

A photograph of three children on a swing set, overlaid with a pink tint. One child in the center is wearing a red hat and a blue and white striped shirt, smiling broadly. Two other children are visible on either side, also smiling. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

United Kingdom



## Aspects of Social and Emotional Learning in the United Kingdom

Christopher Clouder, in collaboration with Belinda Heys

### Abstract

In the UK, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own educational policies. This report focuses mainly on the education system in England where the care and education of children and adolescents is currently high on the government's agenda. The SEAL programme (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) is a government sponsored initiative which is offered to mainstream schools on a voluntary basis. At least 60% of primary schools and 15% of secondary schools are now using the programme.

Social and emotional learning forms part of the compulsory strands of the national curriculum such as personal, social and health education (known as PSHE), and citizenship education. In addition, the promotion of children's emotional well-being is a key aspect of the Health Promoting Schools movement, another national initiative that schools are free to take up on a voluntary basis.

The British media regularly focuses the public's attention on issues negatively affecting the mental health and behaviour of children and adolescents, such as commercial pressures, violent video games and films, permeable family structures, and the high number of school tests that children in England are required to take during the course of their school careers.

Three detailed case studies form part of this report: a primary school in a deprived area, one of the pilot secondary schools for the SEAL programme, and an independent school. Each school has taken differing approaches to supporting and promoting their pupils' social and emotional skills and wellbeing.

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## Introduction

The UK has a regionalised educational policy which means that the nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are, in this area, all independent of each other, although they keep a very close eye on one another's developments. This report will be mainly focused on England where education and childhood have been a major preoccupation for the last fifteen years and are increasingly paramount in the domestic political and cultural debate. Over these years there have been very many reforms and policy changes that have caused some confusion and tension in their wake but are nevertheless symptomatic of an evolving system which accepts that the greatest disservice to children would be complacency. After many efforts there is still a high rate of child poverty, a perceived decline in public behaviour and little social mobility. Much effort has been put into the development of infant education from 5 to 11 in order to give children the security and stimulation they need, and this process is being expanded to later age ranges.

Education in all parts of the UK is in a state of flux and has been for more than a decade. As well as having a national curriculum in England, which according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is the most prescriptive in Europe, there is a constant stream of initiatives coming from the government to do things better and differently. Presently, compulsory education runs from the age of 5 to 16, although the English government is considering raising this to 18 years of age. The early years play-based foundation stage, which the government insists is a framework rather than a curriculum, continues until the children are seven years of age. Education is compulsory but not schooling as such, so there is a strong and growing home school movement. It is estimated that between 40,000 and 55,000 (around 1%) of all school age children are educated at home and it is legal, as long as the

parent ensures the child receives an education. Although they don't have to follow the national curriculum and they don't have to sit examinations, many do. They will usually be visited by an officer from their local authority around once a year to ensure that the children are progressing. Around half a million school age children, 7.5% of the total of the 8.2 million pupils in 25,200<sup>1</sup> maintained and independent schools in England, are in private education for which the parents pay the full costs. These schools too are free to follow their own curriculum but are subject to regular inspections. Private schools are often known as independent or public schools. State funded schools are known as maintained schools and are divided into primary and secondary schools with the transition from one to the other coming at the age of 11 in England and age 12 in Scotland. Under recent legislation new independent schools with state funding are being created and are known as academies. They have greater flexibility with regard to the curriculum, are allowed to specialize in subjects of their own choosing and in return are expected to benefit the community of the schools in general by serving areas of educational disadvantage.

Over the years more emphasis has been placed on testing as a way of improving standards and now it is reckoned that children in England take a high-profile test or exam virtually every year of their school career<sup>2</sup>, the highest figure in the world. There is a strengthening reaction to the never-ending testing culture among teachers, their unions and educators in general, so both the prescriptions of the national curriculum and the amount of testing attached to them are gradually being eased. This practice of continuous summative assessment by testing is seen, in some quarters, as a source of stress and is known to its critics as "education by numbers". An independent inquiry, The Primary Review (2007)<sup>3</sup> into the English primary education system expressed deep concern about

the pressure on young children, teachers and families caused by national tests at ages 7 and 11. It was felt that they contributed to a view of the world and its contemporary problems which contributed to "... a pervasive anxiety about current educational and social contexts ... and a deeper pessimism about the world in which today's children are growing up." However the Welsh Assembly scrapped standard assessment tests (SATs) at 7 years of age in 2001 in order to "focus more on social skills and play" and has since also abolished SATs at 11 and 14, and school performance league tables too. The Educational Minister of Wales

with initiatives such as the NHSS – National Healthy School Standard. This builds on the Health Promoting School approach of twenty years or so, initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Together with the emergence of new governmental departments, these signify how important children and education have become in national awareness in a relatively short time, and consequently how high in government budgetary terms these issues now lie. It is against this background that ideas of emotional and social learning have surfaced and are being steadily implemented.

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insists that personal and social development will be key elements in the new curriculum that is to be introduced in 2008 and that all Welsh schools will receive guidance on emotional literacy before then.

In England the government department that was previously called the Department of Education and Skills has recently been divided into two, so at present there is a Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and another separate Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, which is responsible for further and higher education. The rationale for this recent change being that the care and education of children needs the highest level of political representation in its own right and that everything that impacts on them should be considered as interrelated. In addition, the Department of Health still has its own agenda for children

### Social and Emotional Education in England

#### The Changing Role of Schools

The Secretary of State for Children, School and Families, a high ranking ministerial post, announced officially (in August 2007) that all state schools in England will be given the opportunity to be supported to develop the social and emotional skills of all their pupils, using the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme as the vehicle for this. SEAL is described as a comprehensive approach to promoting social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools. Alongside this initiative the Children's Plan was launched in December 2007 and takes this thinking a stage further. In view of the new challenges facing children and young

people in a fast changing world it envisages a “new role for schools at the centre of communities”. It aims to improve all aspects of child health, build up a national play strategy by building more playgrounds, supervised play parks and youth centres, and extends child-care in disadvantaged communities. Testing will begin to focus on “stage not age” because it recognises that children do not all develop at the same rate, although it is not yet clear

how this change will be implemented. This approach is also designed to ensure a new relationship between parents and schools. In addition, there are proposals to give all pupils at least five hours of cultural activity every week. Recent government policy reflects a change in focus and approach towards the development and well-being of children and young people. The latest being the DCSF Secretary of State commissioning a review of the primary curriculum expressly focused on the “development of the whole child as well as their level of attainment”, on the basis that “personal, social and emotional capabilities are closely related to educational attainment, success in the labour market and children’s wellbeing.” Underlying all these plans are The Children’s Act legislation and Every Child Matters agenda (2003) which recognise the need for every child to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy their childhood, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. Parallel to this is an increasing awareness of the impact of pupil behaviour and attendance on teaching and learning and the importance of developing emotional well-being amongst staff and pupils in schools, not only in raising attainment levels and improving behaviour but also in order to provide young people with the necessary skills to engage positively with society.

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In 2006, the Teaching and Learning 2020 Review Group reported on the vision of personalised learning across schools in 2020. The report drew attention to the need for schools to ensure that young people developed skills and attitudes which are valued by employers, such as knowing how to work in a team, being able to communicate effectively and being resilient in the face of difficulties. In addition, one of the key recommendations from a recent report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)<sup>4</sup> on the ‘state of youth’ was an increased focus on improving teaching and learning in the areas of personal and social skills development. This change in policy reflects an increasing awareness that pupils’ personal, emotional and behavioural development both supports their ‘subject based’ learning within the classroom and, independently, complements it. It is increasingly acknowledged that pupils

need to learn, and be taught, about the behaviours appropriate to particular situations just as they have to learn, and be taught, for example, the suitable arithmetic function for a problem.

### Education for Citizenship

#### Resilience

In the following section the differing approaches to social and emotional education in England will be introduced. One approach that is being piloted in England is through the concept of resiliency where children are taught to think optimistically, empathise with others and develop coping strategies to deal with the setbacks of daily life. Resiliency lessons are being rolled out in 21 secondary schools across the country for a three-year trial period within the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and citizenship syllabus (which is part of the National Curriculum). PSHE, which includes a range of subjects from economic well-being and financial capabilities to sex and relationships, is already an established element in schools and practitioners are now exploring how their practice relates to the new push for emotional literacy. From September 2002 every school has had to teach a subject called Citizenship. In the United Kingdom, the idea of citizens as ‘persons coexisting in a society’ is expressed in the consultation paper Education for Citizenship in Scotland, published by Learning and Teaching Scotland, as follows: “Citizenship involves enjoying rights and exercising responsibilities in various types of community. This way of seeing citizenship encompasses the specific idea of political participation by members of a democratic state. It also includes the more general notion that citizenship embraces a range of participatory activities, not all overtly political, that affect the welfare of communities. (...) Citizenship is about making informed choices and decisions, and about taking action, individually and as part of collective processes.”

The connection between Citizenship education and the PSHE programme is quite close, as seen in one secondary school’s (Ivy Banks, Lancashire) PSHE curriculum, for instance, which reads:

- **Year 7** Settling in School, Homework and Setting Targets, Puberty, Drugs/Choices, Bullying, Healthy Eating and Safety, Children’s Rights and Responsibilities, Personal Safety and Sex Education
- **Year 8** Decision Making (which includes truancy, alcohol and solvent misuse), Friendships, Families, Coping with loss
- **Year 9** Prejudice (which includes racism, disability, stereotyping and sexuality), Sex and Relationships (which includes contraception, sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy), Careers and Option Choices, Money Management, Animal Rights and Planning for Years 10 and 11.
- **Year 10** Drugs Education, Work Experience and Police and Crime
- **Year 11** Careers and preparation for leaving school, work for the National Record of Achievement, Homes and Housing, Sex and Relationships

#### Health Promoting Schools

The national Healthy School Standard (NHSS) is a long-standing programme which includes the promotion of emotional well-being as part of the global network of Health Promoting Schools, theoretically devised by the World Health Organisation (WHO). It is thought that 3.7 million children, nearly half the total number of school children and young people in England are attending a “healthy school”. (Weare, 2004)

points out that this approach has 12 criteria for a health promoting school, 3 of which are directly connected to social and emotional well-being:

- Active promotion of self-esteem of all students by demonstrating that everyone can make a contribution to the life of the school
- The development of good relations between staff and students and the daily life of the school
- The clarification for staff and students of the social aims of the school

She adds that in her view five other criteria also have a direct bearing:

- The development of good links between school, home and the community
- The active promotion of the health and well-being of the school staff
- The consideration of the role of staff exemplars in health related issues
- The realisation of the potential of specialist services in the community for advice and support in health education
- The development of the educational potential of the school health services beyond routine screening towards the active support of the curriculum

In England schools are given a lot of independence in their approach, following any social and emotional education programme they think is suitable and many devise their own toolkits in cooperation with other agencies, which, of course, is part and parcel of being a socially and emotionally literate community. Three examples of this are:

West Kidlington Primary School has a curriculum framed around 22 values, from “respect” to “simplicity”.

The charity Beatbullying claims that “Teaching children emotional intelligence is central to the successful prevention of bullying behaviour all through our lives” and that primary schools where the bullying prevention programme has been initiated have seen an average of a 40% reduction in instances. (BBC 3/5/2007).

The USA Pen Resiliency Project (PRP) has been particularly influential in the UK having trained hundreds of professionals over the last ten years. It uses a mixture of lectures, role-playing and games to show teachers how to apply conceptual ideas drawn from social and cognitive theory in their classrooms and in the world around them. In 11 evaluations of its impact so far it has been shown to cut teenage depression rates by half and bad behaviour by a third.

#### **SEAL: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning**

Gradually, over the last six years, the ideas about emotional and social learning have been percolating through the system, although in financial terms it is unclear as to how much money the government will invest in it. The approach commissioned and designed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and offered to mainstream schools is called SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) known for a short time in both the primary and secondary sectors as SEBS (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills). From the outset it was not intended that SEAL would be a centrally imposed programme but rather that it would provide a framework and guidance to support schools to develop pupils’ social and emotional skills within each school’s unique circumstances. Schools are being offered examples on a whole school basis with the sup-

port of publications, specialist advisors and professional development courses for practising teachers. SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) was begun in primary schools, and is now available to both primary and secondary schools. The domains it

covers are self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills.<sup>5</sup> Social mobility seems to be in a state of stagnation, according to a report on recent changes in intergenerational mobility in Britain, which came to the conclusion that without improvement this was accompanied by a greater incidence of educational inequality.<sup>6</sup> This lack of mobility has ramifications in that it prolongs the cycle of deprivation, reduces the opportunity for well-being for a sizable section of the community and reduces children’s faith in their futures and their aspirations. The difference between how children in wealthy families experience socialisation and those from families with fewer resources has negative long-term effects on social cohesion.

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- They include explicit teaching and learning programmes that develop key skills, attitudes and behaviours, in pupils and staff
- They take a whole school approach and link with existing work in schools, including and especially on the promotion of good behaviour and sound learning
- They involve parents and the community
- They are supported by outside agencies, working together in a co-ordinated and coherent way

One of the architects of this potentially dramatic change in educational practice has been Professor Katherine Weare of the Uni-

- They are coherent and well planned
- They last for many years, and do not expect instant results
- They start early, in the primary or even infant school
- They encourage appropriate climates –that foster warm relationships, encourage participation, develop pupil and teacher autonomy, and foster clarity about boundaries, rules and positive expectations
- They promote teachers' emotional and social competence and well-being, and provide appropriate staff development

Hence the policy that SEAL represents is not a prescriptive programme that can be manufactured, duplicated and then imitated across institutions or cultures, but an ongoing process of development.

The first feasibility study for the current SEAL programme (Weare & Gray 2003) was completed in 2003 and has been the foundation for implementation and research. Interestingly, it was undertaken by the Health Education Unit at the University of Southampton and covered both health and schooling issues. This report lists the benefits of social and emotional learning that were identified as desired outcomes in the research literature, through experience in the field and among five local authorities who were pioneering work in this area. These include:

- Greater educational success
- Improvements in behaviour
- Increased inclusion,
- Improved learning
- Greater social cohesion
- And improvements in mental health.

The first interim evaluation report was issued in 2006. In 2008 there will be an evaluation of the small group work aspect of the Primary SEAL programme and an evaluation of the Secondary SEAL programme will appear in 2010. The initial idea was to concentrate on primary education for 4 to 11 year olds. At the time of writing 60% of all primary schools, (of which there are about 17,500) have adopted the SEAL programme and 20% more are expected to do so within the 2007/8 academic year.

Partly in response to the success of Primary SEAL, a specially designed SEAL programme for secondary schools<sup>9</sup> was developed and successfully piloted in 60 varied secondary schools. The programme is now being rolled out to 15% to 20% of secondary schools, out of a total of 3,300, with the hope that every school which wishes to will be included by 2011. In educational terms this is an extraordinarily fast and dramatic change considering it is not compulsory but entirely voluntary for schools to take the SEAL programme up or not.

The SEAL Secondary Programme Guidance manual<sup>10</sup> for schools is built on the two-year experience of primary schools as well as the secondary pilot and it highlights implementation tasks derived from this experience:

- Creating a clear and shared vision of the importance, purpose and outcomes of implementing SEAL with all members of the school community;
- Identifying and celebrating what the school is already doing well to promote social and emotional skills, what they might enhance and what they might introduce;
- Reviewing the current curriculum on offer and identifying where social

and emotional skills are currently promoted, and considering how this learning might be enhanced;

- Considering what other schools are doing in this area and what can be learned from them;
- Working with members of the school community to create a shared vision of the role and importance of social and emotional skills within the school community;
- Identifying appropriate individuals and groups to take a lead on SEAL at both strategic and operational levels;
- Planning action and recording this in the school development plan;
- Raising awareness of the importance of social and emotional skills, emphasising the links to whole-school processes, for example school improvement, teaching and learning, raising standards, increasing equal opportunities, celebrating diversity and increasing inclusion;
- Identifying staff development needs, planning and delivering whole-staff professional development, using a range of strategies including whole school training, peer mentoring, individual or group study and coaching etc.;
- Adapting, modifying and developing the curriculum to ensure that it promotes social and emotional skills in a systematic, coherent and comprehensive way that matches the needs of all pupils;
- Considering the wider implications of introducing SEAL: reviewing, adapting and modifying policies in the light of this;

- Involving pupils, staff, parents and carers;

The Primary SEAL programme is focused particularly on a suggested curriculum, with supporting material on whole school implementation. In Secondary SEAL the emphasis is on creating the right environment to support the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. In addition to the materials made available, teachers and schools themselves develop further the curriculum and lesson plans. It is important that the programme is supported by a committed leadership and management group who are able to introduce and sustain the programme. These schools are supported by their local educational authorities and provide an example for others.

It is recognised that introducing SEAL into secondary education will be much more challenging than in primary because of the pressure to produce good examination results and the tradition of subject teaching and teacher specialism. There is a tendency for secondary teachers to focus on the subject they are teaching rather than the development of the whole child / young person. At the moment there is no intention to include SEAL competencies in any testing regime as it is there solely to support and strengthen the students. Both teachers and students are expected to participate in this formative process and the developments that come about through the SEAL programme will eventually profoundly affect the school's relationship with its parents too. What is essential is the whole school environment in which the SEAL programme can operate and that there is sufficient support for all concerned.<sup>11</sup> Teachers and students become learners together. Programme coordinators and implementers work alongside each other and existing staff are helped in acquiring new and creative skills. Each school decides what fits their particular situation the best. Learning materials are being provided already and being developed for successive

age ranges, conferences are being held up and down the country and the media is following the debate intensely.

The fast diffusion of the primary SEAL programme has come about through a form of fractal dissemination and clusters of schools are cooperating just as the teachers themselves are finding new levels of cooperation among themselves. Advisors are trained to work with teachers and leadership teams and the SEAL team in the Department are guided academically by an advisory board of about 25 specialists in the social and emotional learning field. The ground had also been partially prepared by non-governmental organisations, such as Antidote,<sup>12</sup> which has propagated the need to take emotional learning seriously for many years. Looking ahead, these innovative practices have implications for teacher education, both initial training and continuous professional development, which have not been taken up yet, and teachers will need good tools for reflective practice. (Reflective intelligence is the ability to become aware of your own mental habits and to transcend limited patterns in thinking and also involves reflecting on your emotions and behaviour.) It is a necessary competence for a practitioner to work with SEAL fruitfully. SEAL enables children to take responsibility for themselves and their own successful learning, become confident individuals and responsible citizens. Learning to teach a SEAL programme should, however, sensitise teachers to pick up mental health and emotional problems earlier and refer the children to the appropriate specialists.

It can be foreseen that the arts, such as drama and music, may play a more significant role in the school and cease to just be peripheral activities given in little discrete chunks within the structure of the National Curriculum, but seen as being central to healthy child development. The Quality and

Curriculum Authority (QCA) has launched a new curriculum for secondary schools in the light of this change of vision. Cross curricular dimensions of this new curriculum include: identity and cultural diversity, community participation, creativity and critical thinking. The aim of SEAL is to proactively promote the broad emotional health of school pupils through the development of their social and emotional skills.

School inspectors (Ofsted) are becoming convinced of its value. They concluded in their latest report (Developing Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills in Secondary Schools. July 2007)<sup>13</sup> based on a survey of a pilot project in 11 secondary schools, after it had been launched in 54 schools across six local authorities in 2005, that *“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 ... After five terms, the greatest impact in the pilot schools was on the 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 there were discernable 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.”* The aim of the programme was to help teachers develop pupils’ skills in five areas:

- Self-awareness;
- The management of feelings;
- Motivation;
- Empathy;
- And forming positive relationships

Data from the participating schools was analysed by the University of Sussex and it presented a positive impression of students’ emotional and social functioning. Having been experienced, the programme became quickly part of the way things were done in the schools, the greatest impact being on teachers’ attitudes. It was less successful where teachers said they had not been given enough guidance or had not fully grasped the underlying philosophy.

In the OFSTED report they give a few examples of good practice such as:

*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 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.*

This change of perspective to develop that which works in the classroom and is age-appropriate, in spite of the lack of base-line data, is beginning to affect educational policy throughout the UK and examples from this report, like the following, are inspiring new ventures with the blessing of government. In another school, the head teacher 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

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## Encouragement, inspiration and convincing are the techniques chosen for dissemination of the SEAL programmes. It could almost be called a revolution in the making. Whole new areas of school activity are being opened up with, as yet, unforeseen effects. Nevertheless there is a steadfast commitment behind SEAL and the sense that for the sake of the well-being of children there has to be radical change

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rude and aggressive behaviour and reduced litter and graffiti.

Encouragement, inspiration and convincing are the techniques chosen for dissemination of the SEAL programmes. It could almost be called a revolution in the making. Whole new areas of school activity are being opened up with, as yet, unforeseen effects. Nevertheless there is a steadfast commitment behind SEAL and the sense that for the sake of the well-being of children there has to be radical change. The gesture to schools and practitioners is that “*this exists and you can be part of it.*” The emotional health and well-being of children is increasingly perceived as vital a part of schooling as academic and cognitive prowess. The art of teaching is not only about what we teach but also how we teach and within the SEAL programme it is intended that the programme empowers everybody in the school community. This is recognised for instance in the policy documents of local school authorities, such as Halton, an area of disadvantage on Merseyside,

### School systems for promoting positive behaviour

*Positive behaviour is consistently reinforced and the staff model appropriate behaviour in their interactions with each other and with the children. The school teaches the SEAL curriculum, where pupils learn the skills of self-*

*awareness, self-regulation, motivation and empathy as well as social skills. SEAL assemblies celebrate these skills each half term. Children are provided with consistent positive encouragement and specific recognition when they do demonstrate positive behaviour. The use of R Time (a structured programme for schools that develops positive relationships between children through a simple process called ‘Random Pairing’ in conjunction with interesting, non-threatening and easily achievable activities for children from Nursery to Year 7) in morning meetings four days a week in addition to time spent delivering SEAL, reinforces opportunities to practice skills needed to develop positive relationships. Through the PSHE curriculum the fundamental rights of all those in school are also reinforced. Playground buddies and play leaders support positive behaviour on the playground and at lunchtime. The same positive ethos is promoted at lunchtimes and the same behaviours rewarded. Teachers and other adults adopt a positive and empathetic manner when responding to children and to each other. Rewards are given consistently, with at least five times as many rewards given out each week when compared to sanctions.*

### The Big Red Bus

The creativity sector too is making a contribution with small theatre companies putting themselves at the disposal of schools

with positive effects. Here too there are already encouraging signs. An example would be The Big Red Bus, which is supported by the Government’s Creative Partnerships programme. The bus visits school playgrounds with two actors on board, who have previously briefed themselves on the schools particular problem areas as highlighted by the teachers. They stimulate interactions with the pupils to look at these problems together and the teachers themselves can withdraw into the background. In one instance they enacted a scene on the top deck of a red London double-decker bus, which had trundled into the school playground, where a minor argument escalates into something far more serious, as the children seated in the bus looked on. The children then role-played similar episodes and were then asked to suggest alternate outcomes and evolve scripts to calm down the situation. All suggestions are given acting space and working time in the school such as in their artistic, writing and acting lessons which are directly related to their experience in the bus. The teachers’ perception was that this much improved social behaviour in the playground and when tensions were rising among various children a reminder of “*What happened in the big red bus?*” was enough to deflate the situation. The improvements in behaviour may be read as unscientific or even the product of the teachers’ wishful thinking, to which the profession is rightly and healthily prone, but nevertheless it is highly probable that the observed improvements in relationships in the school through such an artistic and collaborative approach did occur and made a deep impression on the children. Reaching for support and inspiration beyond the traditional school fence is a fruitful and vital approach. “*Going wider with purpose, integrity and emotional depth is an imperative for teachers in many parts of the world now – as their pupils become more culturally diverse, as technology becomes more com-*

*plex, as market perspectives intrude more and more into the educational landscape...*” (Hargreaves & Fullan 1998)<sup>14</sup>

### Characteristics of an Emotionally Healthy School

But how would such a socially and emotionally literate community be recognised? A characterisation of an emotionally healthy school according to a consortium of institutions in Bristol involving schools, health-care and the city council, as part of the National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), would be one with the following attributes:

- Distributive leadership
- Supportive relationships
- Good communication
- Openness, honesty and trust
- Regular celebrations of success
- Whole community participation in policies and practices
- Inclusive approaches
- A recognition of all achievements
- Independent and group approaches to learning
- Creativity and innovation
- No fear of failure
- Explicit morale raising activities
- Clarity of expectation
- Appropriate boundaries
- A willingness to examine feelings and values
- High levels of continuous professional development

As a government Minister of Health pointed out “*Young people today are growing up in a very different environment to that of their parents or grandparents. New problems mean that children and young people need the skills and resilience to deal with conflict in new and changing contexts.*”, hence the idealism lying behind these initiatives and their intrinsic foundation on a set of values. With this plethora of initiatives and their assorted

acronyms it becomes like traversing a rather dense forest, but it signifies that perspectives have radically changed even if it all seems a little uncoordinated at times. As the Prime Minister's senior advisor on education recently said "Over the last few years there has been a huge emphasis on exams, and a huge amount of money going into school buildings, but almost no emphasis on children's wellbeing"<sup>15</sup>

### Social and Emotional Education in Scotland

Scotland, having an independent educational policy, has the 5 to 14 guidelines for Scottish local authorities and schools which cover the structure, content and assessment of the curriculum in primary schools and in the first two years of secondary education. Schools are not legally required to follow these guidelines. Now they have embarked on "A Curriculum for Excellence"<sup>16</sup> programme for three to eighteen year olds. This is intended to be implemented by enthusiastic and committed teachers "who have a sense of community with their colleagues and who share in responsibility for the success of the school and all that happens in it." It is acknowledged that to achieve this goal the teachers' professional development and initial teacher training will need to be developed in a way that sustains and nurtures them. They are expected to exemplify the four capacities that stand central to the whole programme:

- Developing successful learners
- Developing confident individuals
- Developing responsible citizens
- And developing effective contributors

These four strands run throughout the whole school curriculum and guidance is given as to how they can be implemented in all subject areas such as the expressive arts, health and well-being, languages, mathematics, religious and moral education, science, social studies and technologies. Emotional literacy is included in all the strands. Nurturing successful learners involves children and

young people learning social and emotional skills which can help them embrace change and challenge with optimism, and develop emotional resilience in dealing with competitive and challenging situations. Confident individuals need to feel emotionally secure, have a sense of well-being and sustain satisfying personal relationships. Responsible citizens develop positive relationships, respect and value other people, understand how their actions affect others and promote fairness. While effective contributors engage in experiences that are fun, enjoyable and challenging and become involved in activities that help others. These are all expressed as national aspirations and ways of thinking that then have outcomes within and beyond school and influence colleges and even the workplace. This involves rethinking the design of school buildings to make them more conducive to learning, putting greater stress on experiential education and piloting new Skills for Work courses, where students develop a range of employability skills. The official documentation recognises that formal learning and teaching has become increasingly prevalent at an earlier age but states that "research indicates that developmentally appropriate practice is most conducive to effective learning" and that "there is no long term advantage to children when there is an over-emphasis on systematic teaching before 6 or 7 years of age." This is again a new departure and, as yet, too early to assess but nevertheless reflects a radical rethink of how a school could serve the children and its local community in the future that is contiguous with social and emotional educational developments elsewhere, and attempts to give it a widely applicable and cohesive foundation. It is striking how much of the vocabulary of social and emotional education percolates through the whole programme and is seen as a core element of a future school curriculum backed by the Scottish government. Typical of all these above considerations is a clearly identifiable unifying ele-

ment that seeks to bridge a perceived fragmentation between and within children's education in school, contemporary social trends and the home environment.

### Criticism of social and emotional learning programmes in the UK

It could not be expected that such fundamental changes, for example the fast and wide roll-out of SEAL, would be universally welcome. Concerns have been expressed, for example, about the large-scale industrialised approach to introducing the teaching of social and emotional literacy in schools, when the field is still relatively new and much has still to be empirically proven (at least to the crit-

can assist in pointing at the pitfalls as well as the opportunities. It will certainly be difficult to accommodate an ethos empowering the teacher as a creative and free practitioner with the demands of the present testing and examination system.

### Why have social and emotional learning programmes been introduced into the educational systems in the UK?

For all this to be taken on so precipitously there had to be shift in the educational climate and this has proved to have happened in both positive and negative ways. Various reports on the state of childhood have underlined the urgent necessity for a new ap-

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**Public attention in the UK has been directed to many childhood ailments of late that have negative social and emotional consequences. For instance, there is growing awareness that children are not challenged enough as their ability to play declines and experiences of nature become limited because of safety fears, urbanisation, media induced paranoia and the fascination with the "virtual world". Although some symptoms of changing childhood may be unique to an Anglo-Saxon culture there are other countries throughout Europe where similar concerns are also expressed**

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ics' satisfaction). The fear has been expressed that dwelling on emotions could lead to self-obsession and over-reliance on professionals to sort out people's emotions, rather than the stated goals of improving young people's confidence and resilience.<sup>17</sup> There is also a perception that the training received by teachers at this stage is too rudimentary. As with any new venture a balance has to be struck between enthusiasm, idealism, and facts on the ground. Critical observations, although as yet not based on sufficient empirical evidence,

proach to well-being in childhood and the question is now in how far schools and teachers should be playing a part in the social and cultural remedies. Of late there have been a great number of research-based concerns that have gripped the attention of the media, educators and the public such as *An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries* (UNICEF 2007)<sup>18</sup> that placed the UK very low in its rankings in relationship to other comparative counties. This did attract a lot of attention and led to a government re-

port on the issue “Children and Young People Today” (DCSF 2007)<sup>19</sup> which acknowledged there were severe problems with deprivation and mental health among children and teenagers and that disorderly behaviour has increased substantially in the last twenty years. Its conclusions were not as bleak as the UNICEF report but it also highlighted an increased level of anxiety among children, mentioning that younger children are worried about friendships and bullying and older ones about examinations and their future. Commercial pressures were also cited as of particular concern. Overall, parents identified that improvements in education were a means that could keep young people out of trouble and help them on the path to success. Schools were seen as providing the best local service and greater parental involvement in school life could bring more positive experiences of education for the children. It was also felt that schools could give more emphasis to “life-skills”.

Public attention in the UK has been directed to many childhood ailments of late that have negative social and emotional consequences. For instance, there is growing awareness that children are not challenged enough as their ability to play declines and experiences of nature become limited because of safety fears, urbanisation, media induced paranoia and the fascination with the “virtual world”. Although some symptoms of changing childhood may be unique to an Anglo-Saxon culture there are other countries throughout Europe where similar concerns are also expressed. The school testing regimes that are being increasingly practiced in schools are putting more pressure and stress on children and causing more anxiety, and even a worrying sense of unredeemable personal failure, at a vulnerable young age. The extensive use of video games and a taste for extremely violent video and films is leading to a tendency to an aggressive response when faced with a challenging situation and

younger and younger children are caught up in a culture of a bullying and violence.<sup>20</sup> Permeable family structures, which are becoming the norm, can, if not handled with care, create deep insecurity in children and undermine their sense of self-worth. Children are losing opportunities to play physically as some schools cut back on play time and parents are under the impression that unsupervised outside play is dangerous.<sup>21</sup> Instead children are offered the temptation of bedrooms equipped with all the devices needed to live in a virtual world.

#### Mental and Physical Health Concerns

As well as the above, a plethora of concerns has appeared in the media, for instance:

- An epidemic of childhood obesity with consequent effects on future health is clearly visible in the U.K.
- There are signs of similar increase of depressive states at a younger age than hitherto, although more difficult to measure<sup>22</sup>
- Children’s mental health figures are causing great concern. The proportion of 15 year olds with behavioural problems has doubled in Britain in the last 25 years. (JCPP 2004)<sup>23</sup>
- The number of children disclosing self-harm has increased by 65% in the last two years<sup>24</sup>
- One in ten children between one and 10 suffer from psychological problems that are “persistent, severe and affect functioning on a day-to-day basis” (BMA 2006).<sup>25</sup> A study carried out by the children’s charity NCH found a 100% increase in the prevalence of emotional problems and disorders since the 1930’s.



- Consumption of alcohol among 11 to 15 year olds has doubled in 14 years
- According to the UNICEF report (UNICEF 2007) British children are among the unhappiest and unhealthiest in Europe. Although some of the findings of this report are contested, it cannot be easily dismissed and exposes a situation that is increasingly found to a greater or lesser extent in other countries too

It is not without good reason that the media-catching concept of a “Toxic Childhood”<sup>26</sup> has gained general currency as an expression of concern and is much debated.

#### Commercialisation of Childhood

We hear of an increased commercialisation of childhood that nurtures cynicism (Langer 2005).<sup>27</sup> The research report “*Watching, Wanting and Well-being: a study of 9 to 13 year olds*”<sup>28</sup> has shown significant associations between media exposure (watching) and materialism (wanting), and between materialism and self-esteem (well-being). “*We have shown that the relationship between materialism and self-esteem is bound up with family dynamics. This provides some support for the theory that materialism is associated with impaired social relationships, which in turn are associated with how children feel about themselves.*” Consumer culture has its price, one of which is an increase in child-parent conflict as children develop a lower opinion of their parents and argue with them more, leading consequently to a more divided society.<sup>29</sup> School is also affected in that TV and computers are omnipresent. Children sit in front of them before they go to school and when they come back from school, a third of families accompany mealtimes with TV programmes and even the computer. In addition, excessive computer gaming has been shown to impair sleep and

memory.<sup>30</sup> Pre and post-computer cognitive tests show a decline in verbal memory “...strong emotional experiences such as playing a computer game or watching a thrilling movie, could decisively impact the learning process... because recently acquired knowledge is very sensitive in the subsequent consolidation period.” (Paediatrics November 2007).<sup>31</sup> A follow up investigation into commercial activity on children’s favourite websites, “*Fair Game*”,<sup>32</sup> found that although there were online rules for fair-trading and data protection these are, in certain instances, flouted, and advertisements and commercial messages become difficult for children to identify and are used dishonestly to manipulate children, potentially bringing additional emotional strain into the family context. All these influences naturally have an impact on children’s values and their relationships with others, especially children from less affluent backgrounds.

The present and first ever Children’s Commissioner for England, Professor Sir Albert Aynsley-Green, who is also an eminent paediatrician, sounds a warning note, “*There is a loss of time for children to be children, the incessant commercialisation of childhood by the advertising industry, and the relentless sexualisation of children at a very young age... the media demonises children*”. The dramatically increasing use of behavioural control drugs such as the stimulants Ritalin and Concerta, at present prescribed to around 55,000 children for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD),<sup>33</sup> is being questioned as they could stunt children’s growth and tend to work no better than behavioural intervention therapy. It is fairly well accepted that 10% of all 5 to 15 year olds have a clinically diagnosed disorder, ranging from anxiety to depression and autism, although the figure is sometimes contested as being a result of modern diagnostic criteria. Nevertheless the decline in social behaviours and an increase in aggressive tendencies are not contested in the same way.

Robin Alexander, former professor of Education at Warwick and Leeds and now at Cambridge University who is heading The Primary Review 2007 and is travelling around the country speaking to people inside and outside education found “*unease about the present and pessimism about the future*” and also remarked that “*Every generation has its nightmares and problems to contend with*”. The report, although only in its initial stages, does also point to a way forward “*where schools had started engaging children with global and local realities as aspects of their education they were noticeably more upbeat .... the sense of “we can do something about it” seemed to make a difference.*” But there is a sense of urgency for change in the air, and that something that has the range of social and emotional education is needed, as summed up by the head of the children’s charity National Children’s Homes “*We know from our own research the increasing importance of emotional well-being in childhood in determining life chances and later social mobility*”.

In April 2007 the European Commissioner for Freedom, Security and Justice, Franco Frattini announced that “*families and schools are in crisis*” in Europe, not just in the UK. Faced with all these symptoms is it any wonder that people turn to early childhood centres and schools to help find the solutions? It is hardly surprising then that schools and other educational institutions are having to rethink their purposes and practices. So what are they to do?

We will now look at three schools that have embarked on educational innovation within an English context. Hele’s is a mainstream school in the south-west peninsula that has adopted the SEAL approach as outlined above. Gallions serves a deprived and constantly shifting urban population on a housing estate in the east of London and Wellington is an example of established private boarding school with traditional values and a well-heeled

clientele. All three are very different and yet have in common a wish to work in a more rounded way with their pupils in order to foster their well-being through a social and emotional learning programme.

#### Case Study 1: Hele’s School

##### Introduction

Hele’s School is a state secondary school, in the South West of England. There are 1300 pupils, from 11 to 18 years of age. The majority of the pupils live within two to three miles of the school. The pupil body is made up of students of all abilities and socio-economic backgrounds. 75% of students stay on into the sixth form (i.e. to the last year of school). The community from which the pupils come is an established one and is not particularly culturally diverse. Most pupils are native English speakers with 40% of the pupils from single parent families. The incidence of mental illness among adults in the community in which Hele’s is based is high for the area.

Hele’s was one of the pilot schools for the secondary SEAL programme, and was thus involved both in trialling the various aspects of SEAL and also contributed to the development of SEAL. Hele’s chose to be part of the secondary SEAL pilot “*because the senior leadership team believed that SEAL fitted in with what they already did, but brought coherence, clarity and explicitness to existing priorities.*”

The school has three specialisms: Languages, Maths and Information Technology, and Vocational Education. As part of being a specialist language school, Hele’s actively cultivates its international links. An example of how the specialist language status impacts on the curriculum is that each year a group of students “*has a quarter of their lessons taught in French.*”<sup>34</sup>

Hele's has very much taken a whole school approach to embedding and developing SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning). A key priority for the senior management team of the school is to maintain and further develop the culture of the school – creating the conditions for good relationships, for learning and development. Some of the ways in which it is possible to observe this is that developing social and emotional skills and awareness is not just a task for the pupils but is central to the school's approach to continuing professional development for all staff (senior management, teaching and support staff). For the students, SEAL is integrated within the curriculum and is also built into the time between lessons. For example, the school employs and trains 18 of the oldest pupils in the school to “patrol” the school at lunchtimes, to see what is needed and to provide support to pupils. The result of this is that pupils can eat their sandwiches in the classrooms at lunchtimes, which in most secondary schools is unheard of, as often the classrooms end up being trashed. SEAL is embedded in the curriculum, and in addition each year group has one personal development lesson per week, in which SEAL is taught directly, for example, working on improving communication skills.

The views and feedback of pupils and staff are regularly sought. Pupils were asked what they considered the top issues that needed to be addressed to make the school a better place. The first issue was the toilets – that they needed to be upgraded, and secondly that bullying needed to be stopped. The senior leadership team took this feedback seriously and have upgraded the student toilets and are working hand in hand with the Student Support Base staff to address any incidents of bullying as they come up, but also make clear to pupils entering the school that bullying is not tolerated, and how to go about reporting it should they witness any incidents of bullying, or experience bullying

themselves. *“Students –feel that they contribute to the way the school is run and, even when commenting on what they see as less favourable aspects, criticise constructively. Older students mentor younger ones –”*<sup>35</sup>

The school works hard at serving the needs of all pupils. The Student Support Base works with individual pupils and groups of pupils who are experiencing particular behavioural, social or emotional difficulties. Where necessary the support base staff can call on the assistance of a range of external agencies, for example, the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The Student Support Base is described in more detail below. One of the strengths of Hele's is that it pays attention to identifying those pupils at risk, and then to put in place strategies to reduce those risks. The headmaster and the deputy heads are constantly taking the view of “if I were a pupil here, what needs to be changed and improved?” A similar approach is taken to staff. The question “What needs to be put in place to make the work of the staff more effective, more enjoyable and of a higher quality?” is constantly being looked at.

Hele's staff put in a lot of hard work to help primary school pupils manage the transition from primary to secondary school. There are three main primary schools in the area that feed pupils to Hele's and the school has built up excellent collaborative working relationships with these schools. Staff work together, for example, to identify pupils who may find the transition from primary to secondary school difficult, and then Hele's puts structures and strategies in place to support these particular pupils. *“Many parents commented on the very smooth transition from primary school.”*<sup>36</sup> Children who have had difficulties at other schools (for example, children who are on the autistic spectrum, or those with physical disabilities) usually fit in well at Hele's. The school is supported in this by the “transition team” of the local education au-

thority, which helps to support the integration of pupils. The school has a culture in which diversity, in the widest meaning of the word, is positively (or at least neutrally) viewed.

### Measurement

Since the beginning of the SEAL pilot in autumn of 2004 the school has been monitoring the incidence of absenteeism, lateness, and the number of detentions and exclusions. In addition, the school monitors the academic progress of pupils, and has clear pathways and strategies in place to identify pupils who are struggling (whether it be academically, socially or psychologically), to communicate the issues to whoever needs to be informed, be it parents, other teachers, the student support base or external agencies. The latest school inspection report, by OFSTED,<sup>37</sup> the national inspectorate body, concludes:

*“Systems for monitoring and tracking students are exemplary. Thorough analysis of data contributes to detailed self-evaluation in departments as well as at whole school level.”*

Since the introduction of the SEAL programme, pupil attendance has improved, punctuality has vastly improved, and the number of temporary and permanent exclusions has dropped from 795 in 2004/5 to 723 in 2006/7. The attendance of teachers, support staff and teaching assistants has also been monitored since 2004, and the number of days absent due to illness has dropped across the board.

### The General Curriculum

Hele's has developed a number of codes of conduct to assist the pupils in managing their behaviour, and to make clear what kind of behaviour is expected in the school. For example, there is a school lateness code which is pinned to every classroom door. This provides guidelines as to what to do if

you are late. For example, one of the codes is to calm yourself down before opening the classroom door, and come into the classroom quietly, making sure to cause as little disturbance as possible.

Social and emotional aspects of learning permeate the approach to teaching. For example, many lessons end with a plenary session and teachers use this time to promote reflection. The promotion of tolerance for diversity is addressed in the curriculum in the following ways: pupils have one lesson of religious education per week (with the emphasis being on understanding other religions and cultures). Pupils consider ethical issues in the Social Education GCSE (GCSE's are national examinations, usually taken at age 15/16). The 6<sup>th</sup> Form pupils have lessons in philosophy, ethics and critical thinking. The school works hard at encouraging the pupils to aim high and to have realistic rather than low expectations of themselves. An example of this is that pupils doing humanities subjects are encouraged to choose a “dream grade” for themselves, with the teachers in the department promoting the belief that the minimum that you can get is a C, if you do the work that you are set in lessons and for homework.

### Student Support Services and the Student Support Base

The student support services are an essential aspect of the implementation and development of SEAL at Hele's School. Recently, the school has moved all the student services to the western side of the school building. The student support base is close to the first aid room, the office where absences are reported, and the student services reception area where students can go to ask for help, information or advice. This area is sensitively located near a door to the playground, in a quiet part of the school. Previously, students had to bring their concerns and questions to the main school reception area at the front door, in view and earshot of parents,

visitors, delivery personnel, and others, which was far from ideal.

The student support base is run by two counsellors, supported by others, such as the parent support advisor who is a retired police officer. Among other things, s/he can offer mediation, for example, between a pupil and their parent/s, when this is called for. The counsellors work closely with external agencies when needed, such as the local authority educational psychology department. The counsellors offer one-to-one support to pupils as well as ongoing groups for pupils with particular needs. The one-to-one work with pupils consists of an hour a day for up to 2 weeks, moving to once a week, then to once a fortnight and so on. External agencies are called upon for input, assistance and expertise as needed. For example, the student support base run a “Nurture Group” during the first term of the school year for those

order to meet the deadlines and demands for the different subject areas. In addition to the nurture group, Year 7 pupils (aged 11 to 12) (who are in the first year of secondary school) are mentored by pupils in Year 9 (aged 13 to 14).

Another group run by the student support counsellors over 18 months is called “Raising Aspirations”. The school identified a group of boys in Year 8 (age 12 to 13) who were poorly motivated, and who did not see much of a future for themselves. This group of 14 pupils meets once a month, and in addition each group member receives regular mentoring. *“They are attempting to inspire these students with support, advice, examples of celebrities who did not start life as a success, one-to-one work and inspirational posters around the school about the value of having high expectations and dreams.”*<sup>38</sup>

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## Before the advent of the SEAL programme at Hele’s the student support base took pupils with difficulties out of the classroom and provided them with 6 weeks of full-time education. Evaluation of this approach showed that it was not effective – it contained the problem for those 6 weeks but did not bring about any change

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pupils who were identified as needing extra support in moving from primary to secondary school. During the first term the counsellors work with the pupils in the nurture group to help boost their confidence, and to help them manage the emotions that come up as a result of the transition, and to find their place socially in the nurture group as well as in their year group, and in the school as a whole. The 2007/8 nurture group has continued on into the second term, with a focus on “organisation and homework” – how to organise yourself, your time, your work in

The student support base staff work hard to build a culture of connectedness around each child – co-working with a range of agencies to ensure the best for the needs and situation of each teenager, striving to keep the communication open and flowing with all who need to be involved. For example, the support base staff foster strong communication and links with parents, the head of the pupil’s year, the pastoral support manager and all teachers who teach that pupil. The support plan for the student is shared with all their subject teachers. The counsellors try to

take the pupil out of a mixture of subject lessons during the course of a week so that they do not miss all their maths lessons that week, for example. Occasionally the counsellors will sit in on classes so as to observe one or more of the pupils whom teachers have raised concerns about, or pupils with whom the student support base is already working. In addition, *“The school reaches out beyond students to groups of parents who may need extra support.”*<sup>39</sup> This task is taken on by staff of the student support base.

Before the advent of the SEAL programme at Hele’s the student support base took pupils with difficulties out of the classroom and provided them with 6 weeks of full-time education. Evaluation of this approach showed that it was not effective – it contained the problem for those 6 weeks but did not bring about any change. *“When pupils returned to mainstream lessons they tended to revert to their previous behaviour.”*<sup>40</sup> The student support base staff now *“work with many more pupils in a less intensive way, allowing them in mainstream classes, but holding weekly groups in which social and emotional skills are taught explicitly... They {also} offer an individualised intensive approach to those who have the most acute need, covering behaviour recovery skills, assertion and anger management.”*<sup>41</sup>

### Staff

The senior leadership team places a high priority on the development, welfare and emotional health and well-being of staff. For example, an important chunk of the school budget is spent on staff training and development. The SEAL programme, the values upon which it is based, and the task of building a culture in which everyone in the school is working on developing their social and emotional awareness and competence, were all carefully introduced in a step by step manner, to enable staff to get used to the approach, and to begin to engage with it, and get excited about it. *“They have taken the oppor-*

*tunity of the SEAL programme to deepen their work on staff well-being and add a new emphasis on skills, for and by staff. For example, paying for staff to self-refer for counselling with no school involvement; offering a support group for staff in their first few years of teaching, holding meetings at times the support staff can attend, etc.”*<sup>42</sup>

A culture of consultation and continuous improvement exists within the school, where staff suggestions are welcomed, as are the research, developing and piloting of new approaches to teaching and learning within the school. Teachers share best practice, both within and between departments. In addition, teachers work in pairs to give each other feedback on performance, and to assist one another in the development of new skills. *“Senior management team, teaching and associate staff work together as a very effective team to provide a cooperative, calm and happy atmosphere where the quality of care provided for every student is as important as the quality of their learning.”*<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

The recent inspection of the government school inspectorate body (OFSTED) rated Hele’s as an outstanding school. Visiting the school the impression that one gains is that fostering a climate in which staff and pupils can thrive is the current and long-term goal of the school. The school is open to innovation and puts considerable effort into building links with other schools, cultures and agencies. The school has integrated social and emotional aspects of learning into the whole school – into the culture of the school –, the continuing professional development of all staff, into the general curriculum and into its provision for students with particular behavioural, social and emotional needs. A parent, quoted in the recent OFSTED report, said that the school *“genuinely treats children and their parents as individuals, listens to their needs as well as observes*

them, and reacts appropriately with great skill and professionalism.”

### Case Study 2: Gallions Primary School, London

Gallions primary school is situated in the underprivileged neighbourhood of Newham in the east of London and has about 450 children aged between 3 and 11. An area that was once in close proximity to a thriving London docklands is now the domicile of a transient and low income population in social housing that makes up one of the most deprived areas in the country. Problem families from across London were moved into this 15 year old estate at the outset and there was no real infrastructure to support them. When the school first opened, many of the children were on the verge of being excluded from school and 68% were on the special needs register. Yet the school itself exudes hopefulness and happiness. The building is nine years old and placed in a large green area. Its dimensions are child-friendly, with internal courtyards with well-kept gardens, communal work spaces as well as light-filled classrooms. Its aim is to give the children a fresh start in an environment that conveys the feeling that they are important and cared for.

From the beginning the vision was that this would be a creative school where the arts would play a crucial role. However the first years were a struggle, as the children in the older classes had not experienced the schooling that would give them a basis to benefit from the good intentions and creative approaches to teaching. The younger children were fine but naturally influenced by the older ones. Many children in year 5 (9 & 10 year olds) could neither read nor write, had low sense of self-worth, avoided school work with the expectation that they could not do it anyway and were aggressive. The staff were quickly worn down and tired. An inspiring principal, who worked alongside

*Antidote*, a voluntary organisation dedicated to developing social and emotional skills, was appointed. She brought in an advisor from Antidote who started to help the teachers acknowledge that they could make a difference. The advisor worked with them individually and in groups. They were being listened to and their ideas appreciated and consequently their morale rose. Whereas before they would say “*We have a problem. We’ll leave it to you*” the emotional climate changed and the principal began to hear “*We have a problem but we’ve thought of a couple of solutions that might work*”.

The advisor also worked with the children by encouraging them to draw pictures of what made them happy and sad and also how to recognise other children’s feelings. It was clear that the children needed some sort of forum in which they could express themselves and so the school experimented with circle time. The teachers began to trust these changes and were able to let go of the tension a little. The staff then completed questionnaires as to how they saw the school in terms of emotional literacy and a more positive picture emerged than either the principal or advisor had expected. The children also worked with questionnaires and conversation and what they felt about school was explored. What were they good at? And where were they weak? Why did they fight so much? Why did they come to school with certain attitudes?

### Philosophy for Children (P4C)

It was then decided to introduce an approach called Philosophy for Children (P4C) to the school under the guidance of a Hungarian advisor. It was not easy to begin with but step by step there were breakthroughs. One boy who came from a very deprived and disturbed background read a book called “*Not Now Bernard*” and was able to recognise himself in the story, in that he was never listened to at home and could bring this insight

into the P4C session. This recognition helped the children to see the purpose in what they were doing. These sessions have now been running for 6 years and the impact, teachers claim, is huge. All staff, not only the teachers, undergo training to various levels in P4C. Previously all the children’s behaviour was managed through the traffic light system. This system means that children receive warnings about their behaviour and move into the amber zone. If they do the right thing and follow the school rules, they move back into the ‘safe’ green zone. If a child continues to not follow the school rules whilst in the amber zone, they move into the red zone and then receive class sanctions. Through P4C the children have become more able to manage their own behaviour. The programme began with a difficult year 4 class and by year 6 the positive impact could be clearly observed. Now it is run from nursery upwards. Playground behaviour has improved and the children can play healthily and are able to solve things between them verbally rather than through physical aggression. One colleague is a qualified trainer and coordinator for P4C in the school and constantly champions the work.

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is an approach to learning developed by Professor Matthew Lipman and associates at the IAPC at Montclair State College, New Jersey, USA.

In the wake of student unrest in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s Lipman sought to find an educational approach to encourage children to be more “reasonable”, in other words, to be able to reason and be reasoned with. The goal of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) curriculum for 6 – 16 year olds is to help children to develop the faculty of making good judgements. The model of learning developed by Lipman is called “communities of enquiry” in which the teacher and the children “collaborate with each other to grow in understanding, not only of the material world, but

also of the personal and ethical world around them.” (<http://sapere.org.uk/what-is-p4c/>)

P4C is a questioning, social and democratic approach to learning, which enables children to develop their thinking and reasoning abilities, as well as their social awareness and social skills.

A list of the research that has been done into P4C can be found at <http://cehs.montclair.edu/academic/iapc/research.shtml#aff>

The children have one hour of P4C a week where they are listened to, encouraged to speak from direct experience, share what they believe in, experience that their opinions are valued and develop skills in listening and verbal communication. In these sessions a teacher uses a story, a picture, a news item, a piece of music or an artefact to stimulate thinking and imagination. The children are encouraged to express their thoughts and emotions, to challenge what is being said and to ask questions that intrigue them (Antidote 2004). They also celebrate their cultural identity and learn to understand the lifestyles of the other children. “*Now we have Philosophy every Monday, we kind of learn more and people change. I think philosophy is a really good thing for children because it helps us learn*” (Katy, Year 4). This is now being introduced into other schools by teachers who have experienced it first hand and are convinced of its merits.

These lessons, that are deliberately intended to deepen the children’s thinking and emotional responses, always follow the same format. First there is a warm-up game, to develop children’s basic skills, e.g. turn taking, how to ask a ‘good’ question, the importance of eye contact whilst speaking. An imaginative teacher can turn this into an effective participatory experience. For instance, each child is asked to think what number they would like to be and then to imagine them-

selves as that number. When they have chosen the number they then individually explain why they chose that particular number. If one child cannot give an explanation the rest of the group are encouraged to suggest one, which develops a friendly collaborative element. One child decided to be number 2 because its shape facilitated climbing trees by using its arms as hooks. Another thought being number 1 would give the opportunity to fly up to other planets and come back down again. Or another chose 0 because he had just got a newborn baby brother who did not have to go to school and was the centre of attention. They then review the previous session where the children are encouraged to remember what occurred, followed by an introductory stimulus which can be anything, either related to the school's study theme of the time or something the teacher feels the class would relate to. This is followed by development of questions usually first in pairs and then going round the circle so each child comes with an idea such as "why did they invent numbers? What would we do without numbers?" The teacher constantly expresses appreciation for each child's input and they are often praised, showing a positive emotional involvement in the process and an understanding and interest in each child's individuality. She sometimes gently helps them with their English formulation. Then the questions are grouped into discreet sub-groups of interest by the children, facilitated by the teacher, followed by a vote on which question should be explored together, so all children are involved in this decision. This is followed by a discussion and further enquiry until the teacher concludes the session with a 'final word' from each child.

The school has a policy of the teacher clapping their hands in a rhythm when attention wanders or to start the lesson, instead of using a raised voice. The children then imitate the rhythm she uses and have to follow her as she changes it. It then becomes a game

with the children working hard to keep up with the complicated rhythms and enjoying the concentration needed. This also has the advantage of occupying the children in movement during sessions such as P4C that might require quite a bit of attention while not disturbing the flow of the lessons. All in all one observes a deep and positive effect on the children and an intense but pleasurable age-appropriate learning experience, where they feel they are being taken seriously, where they can make a contribution and it is enjoyable. This obviously pervades the rest of their school work and experience, but much does rest on the personality of the teacher to bring it off. However, the general ethos of the school is very supportive and the children are well able to vocalise their thoughts and emotional responses, some at a very adult level.

The school has developed such an expertise in P4C that they have produced a training resource 'Thinking Allowed' to help schools and other settings introduce this idea.<sup>44</sup>

#### The Arts at Gallions

Another unique aspect of Gallions Primary School is that every child plays a string instrument from year 2 onwards, the school having bought all the instruments from funds they raised in several different ways, including a charitable grant and donations from local businesses. The lessons take a considerable amount of financial support, but they find that the learning and discipline of playing an instrument helps develop the children's concentration and social skills and raises their self esteem, not only in the school but in their families and community too. The teachers learn to play these instruments alongside the children. The school work hard to subsidise this activity by arranging Art Conference days when teachers from other schools can learn about P4C and other unique aspects of Gallions' creative approaches to teaching, as well as a variety of other courses. The children practice at

lunchtime and the orchestra, which children are invited to join, practices on Friday mornings before school starts. There is also now a popular choir and they undertake performances in other parts of the country alongside other partner schools. These have been well received and in fact their infectious enthusiasm has had a marked effect on other pupils. At the same time their SATs scores are improving to above average.

ances and festivals of work. All children participate regardless of ability. On top of this there are 4 maths lessons a week and the Friday music sessions. There is a worry about what will happen when the children move into secondary education where the approach is so radically different, so they are hoping to become an all-through school (serving children up to 16 years of age) by building on their spare land. There are no longitudinal

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**From the beginning the vision was that this would be a creative school where the arts would play a crucial role. However the first years were a struggle, as the children in the older classes had not experienced the schooling that would give them a basis to benefit from the good intentions and creative approaches to teaching. Gallions' teachers use music, dance, drama and art to teach, for instance, science and geography**

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So far only two parents have removed their children because they disapproved of the schools approach of teaching through P4C and the Arts. Gallions' teachers use music, dance, drama and art to teach, for instance, science and geography. Pupils in the first year have a write-dance session where they move in straight lines and curves accompanied by music and singing. These movements are then transcribed onto a large roll of paper laid out onto the floor and they walk round to admire each other's work. So intellectual, linguistic, musical, kinetic, social and aesthetic skills are developed together. This approach has had to pervade the whole curriculum to be effective. The whole school works on research projects which last from 3 to 12 weeks and which take up 12 hours teaching time each week. At the end of each research project there are displays and presentations of the children's work and 70% to 80% of the parents attend these perform-

studies yet of how the children fare later but the school hears anecdotally that compared to others their children are more artistic and have a better attitude to learning when they go on to secondary school. Inspectors' reports confirm the school to be outstanding now even though there are many children with special needs. The school is very well equipped and staffed so that there is appropriate support for all children either with special needs teachers or with teaching assistants. Wandering around the school one is struck by the quality of the children's work displayed everywhere, from high quality almost professional photography, to deeply reflective poetry, skilled paintings and drawing and imaginative pottery.

#### Conclusion

A newspaper report on Gallions school<sup>45</sup> remarked that such an urban environment was the last place where one would expect

Latin to be sung with determination, at a school where 65% speak English as a second language. As the then principal said “We want to give people the opportunity to change their lot in life. They should not be sentenced to poverty and a life of crime. It’s not just a question of giving everyone a musical instrument. I want them to have the experience and knowledge that children from rich families have.” Because of its success Gallions is now being consulted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on their review of the Primary National Curriculum and is seen as flagship school from which others are learning. The commitment to the children’s well-being and emotional and mental health is palpable in how the children bear themselves and the general ordered liveliness of the school. A statement that appears on the walls delineates the school ethos: “In our class we respect others, listen to others, work hard, look after property, are always in the right place and follow instructions”. Its prescriptions seem to be well followed without any overt authoritarian discipline among children who are happy to be at school, and where innovative social emotional practices are well incorporated into the whole school environment.

### Case Study 3: Wellington College

At the other end of the social scale, Wellington College, founded to celebrate the victor of Waterloo, is an exclusive private school set among very extensive grounds some 50 kilometres south-west of London. It is reached along a formidably long drive running between swathes of playing fields. The mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century building, with its cloister like character, looms large and imposingly among its many other buildings which are discretely interspersed within a lush tree-strewn English parkland. The architecture speaks of tradition, academic learning, classicism and order. Here, however, among the ideals of another age and a long-standing traditional approach, accessible only to the very affluent

in society and those who have had family connections with the school in the past, another unusual approach to education is being pioneered in what for many, would seem to be a conservative institution based on long-standing and well-tried practices. This unlikely approach to emotional and social learning is being driven by the headmaster, Anthony Seldon, who is a journalist, a psychologist and the biographer of two recent prime ministers. The school has introduced fortnightly lessons in well-being and happiness for years 10 and 11 (14 - 16 year olds) as a reaction to the traditional focus of schooling on just linguistic and logical mathematical intelligences, embracing the multiple intelligences as expounded by Howard Gardner. Seldon’s view is that schools have been dictated to by the “three dragons”: universities, employers and government and have replaced education with instruction. (Guardian 29/5/2007)<sup>46</sup>

The school has developed an eight aptitude model: personal, moral, spiritual, physical, cultural, logical, linguistic and social which is used to create an “aptitude file” for each student so that they can see their individual strengths and weaknesses.<sup>47</sup> These eight aptitudes are placed into pairs:

**moral and spiritual**, where spirituality is defined as being independent of faith and the task of a school is to help develop a child as a moral agent;

**personal and social** which not only includes a greater understanding of personal emotions but also how the mind and body work and the ability to work harmoniously with others;

**cultural and sporting aptitudes**, which he feels schools are increasingly neglecting and thereby detrimentally affecting a child’s potential;



**numerical/logical and linguistic** which have had a dominant place in education heretofore because they readily lend themselves to assessment whereas the others don't.

This programme at Wellington College only commenced for older students in autumn 2006 and is already in the process of undergoing a thorough revision. However, it has caught national attention, presumably as so-called public schools, which are usually residential, are seen as bastions of tradition and good standards, and it is widely and proficently publicised. The school's website says

*tional intelligence, and is far more a reflective activity than traditional classes... So the essence is that pupils learn more about themselves, which will be information they will be able to use for the rest of their lives." (The Independent 19/4/06).<sup>48</sup>*

The structured well-being programme is based on Positive Psychology and the Science of Well-being. The school developed the programme in co-operation with Dr Nick Baylis of the University of Cambridge. It is a direct approach to equipping pupils with social and emotional competencies and a range of life skills.

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**Wellington College claims that the aim is to equip the children "with an understanding of what makes lives thrive and flourish, and how they can improve their chances of experiencing happiness, good health, a sense of accomplishment and lasting companionship. These will not be lessons like history of physics, where it is primarily the intellect that is involved, and where the question of knowledge is all important. This is about emotional learning and emotional intelligence, and is far more a reflective activity than traditional classes... So the essence is that pupils learn more about themselves, which will be information they will be able to use for the rest of their lives"**

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the aim is to equip the children "with an understanding of what makes lives thrive and flourish, and how they can improve their chances of experiencing happiness, good health, a sense of accomplishment and lasting companionship". Seldon writes "These will not be lessons like history of physics, where it is primarily intellect that is involved, and where the question of knowledge is all important. This is about emotional learning and emo-

A few of the themes covered in the extensive programme are as follows:

**The Key Skills of Well-being** for example, the practice of visualising ourselves succeeding in the tasks that we undertake, building up our self-confidence by aiming for bite-sized goals;

**Our Relationship with our Emotions** for example, managing anxiety and exploring ways to defuse the fears that hold us back.

**Our Relationship with Others** in this module, themes such as friendship, conflict resolution, and sexuality are considered, with a variety of appropriate skills and approaches to these issues being learned and practiced.

The topics are taught through a wide range of approaches including personal reflection, discussions, role play, movement, simulations and stress management techniques. Seldon's eclectic mix of influences includes the psychologist John Kabat-Zinn and his research into meditative practices which the programme recommends to its students as a form of imaginative practice, the Indian philosopher and poet Rabindranath Tagore, and Martin Seligman, considered the founder of Positive Psychology. Seligman concluded that psychology has overly concerned itself with abnormality and illness rather than factors that lead to fulfilment and happiness. Seldon's approach and his aim to educate his students to be "fully rounded human beings" have the potential to break the mould of a previously fairly traditional and privileged sector of educational practice.<sup>49</sup> He has vociferously and skilfully brought this into the public domain and ensured a national debate on educational purposes where like-minded educators and parents can make themselves heard.<sup>50</sup>

This both echoes and takes into account the recent work of Richard Layard who also approached the subject from the angle of positive thinking and utilitarianism. He is director of the Economic Performance Centre at the London School of Economics and his best selling book *Happiness* (2005), based on a utilitarian philosophical approach, has had a wide impact. Layard contends that there is no simple correlation between increased fi-

nancial income and happiness. A sense of personal well-being is not just a matter of increased wealth. Layard has since shifted his attention to schooling where he is expounding an "educational revolution". He insists that an excessive culture of individualism in the Anglo-Saxon world prevents children from achieving happiness. "I am talking about something bigger than a programme: I am talking about a reversal of a major cultural trend towards increased consumerism, interpersonal competition and interest in celebrity and money."<sup>51</sup> His booklet *Happiness and the Teaching of Values* (2007) calls for schools to teach the children the secrets of happiness which he lists: if you care about other people relative to yourself, you are more likely to be happy (Lyubomirsky et al. 2005),<sup>52</sup> if you constantly compare yourself with other people, you are less likely to be happy (Schwartz et al. 2002),<sup>53</sup> choose goals that stretch you, but are attainable with high probability (Nesse, 2000),<sup>54</sup> and challenge your negative thoughts, and focus on the positive aspects of your character and situation (Seligman, 2002).<sup>55</sup> He equates this to social capital which is closely related to our perception of trust in each other and which many perceive as being at threat within UK society and look to schools to rectify. Layard's call to strive for a new concept of the common good and his contention that the principle of seeking the greatest happiness by developing compassion towards oneself and others has struck a chord which has fundamental educational implications. It has been instrumental in bringing about the Resiliency pilot scheme mentioned above, leading to comments from high placed commentators such as "Well-being will be the major focus of government in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in the way that economic prowess was in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and military prowess in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century".<sup>56</sup>

#### Future Perspectives

At the policy level throughout the country there is a commitment to engaging in social

and emotional learning in the classroom and school communities. How that works out in practice is still to be seen, although the examples above give some indications. How that fits in comfortably with the many other such initiatives of a similar nature and the continuing of the present rigorous assessment regime is also open to question. The present accountability culture and data led decision-making is unlikely to be able to be compatible with such programmes as SEAL and could undermine its potential benefits. The emphasis on measurable results obviously deters risk taking and creativity in the

properly pursued. Teachers will need to feel supported as well as inspired and further bureaucratic burdens should at all costs be avoided. Parents will also need to be brought in more consciously so that what the school does achieve can be taken up into home life.

The latest evaluation report *Secondary Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills (SEBS) Pilot Evaluation (2007)*<sup>57</sup> came up with interesting and encouraging conclusions. It highlighted that the implementation of such a programme was a “dynamic process”, whereby schools gradually expanded their work in

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**The latest evaluation report *Secondary Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills (SEBS) Pilot Evaluation (2007)* came up with interesting and encouraging conclusions. It highlighted that the implementation of such a programme was a “dynamic process”, whereby schools gradually expanded their work in social and emotional education and it was viewed by staff as a long-term project, not a quick fix. When interviewed, the practitioners listed a number of factors they felt to be important “maintaining a whole school approach, changing cultures and attitudes, involving the right people, commissioning resources and linking with the bigger picture”**

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classroom. What seems to be missing is any clear policy regarding initial teacher training for any of these programmes and instead there is reliance on continuing professional development. This hardly seems satisfactory given the enormity of the task. The government’s bid to allow schools a greater freedom in setting their own curricula and specialisms, within a strong framework of accountability, could at least give possibilities for greater innovation and imaginative approaches, if

social and emotional education and it was viewed by staff as a long-term project, not a quick fix. Networking between schools was an important aspect where good practice and the exchange of ideas could take place. When interviewed, the practitioners listed a number of factors they felt to be important “*maintaining a whole school approach, changing cultures and attitudes, involving the right people, commissioning resources and linking with the bigger picture.*” From their experience they also

felt the impact of the SEBS pilot and the future secondary SEAL programme would raise standards of achievement, create a more positive school environment, improve pupil behaviour, improve interaction between pupils and staff and improve attendance. Optimism, like pessimism, is infectious and in itself a valuable pedagogical tool. The ground work however has to be done in the schools themselves through building a greater sense of collegial trust, good relationships, common understanding, transparent decision-making and a shared perspective of child development and children’s needs. Official policy can only provide a conducive framework and support for change. There is also a clear dichotomy between saying on the one hand that schools are free to follow this path, but also on the other that all schools will have embarked on such a programme within the next five years. The danger is that SEAL, and other such endeavours too, will fall victim to the prevalent target-setting measures, as has been already mooted for creativity in schools. Much remains to be done and advocates of this approach have a formidable task ahead of them. The “delivery” model of education is deeply entrenched and in spite of its well-documented shortcomings will take much effort to be transformed into a more child-orientated approach. Every child’s potential is important and, at least in the UK, that recognition together with the will to develop new, creative and more humanised practices in schools gives some grounds for hoping for a positive sea-change. Time will tell.

## Notes

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- <sup>4</sup> Margo,J. Dixon,M. & Pearce,H. (2006) *Freedom's Orphans*. London: IPPR
- <sup>5</sup> DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2005) *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning: guidance*. London: DfES Primary National Strategy
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- <sup>11</sup> *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning for secondary schools (SEAL), Case Study Booklet* [http://www.bandapilot.org.uk/secondary/resources/appendix2/sns\\_ssealcs0004307.pdf](http://www.bandapilot.org.uk/secondary/resources/appendix2/sns_ssealcs0004307.pdf)
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- <sup>37</sup> Ofsted (November 2007) *Hele's School Inspection Report*
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- <sup>39</sup> OFSTED report
- <sup>40</sup> Case Study
- <sup>41</sup> Case Study
- <sup>42</sup> Case Study
- <sup>43</sup> OFSTED report
- <sup>44</sup> *Thinking Allowed* is available from Gallions Primary School - [orders@gallions.newham.sch.uk](mailto:orders@gallions.newham.sch.uk)
- <sup>45</sup> *The Independent* 14/7/05
- <sup>46</sup> *Guardian*, The. *The Pursuit of Happiness* 29/5/2007
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