

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER  
LEGAL ISSUES

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# Promoting and supporting positive behaviour in primary schools

Developing social and emotional  
aspects of learning (SEAL)



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# Contents

Why use SEAL to support positive behaviour?	2
The knowledge, skills and understanding that can be developed in schools, through the SEAL resource	3
What are the key features of the SEAL curriculum resource that might support positive behaviour?	5
What are the key underpinnings of SEAL?	6
Sharing effective practice	8
What is in the SEAL resources?	10

## Why use SEAL to support positive behaviour?

Social, emotional and behavioural skills underlie almost every aspect of school, home and community life, including effective learning and getting on with other people. They are fundamental to school improvement. Where children have good skills in these areas, and are educated within an environment supportive to emotional health and well-being, they will be motivated and equipped to:

- be effective and successful learners
- make and sustain friendships
- deal with and resolve conflict effectively and fairly
- solve problems with others or by themselves
- manage strong feelings such as frustration, anger and anxiety
- be able to promote calm and optimistic states that further the achievement of goals
- recover from setbacks and persist in the face of difficulties
- work and play cooperatively
- compete fairly and win and lose with dignity and respect for competitors
- recognise and stand up for their rights and the rights of others
- understand and value the differences and commonalities between people, respecting the right of others to have beliefs and values different from their own.

## The knowledge, skills and understanding that can be developed in schools, through the SEAL resource

The SEAL resource provides a set of learning opportunities designed to help children develop the social, emotional and behavioural skills that we want children to possess when they leave.

### Self-awareness

Self-awareness enables children to have some understanding of themselves. They know how they learn, how they relate to others, what they are thinking and what they are feeling. They use this understanding to organise themselves and plan their learning.

Self-awareness means:

- knowing myself
- understanding my feelings.

### Managing feelings

In managing their feelings, children use a range of strategies to recognise and accept their feelings. They can use this to regulate their learning and behaviour, for example, managing anxiety or anger, or demonstrating resilience in the face of difficulty.

Managing feelings means:

- managing how I express my feelings
- managing the way I am feeling.

### Motivation

Motivation enables learners to take an active and enthusiastic part in learning. Intrinsically motivated learners recognise and derive pleasure from learning. Motivation enables learners to set themselves goals and work towards them, to focus and concentrate on learning, to persist when learning is difficult and to develop independence, resourcefulness and personal organisation.

Motivation includes:

- setting goals and planning to meet them
- persistence and resilience
- evaluation and review.

## Empathy

Being able to empathise involves understanding others, anticipating and predicting their likely thoughts, feelings and perceptions. It involves seeing things from another's point of view and modifying one's own response, if appropriate, in the light of this understanding.

Empathy means:

- understanding the feelings of others
- valuing and supporting others.

## Social skills

Social skills enable children to relate to others, take an active part in a group, communicate with different audiences, negotiate, resolve differences and support the learning of others.

- Belonging to a community
- Resolving conflicts
- Friendships and other relationships
- Standing up for myself
- Working together
- Making wise choices

## What are the key features of the SEAL curriculum resource that might support positive behaviour?

The SEAL resource offers:

- an explicit, structured, whole-curriculum framework and resources for developing the social, emotional and behavioural skills of all children, which can easily be incorporated into the existing approach to curriculum design and delivery
- a spiral curriculum that revisits each theme (and the skills associated with that theme), offering new ideas yearly, so that a child entering the school in the Foundation Stage and leaving at the end of Year 6 will have experienced each theme (at an appropriate level), each year. Children can therefore demonstrate progress in the key social, emotional and behavioural skills as they progress through the school
- a means of enhancing and increasing the effectiveness of important aspects of whole-school or setting provision for PSHE and citizenship
- assemblies/Foundation Stage group sessions based on a clear SEAL theme
- suggestions for work on each assembly or group-time theme in each year group, from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6, in a range of curriculum areas. These are the six areas of learning from the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage, core and foundation subjects for Years 1–6. The aim is that different year groups work on different aspects of the shared theme, and can return in a follow-up assembly to present their work and reflect together on their learning
- the potential to teach children how to use thinking skills and feelings together to guide their behaviour, using, for example, calming-down, problem-solving and conflict management techniques that have been explicitly taught
- the potential to reach a shared understanding and use of the SEAL strategies across the school or setting, the home and the community
- a potential whole-school or setting focus for noticing and celebrating positive behaviours: for example, one week 'catching children being kind' or another 'catching children resolving an argument well'. This includes the whole school or setting community – children, parents/carers, caretaker, office staff and lunchtime supervisors, as well as teachers/practitioners and teaching assistants – who can all use the system to nominate a child for celebration.



## What are the key underpinnings of SEAL?

### Understanding our feelings

A key focus in the SEAL resource is the development of the children's understanding of emotions. There are several ideas that can be explored through many of the themes in the resource. Key ideas include:

- developing a vocabulary of feelings
- expressing our feelings
- calming-down strategies
- thinking and feeling
- emotional hijack
- threat, fight and flight
- managing our feelings, including anxiety, anger and fear
- responding to loss and change.

### Conflict resolution

One of the key areas of learning within the materials is about resolving conflict. This is an on-going theme of the materials that is embodied in the **Peaceful problem-solving** and **Problem-solving processes**.

### Assertiveness

The **Good to be me** theme includes activities to encourage children to become assertive, which means being able to recognise and stand up for their rights while recognising and respecting the rights of others.

### Learning to learn

In order to remain well motivated, we need to be self-aware in the area of learning. The **Going for goals!** theme provides several opportunities for children to consider how they learn best and the conditions they need for learning.

This theme draws on the work of Howard Gardner, on multiple intelligences, to help children consider the question: 'How am I clever?' – rather than the more usual question: 'How clever am I?' It also provides an opportunity for children to consider their particular strengths in learning by seeing, doing or talking and listening.

## Calming down

Although feeling stressed, anxious or angry are important and useful emotions, sometimes these feelings can be overwhelming. It is important that children and adults have their own strategies for calming down. Three ways to calm down are suggested in the materials:

- distraction
- exercise
- relaxation.

There are ideas to help children relax in all of the year-group sets. Approaches include **visualisation** and **physical relaxation**.

## Motivation

The **Going for goals!** theme explores the idea of motivation in greater detail. This involves encouraging learners to be able to set a goal, break a long-term goal into small steps, be persistent through a range of strategies, realise when they have met their goal and review the effectiveness of what they have done.

## Solution-focused thinking

The SEAL curriculum resource draws on solution-focused thinking during some of the learning opportunities by encouraging children to:

- look at times when they have been successful
- identify goals, 'miracles', dreams or preferred futures
- set targets to help them to reach their goals or preferred future
- use scaling to identify and support the process.

## Sharing effective practice

1. Whole-school implementation of the peaceful problem-solving process as part of the ongoing SEAL programme

Mowlem Primary School, Tower Hamlets: one-form entry

### Action

Following a baseline assessment, which involved a series of observations at the school and in the playground, it was found that children were unable to express how they were feeling and why, and couldn't listen to others, see another viewpoint or take the views of others on board. It was agreed that there was a need to:

- enhance children's conflict resolution skills, especially regarding playground incidents
- develop a level of consistency for managing incidents
- reduce children's reliance on staff for resolution.

### Impact on the children

Incidences of inappropriate behaviour in the playground and during lessons were recorded in notes, completed by the playground squad, and time-out sheets filled in by the children. Before the implementation of the programme, on average, the playground squad completed six notes per day. After the intervention, the number of reported incidents has fallen by about 75%. It is now rare for children to be sent in during playtimes and most incidents can be dealt with effectively and immediately, either by the children themselves or with a lower level of adult support. Children are now more able to resolve issues for themselves, to discuss the causes and consequences of their behaviour and to recognise the steps that need to be taken, both to resolve the problem and to reduce the likelihood of it happening again. Issues that arise are dealt with at the time and, as a result, are not detracting from learning and teaching in the classroom.

### Next steps

- Plan parent and family sessions to introduce the theme and use the activities.

## 2. Teaching a values education programme to encourage positive behaviour throughout the school

Ranikhet Primary School, Reading: Community: ages 3–11, 188 children on roll

### Action

The headteacher introduced SEAL in a staff meeting. The staff agreed to implement the SEAL materials if a framework could be agreed that would sit alongside the current 'values' education programme already running in the school.

- The school's senior management team (SMT) combined the relevant elements of the SEAL resources with their current values programme.
- A cycle of teaching was introduced, with each new month starting with an assembly introducing the value of the month. This theme is continued into class and phase assemblies, using the SEAL materials. Follow-up lessons, including circle time, also use SEAL materials.

### Impact on the children

- Throughout the month, children receive constant, high-quality input that makes explicit links between the 'values' and their behaviour.
- Children are able to talk about their emotional needs; for example, taking themselves to the behaviour education support team for anger management sessions.
- A healthy schools audit has shown a reduction in behaviour-related incidents at break-time, and a reduction in the number of incidents of bullying reported.
- Within the school community, there is a renewed public focus and increased awareness of the value of this work.

### Next steps

Explore ways of linking **SEAL's material** with **values education** and the new **PSHE scheme of work** recently purchased by the school.

- Develop a **training programme for midday supervisors**.
- Develop an **induction package for new staff and governors**.
- Explore ways of further enhancing the work through taking part in the **emotional well-being project** in Reading.
- Continue to **monitor incidents of negative behaviour**, such as bullying and racist incidents.

## What is in the SEAL resources?

There are seven sets of themed activities.

- *New beginnings*
- *Getting on and falling out*
- *Say no to bullying*
- *Going for goals!*
- *Good to be me*
- *Relationships*
- *Changes*

Each theme consists of:

- Theme overview and assembly booklet
- Purple set booklet: staff development activities relevant to the theme
- Red set booklet: Foundation Stage
- Blue set booklet: Years 1 and 2
- Yellow set booklet: Years 3 and 4
- Green set booklet: Years 5 and 6
- Silver set booklet: small group activities
- Gold set booklet: family activities

A whole-school resource file

A Guidance booklet and Getting started poster

A DVD: *Excellence and enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning: Getting started with SEAL*  
Ref 0150-2006 DVD-EN

A DVD: *Excellence and enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning: Small group work to develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills* Ref 1728-2005CDO-EN

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