (Glover and Law, 2002, p.31).

## **Emotional literacy and constructivist learning**

The emphasis on interpersonal skills... stems from the fact that learning is a social process... and by working collaboratively learners are able to construct knowledge to a higher level than those working alone (Younie, 2006, p.11).

Advancements in neuroscience require that we, as educators, must shift our focus from the teaching process to the learning process and gain a thorough understanding of how the brain develops, learns and organises itself, to be able to apply multiple intelligences, learning styles and collaborative approaches to achieve effective learning (Sousa, 1998, p.1).

Learning is a constructive process that occurs best when what is being learned is relevant and meaningful to the learner, and when the learner is actively engaged in creating his or her own knowledge and understanding (Lambert and McCombs, 1998). The learning process is enhanced by dialogue and collaborative interaction and learners socially construct knowledge together (Younie, 2006).

Promoting strong learning relationships is therefore central to developing individual learning power (Claxton, 2003). To move learning from a shallow mode characterised by rote or lecture style to facilitating/mentoring/coaching styles, which allow deep or profound learning to take place, requires the presence of highly effective interpersonal relationships characterised by emotional literacy, interdependence and trust (West-Burnham, May 2005). To develop positive relationships needs a portfolio of interpersonal skills, which are a key part of emotional literacy capacity. Possessing emotional literacy is, therefore, of critical importance to impact the quality of learning positively. In practice, this means that schools need to create opportunities for learners to share, stimulate and support each other and develop high quality relationships between learners to help deepen the capacity to learn effectively.

## **Emotional literacy and school climate**

The prerequisite for all levels of learning is emotional safety (Beatty, 2005, p.126).

Students must feel physically safe and emotionally secure in their schools and classrooms before they can focus on the curriculum. Teachers can promote emotional security by establishing a positive climate that encourages students to take appropriate risks whilst learning (Sousa, 1998 p.2).

One of the key criteria for school leaders to consider for an effective learning environment would be the development of an appropriate emotional environment. “In establishing a learning organisation, the importance of the emotional climate is often overlooked. It is much more than absence of tension; it is the creation of positive self and mutual regard” (West-Burnham, 2005, p.3).

Being able to promote an environment of calmness, a sense of well-being and feeling safe alongside a level of challenge that stimulates and motivates – relaxed alertness (Caine and Caine, 1994) – must be the primary goal for teachers and educators. A positive climate includes “feeling emotionally supported in the classroom, so students are willing to try new things and learn from their mistakes”, (Hay McBer, 2000, quoted in Sharp, 2001), and its creation is “only really possible when both the teacher and the learners, and the teacher as learner, are actively engaged in promoting emotional literacy” (Sharp, 2001, p.45).

## **Appendix 3 – Useful publications and organisations that support emotional literacy**

If you are interested in exploring emotional literacy and developing capacity further in your school, the following contacts and references may provide a useful starting-point.

### **Useful publications**

#### ***The Emotional Literacy Handbook, Antidote, 2003***

Explores the ideas around emotional literacy and promotes whole-school strategies. Provides a wealth of case studies from schools and useful contacts and resources.

#### ***Developing the Emotionally Literate School, Professor Katherine Weare, 2004***

Provides sections on emotional literacy and its importance to schools. Explores the principles for developing emotional literacy in schools. Gives an overview of the profiling, assessment and evaluation of emotional literacy and useful contacts.

#### ***Emotional Literacy Update, Optimus Publishing***

A monthly magazine reporting on new initiatives and developments in the field of emotional literacy (<http://www.optimuspub.co.uk>).

#### ***Promoting Emotional Health and Well-Being, HDA/Department of Health, 2004***

Provides information and strategies to help schools become more emotionally healthy. Includes case studies, lists of useful contacts and the policy context for emotionally healthy schools.

### **Useful organisations**

#### **Antidote – Campaign for Emotional Literacy**

Works with schools to develop emotional literacy, offers an audit of emotional literacy (SEELs – see below) and guidelines. Organises conferences and publications on emotional literacy. Offers training and consultancy in emotional literacy. (<http://www.antidote.org.uk>)

#### **The National Emotional Literacy Interest Group**

A website pooling information from the UK promoting emotional literacy. (<http://www.nelig.com>)

### **Available tools to assess and develop emotional climate and learning**

#### **SEELS – School Emotional Environment for Learning Survey – developed by Antidote and University of Bristol Graduate School of Education**

SEELS is an online questionnaire for staff and students. It analyses and provides the baseline for work on where developing capacity should be focused. It is a validated instrument designed to assess the extent to which staff and students feel capable, listened to, accepted, safe and included. Antidote also offers training and consultancy in emotional literacy. (<http://www.antidote.org.uk/seels/s1.html>)

#### **ELIOS – Emotional Literacy in Organisations and Schools – developed by Team Transformation Techniques Ltd**

ELIOS is an analysis tool for evaluating the climate of the school. It is focused on a flexible, analytical framework to assess emotional literacy and can be used with any cohort – students, staff and parents. It has been used in schools and in industry as it can be applied to a variety of settings. The tool uses a seven-level model that is based on Maslov's hierarchy of needs. Contacts: Rachel Cooper ([tttrachel@mistral.co.uk](mailto:tttrachel@mistral.co.uk)) or Sarah Younie ([syounie@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:syounie@dmu.ac.uk))

**ELLI – Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory – questionnaire developed by University of Bristol Graduate School of Education – Claxton, Broadfoot and Deacon-Crick (2002)**

Assesses how learners perceive themselves in relation to the dimensions of 'learning power'. The learning power dimensions are: growth orientation; meaning-making; critical curiosity; creativity; learning relationships and interdependence; resilience; strategic awareness.  
Website: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/enterprise/elli>

**School of Emotional Literacy – Professor Elisabeth Morris**

The School of Emotional Literacy was established in 1996. The school offers an accredited postgraduate certificate and an advanced diploma in Emotional Literacy. The organisation also offers some self-audit/analysis tools. These are:

- ELIYA (Emotional Literacy Indicator for Young Adult)
- IELI (Individual Emotional Literacy Indicator)
- WSCHLI (Whole School Emotional Literacy Indicator)
- CELI (Class Emotional Literacy Indicator)

The School of Emotional Literacy provides a range of professional learning programmes and publications in the field of emotional literacy. The Limbic Learning Day, run by the School of Emotional Literacy at King Edward VII School, was regarded highly by the 20 participants.  
(<http://www.schoolofemotional-literacy.com>)

**Remember Education – School Ethos and Relationship**

This organisation offers qualitative tools, 'soft measuring' devices, open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviewing across the whole school to draw up a picture of the emotional health of an organisation. It is suitable across Key Stages 1 to 4.

Contact: Kevin McCarthy

(<http://www.remember.mcmail.com/coursesandconsultancy/3.html>)