

Creating an Emotionally Healthy Classroom

Practical and creative literacy and
art resources for Key Stage 2

**Daphne Gutteridge and
Vivien Smith**

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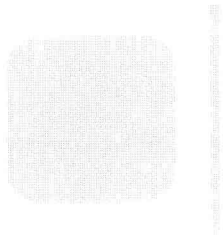
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We would like to dedicate this book to our families who have always provided unfailing support, our former colleagues and our lively and inspirational former pupils.



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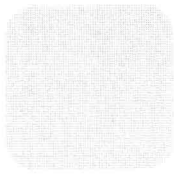
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Preface

As two very experienced primary school teachers we shared a class of primary pupils for over ten years. We have since worked extensively in the field of education and are very encouraged that the current vision for education in the United Kingdom is recognising the importance of the social and emotional aspects of learning. This has always been central to our own core beliefs for children's education and underpinned all our practice in schools.

The artwork which has been used to create the cover of the book was produced by the pupils of St Cuthbert's RC Primary School, Pemberton in Wigan. The pupils attended an art club run by two final year trainees from Edge Hill University, Sarah Kennedy and Sarah Woods. They used 'Emotions' as the stimulus for the work they produced. The pupils were obviously very engaged with the activity as the following comments show:

I think it was easy and fun to show our emotions through art because we could use different colours, materials and patterns.

(Keanu Y4)

Happy is my favourite emotion to paint and create because I'm always smiling.

(Rachel Y4)

We had to imagine our feelings and emotions so we could create our artwork.

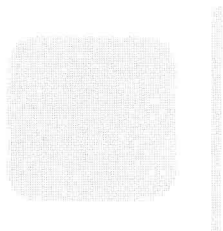
(Kaya Y4)

I liked painting outside, it was fun and made me laugh, I felt happy so it was easy to create a happy feeling picture.

(Louise Y6)

Preface

We hope this book will help to inspire and motivate other teachers to make social and emotional wellbeing of pupils an integral part of their own teaching.

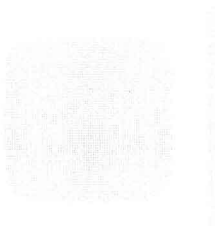


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Introduction

This book is designed to help practitioners who are committed to creating an emotionally healthy environment in which pupils feel valued, have a sense of belonging and feel confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings.

There is very convincing evidence to suggest that if we develop emotional literacy in pupils this will lead to improved wellbeing, self-esteem, positive relationships and higher achievement. Therefore, schools are continually exploring ways to successfully place emotional literacy at the heart of teaching and learning.



What is emotional literacy?

Katherine Weare in her book *Developing the Emotionally Literate School* (2004) defines it as:

The ability to understand ourselves and others and to be aware of, understand and to use information about the emotional states of others with competence. It includes the ability to understand, express and manage our own emotions, and respond to the emotions of others, in ways that are helpful to both ourselves and others.

Currently, schools are addressing these issues through PSHE (Personal Social and Health Education) supported by the SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) programme.



What is SEAL?

This is a programme which offers a whole school framework for promoting the social and emotional aspects of learning. These are defined as five broad areas of learning:

Introduction

- Self-Awareness – pupils need to know how they learn, how they relate to others, what they are thinking and feeling.
- Managing Feelings – pupils need to be able to use, recognise and accept their feelings. They can use this to regulate their learning and behaviour.
- Motivation – pupils need to take an active and enthusiastic part in learning, know how to set themselves goals and work towards them, how to focus and concentrate on learning and how to persist in learning when this proves difficult.
- Empathy – pupils need to know how to understand others, anticipate and predict their likely thoughts, feelings and perceptions. They learn to see things from another point of view and modify their response accordingly.
- Social Skills – pupils need to know how to relate to others, take an active part in a group, communicate with different audiences, negotiate and resolve differences.

When pupils have good social and emotional skills and are in a supportive emotional environment, they will be more able to:

- deal with conflict;
- manage strong feelings;
- be calm and optimistic;
- recover from setbacks;
- keep going when things are difficult;
- understand and respect differences.

However, if children feel:

- awkward;
- anxious;
- embarrassed;
- stressed;
- angry;
- frustrated;
- excluded

it will then be more difficult for them to:

- pay attention;
- concentrate on a task;
- be creative;
- work within a group;
- be motivated and interested;
- keep going when things get difficult.

Emotional health and wellbeing creates happier, healthier children who do better in learning and in life and is an important strand of the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum in schools.

What is Personal Social and Health Education?

Personal Social and Health Education includes everything schools do to promote pupils' good health and wellbeing to develop mature, independent and self-confident pupils with an awareness and respect for others. It is also backed by the National Healthy Schools programme and links very strongly with the Every Child Matters Agenda.

How do we encourage children to explore their emotions?

It is often difficult to verbalise our feelings or emotions and express them with confidence. This book has been written to offer alternative opportunities to encourage discussion and self-awareness of personal emotions as well as developing empathy with others and how and why pupils may be feeling as they do. Through our own extensive teaching experience, we know that interactive activities are far more likely to engage and stimulate pupils, therefore enriching their thinking and learning.

Personal Social and Health Education can be delivered as a discrete lesson but it permeates all practice in schools. Aspects of pupils' social and emotional development are developed across the whole school curriculum and the work presented in this book will support teachers in this area of their practice.

Why a cross-curricular approach?

Current educational thinking supports cross-curricular teaching as a way of increasing children's motivation for learning and their level of engagement. Children are able to see the value of what they are learning so become more actively involved. This book provides ample opportunities for the practitioner to take a creative approach in supporting children's exploration of their emotions, not only through PSHE but also through poetry and art. Through a range of fun activities in all these curriculum areas we hope to stimulate creativity.

What is creativity?

Creativity has been interpreted in many ways, but the National Curriculum outlines the importance of creativity as follows:

By providing rich and varied contexts for pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge and understanding and skills, the curriculum should encourage pupils to think creatively and critically . . . Creative pupils lead richer lives and, in the longer term, make a valuable contribution to society.

In September 2000, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education produced a report entitled *All our Futures*. The report recognised the importance of creativity as multi-dimensional, which involves using imagination, being original and judging value. The report states:

Creative and cultural education provide ways of engaging with issues of social change. They enable schools to address such consequences of change and alienation and exclusion, and to raise young people's self-esteem and motivation.

We would maintain that the opportunities for interaction and discussion with children, as laid out in this text, offer support to teachers who care deeply about their pupils and their development.

Layout and approach

This aspect of emotional literacy may be delivered in other areas of the curriculum or as a specific PSHE lesson. However, this book offers the practitioner a resource which could be used in several different ways:

- as a stimulus for PSHE discussion;
- as part of a literacy lesson;
- as part of an art lesson;
- as a cross-curricular literacy/art/PSHE lesson;
- as a resource book for a series of lessons on the topic of emotions;
- as a resource to support the SEAL programme;
- as stimulus for a Circle Time discussion;
- as an artist information text;
- as a poetry book.

Included in each session are the relevant learning objectives and also specific curriculum links to PSHE, SEAL, Renewed Literacy Framework, and Programmes of Study for Art and Design, as well as to any other appropriate cross-curricular opportunities.

Although the art images are reproduced in black and white, web links are given to enable teachers to display the original artworks on the interactive whiteboard.

Art and design

Pieces of artwork have been carefully chosen, which can in some way illustrate each emotion. The works range from pre-Raphaelite to modern art installations and represent a wide variety of artists and craftspeople. Clear headings mean that teachers can see at a glance which area of art the linked activities cover and also the resources needed. A list of artists and artworks has been added so teachers are able to use the activities when studying the work of a particular artist.

Art and design offers a perfect opportunity for children to explore their feelings in a creative, personal and non-threatening way. Looking at the works of a variety of artists, craftspeople and designers from a range of times and cultures encourages children to communicate their ideas and feelings. It helps to develop their critical awareness and respect for others' work and can sometimes challenge their own attitudes and values in relation to images. The practical art activities give opportunities for children to experiment with a variety of methods and approaches, tools and techniques and provide stimulating starting points to help develop creativity and imagination in their work and their thinking.

Literacy

The poems have been especially written to convey each of the emotions covered in the book, so are ideal to give opportunities for thought and discussion. Following each poem are linked literacy activities, ranging from drama to performance to written pieces incorporating work from the New Literacy Framework.

The New Literacy Framework places greater emphasis on speaking and listening. Most teachers would agree that for children to be able to speak and express themselves clearly and develop active listening strategies equips them with extremely important life skills. The use of the 'think, pair, share' technique incorporated in the literacy activities helps children to develop these skills by giving them opportunities to express themselves in a way that does not involve sharing their thoughts and feelings with the rest of the class, if they choose not to do so. It also encourages them to explore their ideas in more depth and gives every child equal participation and simultaneous interaction.

Poetry is an effective device to use with children as through it they can learn how complex thoughts, humorous ideas and deep emotions are expressed with a few, carefully chosen words. Poetry can access areas of imagination, which can contribute to children growing as critical thinkers. The book contains a variety of poetic forms and genres that encourage children to rethink what a poem is whilst offering them short pieces of writing, which will help sustain their interest.

