

Developing social, emotional and behavioural skills in secondary schools

A five-term longitudinal evaluation of the Secondary National Strategy pilot

The Secondary National Strategy's pilot programme, Developing social, emotional and behavioural skills, was introduced to 54 schools in five local authorities in the summer term of 2005 and to a sixth authority one term later. Ofsted evaluated the pilot programme over five terms in 11 schools. The schools were selected to represent a range of types of school. After five terms, the greatest impact in the schools was on teachers' attitudes towards the idea of social, emotional and behavioural skills and their understanding of how to develop these skills systematically within subject lessons. Where the pilot was most effective, teachers adjusted teaching methods to take account of the pupils' specific needs. As a result, pupils worked better in teams, were better able to recognise and articulate their feelings, and showed greater respect for each other's differences and strengths.

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Executive summary

The Secondary National Strategy's pilot programme, Developing social, emotional and behavioural skills (referred to as 'the programme' elsewhere in this report), was introduced to 54 schools in five local authorities in the summer term of 2005. A sixth authority joined the programme one term later. Ofsted evaluated the development and impact of the pilot over five terms in 11 schools, which were selected to represent a range of types of school. During four or five visits to each school, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) observed the same group of pupils in and outside lessons.

After five terms, the greatest impact in the schools was on teachers' attitudes towards the idea of social, emotional and behavioural skills and their understanding of how to develop these skills systematically within subject lessons. In nine of the 11 schools there were discernible improvements in some teachers' skills in developing pupils' social, emotional and behavioural competencies. Where the pilot was most effective, teachers adjusted teaching methods to take account of the pupils' specific needs. As a result, pupils worked better in teams, were better able to recognise and articulate their feelings, and showed greater respect for each other's differences and strengths. In particular, their resilience – the ability to cope with challenge and change – improved.

Some teachers initially showed resistance to the initiative: they expected an increase in workload or had reservations about the extent to which developing pupils' social and emotional skills should be part of the teacher's role. In higher attaining schools some staff were concerned that the focus on the programme would adversely affect academic results. In most cases, such resistance was managed well by senior staff. An area that required greater emphasis in training, in order to secure teachers' acceptance of the benefits of the programme, was data that illustrated how the programme could have a positive impact on academic achievement. Trainers who added this dimension were able to reassure staff. Examples of good practice helped teachers to see how they could adapt what they already did to enhance pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills.

The schools' approach to the pilot depended on a number of factors, not least their capacity to understand the pilot's concepts and manage the necessary changes. Generally, schools found it difficult to analyse their pupils' specific social, emotional and behavioural skills needs and struggled to find an appropriate starting point quickly. As a result, several schools began by focusing only on behaviour. Their approaches ranged from a simple review of the school's behaviour policy to a detailed evaluation of the way in which teachers interacted with pupils. Two schools used sociograms provided by the University of Sussex to help them to analyse pupils' needs.

The programme was equally successful in the challenging contexts of lower attaining schools and in higher attaining schools located in more affluent areas: the quality of

the leadership rather than the context of the school was the main factor in ensuring success. In the schools which implemented the programme successfully, senior leaders quickly recognised the contribution that it could make to supporting or improving the school's ethos and values. They also recognised how it could help teachers to exemplify and elicit these values in practical ways. In these schools, developing social, emotional and behavioural skills quickly became part of the way things were done and was built into strategic planning.

Evaluating the success of the pilot challenged even those schools that implemented the programme effectively. Separating what the pilot had achieved from the range of other initiatives in which the schools were involved was difficult. All the schools needed clearer guidance from the Secondary National Strategy to help them to monitor and evaluate effectiveness. Schools were sometimes assisted in evaluation by their local authority's consultants for behaviour and attendance, and they found the additional analysis provided by Ofsted's survey useful.

Overall, in a short period of time, the pilot has demonstrated that schools can make a positive difference in developing pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills. This is encouraging and will enable the National Strategy to build on the success.

During the period of the pilot, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) decided to expand the scope of the programme and to rename it the secondary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme.

Key findings

- The programme for developing social, emotional and behavioural skills was introduced most successfully when senior leaders understood its underlying philosophy. Where this was not the case, it remained a 'bolt-on' to personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons or form tutor time and was largely ineffective.
- Developing social, emotional and behavioural skills was most successful in schools with a strong and clearly articulated ethos. More than half the schools in this small social, emotional and behavioural skills survey found that it helped them to revisit their values and articulate them more clearly.
- The pilot's greatest impact was on developing teachers' understanding of pupils' emotional and social development. Such understanding improved interaction between teachers and pupils. In nine of the schools, the work helped to change systems in the school and influenced behaviour management. In six of the 11 schools it improved lesson planning, teaching and the organisation of learning.
- Where the pilot was most effective, pupils' social and behavioural skills improved in the way they worked with each other and with staff. Their resilience increased, as did their teamwork skills and their willingness to take risks in their learning.

- Schools found the early stages of the pilot difficult because some of the aims of the pilot were not defined clearly. There was resistance from some staff because they thought that the programme would increase their workloads and possibly undermine attainment.
- Where good monitoring and evaluation already existed in the school this contributed to the impact of the pilot. Senior leaders were able to identify quickly the next steps needed to improve pupils' learning. In the schools which implemented the programme most successfully, teachers readily understood the stages of pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development and were able to select an appropriate starting point and adapt the focus as necessary.
- Almost all the schools initially emphasised behaviour. Understanding how to develop pupils' social and emotional skills, and the planning to do so, came later.
- All the schools found it difficult to evaluate the impact of the work. Even where the work was successful, schools often found it difficult to disengage what had been achieved through the programme from other initiatives. Where the work had not been integrated with broader school improvements, its influence was negligible.
- The initial documentation from the Secondary National Strategy lacked sufficient guidance to help schools to find the right starting point and to evaluate the effectiveness of their work.

Recommendations

The Department for Children, Schools and Families, through the Secondary National Strategy, should:

- exemplify how programmes that develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills can have a positive impact on attainment and achievement
- clarify the required outcomes from the programme
- give schools clearer guidance about identifying the key social, emotional and behavioural skills needed by different pupils to enhance their learning and provide ideas for appropriate starting points for the work
- ensure that guidance clearly links work on social, emotional and behavioural development to subject teaching and learning, and classroom practice
- develop guidance to support schools in evaluating the effectiveness of their work in this area.

Local authorities should:

- assist schools to find appropriate starting points for social, emotional and behavioural skills development work which are linked to their school improvement plan
- help schools to analyse a range of data that helps them to know how effective such work has been.

Schools implementing the SEAL programme should:

- ensure that senior leaders understand fully the aims of the programme
- allocate the leadership of the programme to a senior member of staff
- ensure that social, emotional and behavioural skills work underpins the values and ethos of the school and is integrated into the teaching of all subjects.

Background

1. The programme was introduced to 54 schools in five local authorities in the summer term 2005. A sixth authority joined the programme one term later. The programme aims to help teachers develop pupils' skills in five key areas:
 - self-awareness, including knowing and valuing oneself, and understanding feelings
 - the management of feelings, focusing on improving the management and expression of emotions
 - motivation, including developing persistence, resilience and optimism and developing strategies to reach goals
 - empathy, to promote understanding the thoughts and feelings of others and valuing and supporting others
 - forming positive relationships: building, maintaining and improving relationships with others.
2. The Secondary National Strategy provided resources to support teachers' professional development and help them to develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills in lessons. In addition, the Secondary National Strategy's behaviour and attendance consultants supported schools with training.

Getting started

3. Initially, schools in the survey found the requirements of the programme difficult to understand and some staff were anxious about what it would entail. Some initial resistance to the initiative arose because teachers expected their workload to increase or because, occasionally, they had reservations about the extent to which developing social and emotional skills should be part of their role. In some cases, teachers felt that they were already undertaking such

work. In higher attaining schools, some staff were concerned that the focus on social, emotional and behavioural skills would adversely affect their pupils' academic results.

4. Where behaviour and attendance consultants in local authorities provided effective briefings about what was involved, schools quickly focused on preparing staff to learn about the pilot. However, when the briefings were weak, schools struggled to understand from the initial documentation, how to proceed. Also, the materials supplied by the Secondary National Strategy did not emphasise sufficiently the links between effective social, emotional and behavioural skills development, pupils' increased confidence and improved academic performance. In general, schools were reluctant to use the examples which did illustrate these links because they were taken from the USA and therefore were not considered relevant to English schools. The programme was most successful in schools that quickly saw the links between developing social, emotional and behavioural skills and effective teaching and learning and made these clear to staff.
5. Generally, schools found it difficult to analyse and identify pupils' specific social, emotional and behavioural skills needs and struggled to find an appropriate starting point quickly. Many found the initial definition of the programme nebulous and the Secondary National Strategy did not give sufficient guidance about how and where to begin. As a result, several schools began by focusing simply on aspects of behaviour, ranging from a simple review of their policy on behaviour to a more detailed evaluation of the way in which teachers interacted with pupils. All but two of the schools made a slow start; most progress was made in the second part of the programme.
6. By the end of the first term of the pilot, the schools had typically not developed a secure plan to guide their work. A joint DfES and Secondary National Strategy conference, which was held for all pilot schools towards the end of the first term, helped to clarify aspects of the programme. As a result some schools, which had begun by focusing on behaviour, appreciated the programme's wider remit.
7. The schools' approaches to self-improvement played a key part in determining the way in which they addressed the pilot. Those which already had clear priorities related to behaviour and, to a lesser extent, social and emotional development within their school improvement plan were able to use the programme materials more efficiently to generate changes.
8. The most important factor determining a sound start and, ultimately, a successful approach was the extent to which the headteacher and senior leadership team believed in and supported the social, emotional and behavioural skills approach. If they incorporated the programme into the school's other priorities and linked it to broader school improvement, staff were more inclined to give it precedence. If a key member of the senior leadership

team led the initiative, the programme had direction and drive at an early stage. Schools which had effective monitoring systems were better placed to adjust the interventions as necessary and, as a result, the programme was more effective in influencing classroom practice. Where no one from the senior leadership team took the lead, changes to policy and practice were superficial and the work was often dismissed by some staff as 'just another initiative'.

9. In most cases, senior staff managed resistance from staff successfully. They used high quality in-service training that built on previous training in managing behaviour and attendance. Resources from the Secondary National Strategy provided teachers and other staff with informative and practical ways of approaching the programme. However, the training did not give sufficient emphasis to the use of data to demonstrate how the programme could have a positive impact on academic achievement. Trainers who added this to the basic social, emotional and behavioural skills training were able to reassure staff. Through examples of good practice, teachers were able to see how they could adapt what they already did and incorporate different ways of working to enhance pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills.
10. In three of the schools in the survey, senior managers organised social, emotional and behavioural skills training and follow-up work effectively by ensuring that working groups comprised a range of staff with varied experience. This helped staff to develop a common understanding and approaches. The role of senior staff was to maintain the momentum and direction of the project. Because aspects of the programme were sometimes led by less experienced or more junior staff, this created a sense of shared responsibility at an early stage.
11. The University of Sussex worked with eight of the pilot schools on a survey of pupils' perceptions of themselves and their peers. The work explored the social and emotional profile of pupils within their peer group, and the correlation between pupils' self-perceptions, the perceptions of their peers, and those of their teachers. Peer relations, pupils' reputation regarding behaviour, feelings about loneliness, social anxiety, and beliefs about bullying and aggression were all considered.
12. The results of this work were fed back to the schools using sociograms showing the relationships within the target group (see Annex 1). The research clearly demonstrated the close links between pupils' social behaviour, emotions, and peer relationships. The schools welcomed this work as a way of deepening their understanding of aspects of the pupils' behaviour and interactions. For example, a small minority of pupils experienced high levels of rejection by their peer groups. These pupils not only showed corresponding patterns of negative emotion, including significantly higher social anxiety and loneliness, but also showed poorer social and behavioural skills, such as lower levels of cooperation. The schools reported that access to tools such as sociograms

would be valuable for wider use in the school. Two of the schools in the survey used sociograms to help them to analyse pupils' needs.

13. By the end of the second term of the pilot, two distinct approaches to introducing the programme were emerging. Several schools had chosen a focus group of pupils and were trialling approaches with them and their staff, while others worked with all staff to introduce aspects of the programme. This continued into the second year, although some schools had begun to use a whole-school approach, coupled with other strategies which suited the emotional or social needs of particular pupils, such as introducing a support centre for pupils.
14. More than half the schools in the survey reviewed their behaviour policy during the first year. Schools which had begun this process before introducing the programme found that its materials helped leadership teams to make explicit some of the values they wanted to develop. In some cases, being part of the programme encouraged a much needed review.
15. The programme prompted two different types of actions:
 - reviewing and adapting current practice, particularly that related to behaviour policies
 - introducing new concepts and ways of working with pupils.

These were equally valuable because they related to schools' individual needs.

16. By the end of the first year, the actions that the schools had taken included:
 - training for all staff, led by the schools themselves, on aspects of social, emotional and behavioural skills work
 - reviewing school behaviour policies¹
 - introducing a student support centre as an outcome of the policy review
 - reviewing anti-bullying policies and procedures
 - introducing circle time for the target groups and sometimes for other groups
 - outdoor activity trips to support pupils in interacting positively with each other
 - auditing the curriculum to find out what aspects of social, emotional and behavioural skills were taught through subjects
 - introducing the objectives of the programme in lessons, and explicit teaching of the skills that pupils would need to develop resilience, cooperation and empathy.

¹ The influence of the Developing social, emotional and behavioural skills programme included a greater focus on praise and rewards, and on involving pupils.

The importance of leadership

17. The quality of leadership determined the success or failure of the project. The pilot was most successful in the schools where all or most of the leadership team committed themselves to the pilot from the beginning and were insistent that the work took a high priority. They made strategic plans with viable timescales and were realistic about what successful social, emotional and behavioural skills work could look like in their school. Detailed discussions ensured that they were clear about how the pilot could contribute to strengthening the school's ethos.
18. As a response to the programme, one school, led by a member of the senior team, made fundamental and effective changes to its pastoral system and the way in which pupils were grouped. Although there was no resistance to the work from other senior leaders, neither did they understand fully what needed to be achieved. Consequently, although the work led to significant positive changes to the provision for some pupils, it had limited impact on most of the staff's understanding of how to develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills.
19. In three of the schools, the leadership team did not promote the programme sufficiently, so little had changed by the end of the first year. One of these schools attributed the lack of progress to the materials. Two of the schools improved when the senior leadership changed during the pilot phase.
20. The schools that implemented the programme most effectively either developed a separate strategic plan for their social, emotional and behavioural skills work or included it as part of their school improvement plan which was linked to a stated outcome. The pilot was most effective when senior leaders made time for staff to discuss and reflect on their own social, emotional and behavioural skills. This was potentially contentious but, nonetheless, important. Senior staff provided high quality training using a range of materials, including those provided by the Secondary National Strategy. This increased the confidence of staff and helped them to consider how they could adapt what they already did to incorporate different ways of working.
21. At the end of the first year, the most effective schools started to involve more staff in leading aspects of the programme. These included heads of year or departments, PSHE leaders and other staff with a particular interest in the programme.

A whole-school philosophy or a personal, social and health education lesson?

22. Staff who understood the underlying philosophy of the programme at an early stage made sure that it permeated all aspects of school life. One school wrote that the programme:

‘...has helped us to address the balance between academic achievement and the education of the ‘whole child’. The social, emotional and behavioural skills programme is a platform to raise achievement while looking at the ‘whole’ experience of the child.’

This view was echoed by the schools that were most successful in applying the programme. In particular it represented how some of the higher attaining schools viewed the programme. However, where the philosophy was not understood, social, emotional and behavioural skills work remained a ‘bolt-on’ to PSHE lessons or form tutor time, rather than being taught across the curriculum, and was largely ineffective.

23. In schools whose ethos and values were strong and evident, or where they were developed as part of the programme, social, emotional and behavioural skills improved pupils’ views of themselves and others and led to better social interaction. Effective social, emotional and behavioural skills work encouraged better cooperation between pupils. Pupils listened to each other with respect, and were more sensitive to difference and understood the purpose of activities.
24. For the schools in the survey which already had a good understanding of its concepts, the programme provided helpful background materials and gave senior staff a vehicle to reinforce social, emotional and behavioural skills development with staff. In one school, the deputy headteacher noted:

‘We’re already doing these aspects well but now we’re part of the social, emotional and behavioural skills pilot we need to take it further.’

In two of the schools, the programme provided an effective vehicle for senior leaders to introduce such work where it had previously been lacking and where there was a tendency towards low expectations of what pupils could achieve.

25. In one school, the deputy headteacher saw the programme as a way to raise achievement for all from an already successful baseline. Training was provided and staff were asked to volunteer for further development work. More than half the staff attended the first development meeting. From this meeting, three working groups were formed: one to look at the programme within the curriculum; another for tutor time and PSHE development; and a third to focus on pupils’ involvement in contributing to the running of the school. Staff took firm leadership of these areas and generated a level of excitement about social,

emotional and behavioural skills work. Coupled with very strong leadership from the deputy headteacher, this approach produced excellent results. After five terms, staff were very aware of the importance of the programme and many were using effective approaches in their lessons. This had begun to have a positive effect on pupils' skills.

26. In another school, the headteacher believed strongly in developing pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills and initially emphasised improving the school's ethos, using the social, emotional and behavioural skills materials for support. The school's own evaluation during the fifth term of the pilot listed some far-reaching improvements:
- an improved atmosphere
 - fewer fights in school
 - more courtesy and respect and improved relationships between staff and pupils
 - a reduced number of exclusions for rude and aggressive behaviour and reduced litter and graffiti.
27. The emphasis on addressing these issues has helped to raise staff's morale. Staff are more willing to develop positive relationships with students and more staff are modelling good social, emotional and behavioural skills. As a consequence, there are now fewer incidents of confrontation and a greater focus on learning.

Linking social, emotional and behavioural skills with learning

28. Nine schools began their social, emotional and behavioural skills work by reviewing their behaviour management policies or aspects of their approach to managing behaviour. However, most soon realised that, to develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills, the work would need to focus on the curriculum and on approaches to learning. Schools which carefully wove social, emotional and behavioural skills into lessons and curriculum planning at an early stage discerned changes to the ways in which teachers helped pupils develop their skills, and to pupils' motivation, resilience and ability to work as part of a team. Teachers commented that improved attitudes in the pilot classes enabled them to take more risks by offering more challenging activities and ways of working. Teachers learnt from each other and practice was shared more readily.
29. The Secondary National Strategy produced a series of lesson plans using social, emotional and behavioural skills approaches and all but one of the schools in the survey trialled the materials. Generally, the schools regarded some aspects as a useful starting point, but most reported that they lacked depth. Schools which found the programme's concepts difficult to understand were unable to generalise from the techniques illustrated to their wider curriculum planning.

30. Several schools introduced the programme's objectives for social, emotional and behavioural skills alongside the learning objective for the lesson. One school held meetings about the target group once every two weeks, choosing the social, emotional and behavioural skills objectives for the group, such as 'to listen and speak appropriately', and discussing how they could be applied consistently. Staff agreed common approaches and discussed seating plans, learning styles and how to deal with low-level bullying. This had a clear impact on how teachers felt about the group, the group's feelings about their lessons, and on their social interactions in the classroom. A more consistent and relevant approach to the target group was implemented and the pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills improved. The meetings were key to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the initiative on pupils' and teachers' skills.
31. Other schools encouraged or expected teachers to set a social, emotional and behavioural skills objective for each lesson, such as developing the skills of working as a group, using positive language and being empathetic. The effectiveness of using the objectives depended on the extent to which the skills were taught or practised in the lesson and whether the objective was reviewed with pupils at the end. Where this happened regularly, pupils became used to the language and became more familiar with what was expected.
32. Staff in the schools did not have enough opportunities to meet to analyse the priorities for a group's social, emotional and behavioural skills development, or to agree and develop strategies. Not enough schools regularly discussed the way in which pupils were grouped and the affects that group dynamics could have on pupils' interactions and attitudes. The programme's materials did not emphasise the importance of analysing the barriers to positive behaviour and learning sufficiently, or the strategies that were needed to remove the barriers for a group or individual.
33. In one school which had begun work on how to incorporate social, emotional and behavioural skills development into lessons, HMI observed five lessons during the day which demonstrated the good development of such skills.

In a French lesson, the teacher set two objectives at the start of the lesson which explained the specific social, emotional and behavioural skills that were a focus of that lesson, as well as the objectives for French. The teacher consistently used techniques to develop the *independence and resilience* of more passive pupils, such as suggesting ways in which they could help themselves rather than simply giving them the answers.

During a mathematics lesson with a lower attaining set, the teacher continually focused on aspects of *the pupils' feelings about their work*, saying, for example: 'I could see from some of your faces that you were anxious about this part. Don't worry if it's confusing: if it is, I'll modify the main part of the lesson to make it less difficult.' This was very effective in

creating an atmosphere in which pupils were encouraged to *recognise and acknowledge their anxiety* so that they could receive support. At the end, the teacher asked the pupils to *review their feelings* about each part of the lesson, giving them some written questions and some vocabulary which they could use, such as 'feeling more confident', 'brilliant' and 'worried'. Pupils took this activity seriously and were able to *articulate how they had felt* about the lesson at the start and the end; for example 'I was really worried about these equations at the start but my *confidence* has grown during the lesson as I've realised that *I can do it after all, although it's hard.*'

In an English lesson the teacher skilfully wove references to *emotion* into his explanations of the context of *Macbeth*. Group work was a regular part of this teacher's lesson. As a result, pupils *cooperated extremely well* with each other and understood the importance of *good teamwork* to produce the necessary outcome.

In an outstanding history lesson, the teacher developed pupils' *motivation and resilience* very well. Through solving a 'murder mystery', he built up suspense and intrigue. Pupils became captivated and, consequently, their *concentration* was excellent and even pupils who sometimes found it difficult to concentrate *applied themselves* throughout the lesson to a task which involved careful *observation and listening*, as well as *cooperation*. *Resilience* was particularly well developed since the pupils were not given the desired outcome at the start of the lesson: the individual tasks were clear and carefully explained, but the 'big picture' did not become evident until the end of the lesson. Even the plenary became a 'cliff-hanger', ready for the next lesson.

The impact on pupils

34. Although the programme had not had a significant effect on pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills over five terms, in the schools where the programme was most successful it had begun to influence aspects of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Moreover, many pupils were affected positively by decisions that schools made as a result of the programme and the improved awareness of staff. Pupils benefited in particular from whole-school improvements such as policies to reward good behaviour, an improved anti-bullying policy or a student support centre. A few schools, supported by evaluations by HMIs during the survey, identified other examples of the impact of the programme on pupils, such as:
- more effective development of pupils' confidence so that they were participating better in their learning
 - benefits from the increased focus on the positive aspects of pupils' behaviour and social interactions
 - more settled behaviour

- less demonstration of egocentric behaviour
 - a greater willingness to persist with tasks they found difficult.
35. Pupils in the target group in one school had a very negative view of their education. They felt uncared for and bullied and that they were not learning enough. Their behaviour in lessons was often poor. This changed during the pilot. They were able to link the changes that the school had made to the more positive way that they were feeling. For many of them, this changed their attitudes to school. Communication with pupils about their conduct improved. Pupils felt that they had greater control over their own learning and behaviour and believed that they could make positive changes. They were calmer and more focused on learning. Serious incidents were very rare and most pupils stayed in class for the whole of each lesson every day, which had not been the case at the start of the programme. Exclusions from the group dropped by 90% and relationships among pupils were improved greatly.
36. The impact on the target group in another school was also good. There were fewer referrals to the disciplinary system than previously. The group members began to get along with each other better and personal issues among pupils interfered less with learning. Termly assessments of pupils' attitudes to learning and their academic progress showed steady improvement. In some curriculum areas, the pupils from the target group took a more positive role in supporting others and brought a greater maturity and sensitivity to lessons. Teachers found that the programme, coupled with other initiatives, enabled the pupils to work better with each other. Pupils' ability to comment constructively on each other's work and support one another to improve became a common feature of lessons. In some lessons, such as drama, the group was able to bring a greater subtlety of understanding to interpreting ideas. Pupils had more opportunities to work with each other. As a result of seating plans determined by the teachers, pupils had worked with everyone in their class and felt more comfortable in working with others than during the previous academic year. They also felt more confident in asking questions of each other and of teachers. Pupils specifically identified the support that they were given by teachers when other pupils responded negatively to what they said or the questions they asked. This removed pupils' fear of appearing to fail.

Barriers to success

37. Schools generally found it difficult to find a suitable starting point for the work of the programme. The materials from the Secondary National Strategy team did not give schools enough guidance about how to analyse the key barriers to pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills development or about how to choose their starting point, and therefore to focus accordingly.
38. Some staff were initially resistant to the initiative. Concerns about workload reflected some of the misconceptions about what the work would involve, as

did a tendency to see the programme as a set of materials to be delivered rather than as an approach to school improvement.

39. Two schools had to overcome staff's concerns about whether the programme would detract from the drive to raise standards. The deputy headteacher of one school in which the programme was very successful wrote:

'The exam driven culture makes it difficult sometimes to concentrate on social, emotional and behavioural skills. Teachers are worried about the exam focus – they still need to get the outcomes from exam results. Does the social, emotional and behavioural skills programme interfere? Is it too risky? The challenge will be to help schools to see how the two fit together.'

40. Four schools saw pressures on schools' and teachers' time and 'too many initiatives' as barriers. Several times, schools highlighted reviews of staffing, resulting from the introduction of teaching and learning responsibility allowances, as a problem. Some staff felt unwilling to become fully involved in new work, and the leadership team had less time available to plan and implement the necessary changes.
41. One school had not been fully staffed for a significant period when it joined the programme. This undermined the impact of the work, despite the school's serious commitment to it and the many positive changes made. Initially, the target group of pupils had temporary teachers who stayed for only for short periods, which led to a lack of continuity. Although this situation improved in the second half of the programme, the school still lacked the capacity to extend the programme to all staff.
42. The programme did not prompt or help schools enough to consider the potential effects of pupil groupings. In one school, inflexible setting of pupils by ability, where pupils spent the whole week together, militated against the positive effects of social, emotional and behavioural skills work until the school considered this aspect more carefully and made some appropriate changes. Few schools gave sufficient consideration to how pupils were grouped for learning, but those which did this systematically and well had a significant positive effect on pupils' interactions with each other.
43. Only two schools regularly agreed common approaches to working with groups which staff found challenging to teach because of their negative social interactions. For some of the target groups, the lack of such agreement undermined the effect of the work.
44. Most schools reported that they did not have sufficiently detailed information at the beginning of the pilot. Schools expressed a wish to receive materials in electronic form, with hyperlinks to more detailed research about developing social, emotional and behavioural skills. These links would be easier to access and to organise than paper copies. Schools also experienced difficulties with the

variable quality of the materials, particularly those which related to teaching and learning. Schools have, however, welcomed some of the more recent materials from the Secondary National Strategy which are designed for senior leaders.

Support from local authorities

45. The amount and type of support which schools received from the Secondary National Strategy consultant in their local authority varied according to the authority's perception of the individual school's needs. High-achieving schools generally received little individual support.
46. One local authority set up an effective professional development group in which teachers met regularly to write materials for their schools and share experiences and ideas. Once materials were written, they were collated by the consultant and given to all the schools in the group. The strength of this approach was that staff were looking at social, emotional and behavioural skills in depth, with sufficient time to plan, reflect and discuss. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the implementation still depended on the commitment of each school's senior team to the programme.
47. Schools valued the opportunities to meet and discuss progress at the network meetings organised by consultants. However, the schools which were the furthest ahead in their programme found that opportunities were limited at these meetings to gain support or new ideas. The Secondary National Strategy had no mechanism within the programme to link the more developed schools to enable them to discuss common issues.
48. Some of the schools tended to rely on the visits by HMI to help them to analyse their progress and the next steps in their development rather than on the local authority consultants. It was clear that, whatever its source, good quality professional discussion, including a high level of challenge, was important in ensuring positive outcomes for schools' social, emotional and behavioural skills work.

The future of the programme

49. Towards the end of the survey, schools were asked whether they planned to continue with social, emotional and behavioural skills work when the pilot finished. All but one intended to do so, and almost all had clear plans about the next steps. Even in the schools which implemented the programme most effectively, it was clear that social, emotional and behavioural skills development needed to be continued for a significant period of time before it would have an impact on pupils' skills. In response to the question about continuing with the work, a deputy headteacher wrote:

'Absolutely! The social, emotional and behavioural skills programme has made a difference to staff and students. Some staff are sceptical, but the majority are in favour of carrying on with the work as they believe it is a fundamental part of their job. We would like to develop progression from Year 6 to Year 7 (SEAL to Secondary SEAL). We want to employ staff that are social, emotional and behavioural skills practitioners. This will help to create a safe, caring and positive learning environment. Three years ago there was an 'us and them' mentality that was causing confrontation and underachievement. This has largely disappeared but still exists with a minority of staff and students, so it is vital to carry on with this work.'

50. A school which had not made much progress in the initial stages of the pilot considered it worthwhile to continue with the programme: it saw the improved emotional well-being of pupils contributing to a happier school and an improvement in the overall outcomes for pupils. It also appreciated the programme's role in helping to improve teaching and learning, and underpinning much of the Every Child Matters agenda. Similar views were expressed by most of the survey schools. Many had already planned the next steps and, for some, this had become part of their school improvement plan. One school did not wish to continue as it felt the materials were largely inappropriate to its context.
51. During the second year, two of the schools which had made slow progress in the first year of the programme realised that, in order for the programme to be effective, they needed a coherent whole-school approach rather than a piecemeal one.

Overall evaluation

52. The programme was equally successful in the challenging contexts of lower attaining schools and in higher attaining schools located in more affluent areas: the quality of the leadership rather than the context of the school was the main factor in ensuring success. In the successful schools, senior leaders quickly recognised the contribution that the programme could make to supporting or improving the school's ethos and values. They also recognised how it could help teachers to emphasise their school's values in practical ways in classroom organisation and teaching. In these schools the programme quickly became part of the way things were done and were incorporated in strategic planning.
53. After five terms, the greatest impact in the pilot schools was on teachers' attitudes towards the idea of the programme and their understanding of how to develop systematically the skills that pupils needed within subject lessons. As a result, in nine of the 11 schools there were discernible improvements in some teachers' skills in developing pupils' social, emotional and behavioural competencies. Where the programme was most effective, teachers adjusted teaching methods to take account of the pupils' specific needs across the curriculum or in a number of subjects. As a result, pupils worked better in

teams, were able to recognise and articulate their feelings more effectively, and showed greater respect for each other's differences and strengths. In particular, their resilience – the ability to cope with challenge and change – improved.

54. Evaluating success challenged even the most effective schools. Throughout the pilot, schools found it difficult to evaluate the impact of their work in developing social, emotional and behavioural skills and the guidance from the Secondary National Strategy was not clear or detailed enough about monitoring and evaluation. Separating what the programme had achieved from the range of other initiatives was also difficult. Schools were further hampered in their monitoring and evaluation at the start of the pilot because they had not established a clear baseline or success criteria. Schools which had worked on improving their ethos, for example, were not always sure about how they could assess the impact of their work.
55. Local authorities' consultants for behaviour and attendance sometimes assisted schools in their evaluations, and many of the schools found that the termly inspection by HMI provided useful additional analyses. This helped them to see where they had made a difference, but at that stage the schools lacked the tools to be able to do this for themselves.

Notes

HMI visited 11 schools in six local authorities. These were selected to include a cross-section of schools involved in the pilot. The sample therefore included mixed and single-sex schools, faith and non-faith schools, and one special school. Inspections took place over five terms. Apart from the Plymouth schools, which joined the pilot one term later than the rest, the first inspection occurred in the summer term 2005 when the pilot began and the final inspection took place in the autumn term 2006. Inspections for the Plymouth schools began in the autumn term 2005 and ended in the spring term 2007. Eight schools were inspected five times. Three schools received four inspections, but all were inspected in the final term of the survey.

Each inspection comprised a two-day visit to the school. With the exception of two visits, the same inspector visited the same school each time. This allowed HMI to gather longitudinal data and to compare the progress the staff and pupils were making each term.

Before the first inspection, each school selected a group of pupils in Year 7 or Year 8 to form the target group for the survey. In some schools this was a class of pupils who were taught together all or most of the time. In others this was a tutor or form group which was then split into different groups for lessons. Some schools initially focused their pilot work on this group and their teachers. Other schools chose to work with the whole staff. Whichever method the school chose, HMI observed the

same class on each visit or, in the case of tutor groups which were then split for lessons, a group within that class.

On each visit, most of one day was spent observing the target group in lessons (generally four to six lessons), at lunchtime and at break time. Lesson observations had two main purposes: to observe the progress that pupils were making in developing their social, emotional and behavioural skills and to observe the effectiveness of the strategies teachers that were using. Discussions took place with pupils on the first and last visits to determine their views on a variety of social, emotional and behavioural skills related issues. Informal discussions were held with pupils on each visit. In the special school, due to the nature of pupils' needs, all discussions were informal.

HMI also held discussions with senior leaders and teachers on each visit. Key documents such as the school's social, emotional and behavioural skills plan were scrutinised. HMI held discussions with the school's local authority consultant at least once and, generally, on several occasions during the survey.

Dr Robin Banerjee from the University of Sussex, in partnership with Ofsted, offered the survey schools a series of questionnaires based on pupils' and teachers' perceptions of their interactions, relationships and behaviour. Eight schools completed the questionnaires with their target groups; these were analysed by the university and data were given to schools. Part of the data comprised a sociogram showing pupils' perceptions of their relationships within the group. HMI discussed the sociograms and the other questionnaire results with the schools. On two occasions, Dr Banerjee joined HMI to give feedback to schools about the results.

Further information

D Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (ISBN 055338371X), London, 1995.

Excellence and enjoyment; social and emotional aspects of learning, improving behaviour, improving learning (DfES 0110-2005G), DfES, 2005.

This is available online at:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/banda/seal/

Annex 1

The University of Sussex questionnaires

The schools in the survey were sent a number of questionnaires that were to be completed by the pupil groups being monitored by HMI. The measures included pupils' reports about themselves and each other, as well as teachers' reports about each pupil. They covered issues such as:

- peer relations
- behavioural reputation
- loneliness
- social anxiety
- beliefs about bullying and aggression.

Eight of the 11 participating schools returned the questionnaires, yielding data for 208 pupils (113 boys, 95 girls).

Data from many of the measures presented a positive impression of pupils' social and emotional functioning at school.

- Teachers were in general significantly more likely to rate pupils as cooperative than as disruptive (mean scores: 3.7 vs 1.7 on a scale from 1 – not at all – to 5 – very much). This was equally true for boys and for girls.
- Average levels of loneliness, social anxiety and self-reported peer problems were all significantly below the midpoint of the response scales ('sometimes' or 'partly true'). This was true for both boys and girls.

Pupils' responses to questions about handling aggression and bullying suggested that this remains a challenging area for many of these pupils.

- Pupils' beliefs about adults' responsiveness to bullying (including adults' awareness of bullying and capacity to stop bullying) were only at the midpoint of the response scale for both boys and girls.
- Pupils' beliefs about their own capacity to respond assertively but calmly to bullying was at the midpoint of the scale for girls, but significantly higher than the midpoint for boys.

There were significant differences in the average scores of the groups for many of the elements. Groups in different schools exhibited different patterns of behaviours, feelings and attitudes. In some schools, the monitored pupil groups gave significantly lower ratings than average regarding their own capacity to handle bullying or aggression and the responsiveness of adults at school, which was often also reflected in the teacher ratings. This was not surprising given that some schools chose groups which they perceived to have under-developed social skills as the target group for their initial social, emotional and behavioural skills work.

Important differences between pupils could also be found within each monitored group. Pupils were asked to nominate three others in the group with whom they most and least liked to spend free time. On the basis of this information a calculation was made of the level of peer acceptance and rejection experienced by each pupil. Differences in peer relations were clearly related to behavioural reputation and emotional functioning.

Approximately 15% of pupils were classed as relatively popular within the pupil group (receiving an average of more than five positive peer nominations and less than one negative peer nomination). Relative to the sample average, these pupils were seen as significantly:

- more cooperative by peers and teachers
- less disruptive by peers and teachers
- less aggressive by peers and teachers
- more as a leader by peers and teachers.

These pupils also reported significantly lower levels of loneliness and social anxiety.

Approximately 13% of pupils were classed as relatively rejected within the pupil group (receiving an average of less than one positive peer nomination and more than six negative peer nominations). Relative to the sample average, these pupils were:

- seen as significantly less cooperative by peers and teachers
- seen significantly less as a leader by peers and teachers.

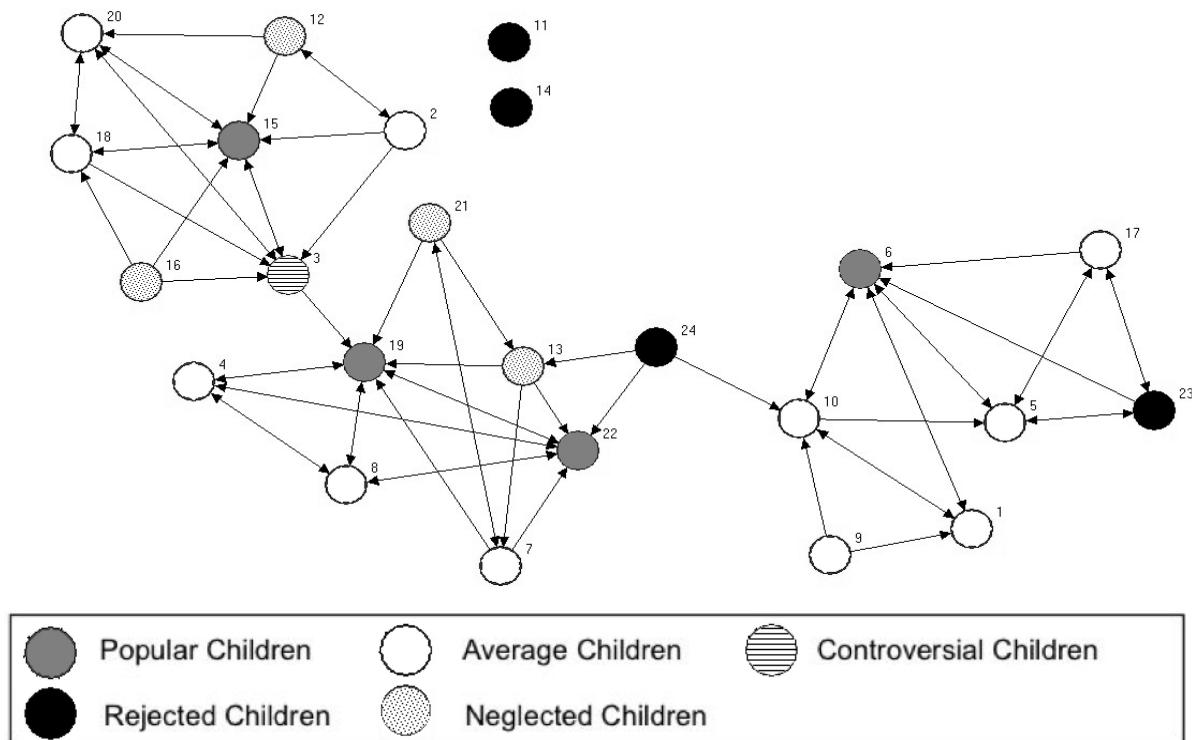
These pupils reported significantly higher levels of loneliness and social anxiety, and greater peer problems.

Approximately 8% of pupils were classed as controversial (receiving relatively high numbers of positive and negative peer nominations). Relative to the sample average, these pupils were seen as the most disruptive and aggressive by peers and teachers, but reported significantly lower loneliness and fewer peer problems, despite often receiving high numbers of negative peer nominations.

Example of a sociogram

Part of the research involved asking pupils to nominate the three classmates with whom they most liked to spend free time (positive nominations), and the three classmates with whom they least liked to spend free time (negative nominations).

The University of Sussex created sociograms which show each pupil as a circle, labelled by their individual code number. The shading of the circle indicates the pupil's status within the peer group. The arrows indicate pupils' positive nominations, with double-headed arrows indicating reciprocated nominations. In the example below, pupils 19 and 22 nominated each other as classmates with whom they most liked to spend time, whereas none of the positive nominations made by pupil 24 were reciprocated.



Annex 2

Schools visited for this survey

Brockworth Enterprise School, Gloucestershire

Chipping Campden School, Gloucestershire

Friern Barnet School, Barnet

Levenshulme High School, Manchester

The Morton School, Cumbria

Newall Green High School, Manchester

Oak Lodge School, Barnet

St Boniface's RC College, Plymouth

St Mary's Catholic School, North East Lincolnshire

Sir John Hunt Community Sports College, Plymouth

William Howard School, Cumbria