



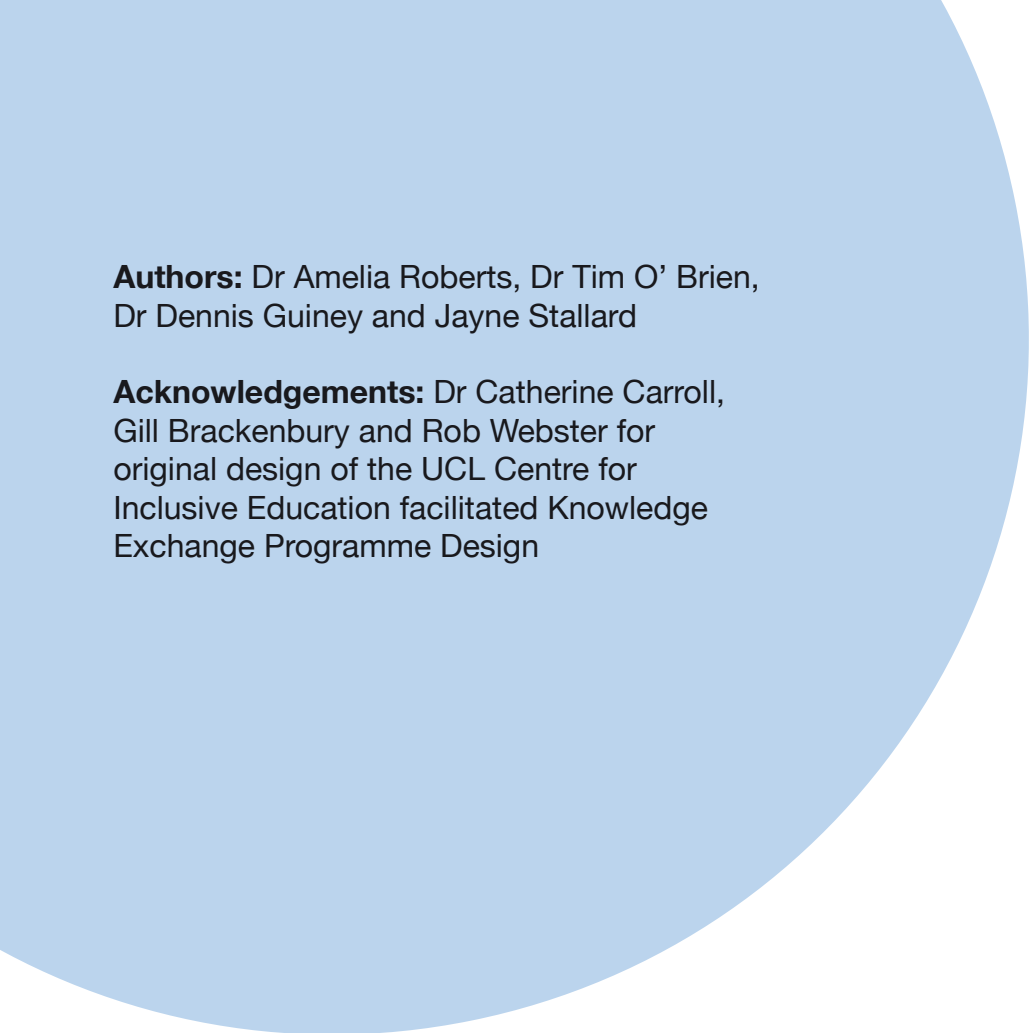
## Supporting Wellbeing, Emotional Resilience and Learning (SWERL)

Pilot Project 2018 case studies



SUPPORTING  
WELLBEING  
EMOTIONAL  
RESILIENCE AND  
LEARNING





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Inclusive Education facilitated Knowledge  
Exchange Programme Design



SUPPORTING  
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### What are the UCL Centre for Inclusive Education (CIE) facilitated Knowledge Exchange programmes?

The CIE facilitated Knowledge Exchange (KE) programmes use existing research to support schools and educational settings in creating new, practice-based research. This is partly done through collecting case-studies based on schools' activities. All of our KE programmes use published research to create a series of domains which form an 'audit'. Schools learn about the domains, then apply the audit collaboratively to their setting, gathering a wide range of views. The KE programmes use Kotter's Theory of Change model to support schools in managing the change process. Schools use their audit results to construct an action plan with the support of a facilitator. The facilitator helps schools to develop an apt and measurable plan that links to school priorities. Schools then present their findings and the action plan and the school journey is then written up as a case study. This paper showcases the case studies from thirteen schools which took part in our pilot project in 2018. Further research will also be published from this pilot project.

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### What is SWERL?

Supporting Wellbeing, Emotional Resilience and Learning (SWERL) is a CIE Knowledge Exchange programme based initially on a literature review by Dr Catherine (Carroll and Professor Jane Hurry 'Carroll & Hurry (2018) **Supporting pupils in school with social, emotional and mental health needs: a scoping review of the literature**, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*).

It was designed to meet the need of schools supporting young people and staff members' mental health and wellbeing. The domains were then generated by Dr Amelia Roberts and Dr Tim O'Brien (O'Brien and Roberts (2019) **A domains-based approach to meeting social, emotional and mental health needs**, *Support for Learning* 34:2 pp. 179–192).

The seven domains are:

- **Supported and Knowledgeable Staff**
- **Graduated Response to Need: Role of the Teacher**
- **Enabling Environment**
- **Whole School Systems and Planning**
- **Building Relationships**
- **Robust Communication Systems**
- **Planning Transitions**

The following case studies show how schools used these domains and the UCL CIE facilitated Knowledge Exchange programme 'SWERL' to effect change within their schools.

# Elsley Primary School

## Context

Elsley Primary is an age 3 to 11, non-denominational inner-city community primary school in the London Borough of Brent. The school is currently a two-form entry school with 572 children on roll. However, an extension and development project means that the school will soon become a four-form entry school. The school serves and represents a diverse community. 83% of children speak English as an additional language. 14% of children are on the SEN register. Elsley Primary is a strategic partner of the Brent Teaching School Alliance.

## Audit and domains

The school SWERL team led a comprehensive whole school audit using the domains. Domains were colour-coded by staff to represent domains that were ‘not yet developing’, ‘developing’ and those already ‘well developed’. This process highlighted two inter-related domains that the project would focus on:



- **Planning Transitions**
- **Building positive relationships**


## What did the school do?

The key transition that appeared to need improved planning was the lunchtime session. Behaviour report analysis showed that most behaviour incidents were due to lunchtime arguments and conflicts. Most of the pupils involved were those identified as experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH). A pupil survey illuminated how many pupils felt that lunchtime was the least positive time in the school day. School playground observations supported pupil perception and highlighted how School Meals Supervisory Assistants (SMSAs) may require a different type of training than they had previously undertaken. SMSAs needed to be empowered, enabled and supported in a different way. Observations also indicated that pupils needed further support during lunchtimes in relation to learning how to get the best out of this time in the school day and to ensure that the school’s values were evident outside of the classroom as well as inside.


### Findings/Decision

Project	Whole school priority
<b>D5 &amp; D7</b> Building positive relationship & planned transitions	<b>D6 &amp; D2</b> - Staff wellbeing - Graduated response to need - Communication to staff

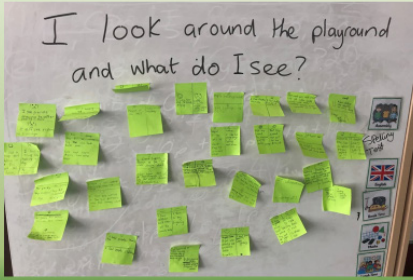





**Baseline data collected**



- **SMSA'S baseline skills/confidence audit**





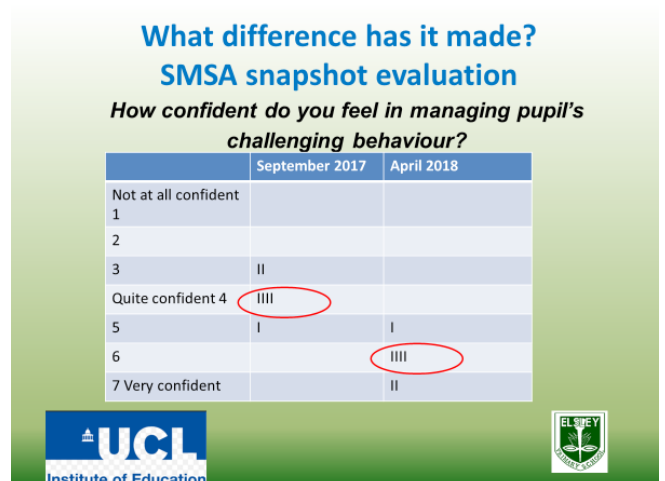


Elsley Primary wanted to improve the lunchtime experience for pupils and staff – therefore lunchtime was selected as the key space in the school day where Planned Transitions and Building Positive Relationships were areas for further input and action – especially as negative lunchtime interactions were shown, for some pupils, to have a negative impact on learning in the afternoon.

A SWERL action plan was created, shared with staff and agreed. SMSA training included asking SMSAs for their perspective of what they see in the playground and what it means to them. This was used to baseline their confidence and skills as well as understand how they felt they could make a positive impact. The influence of one’s own culture and belief systems on how one understands and responds to behaviour that is challenging was discussed. Communication styles were explored, as were some of the principles of assertive discipline and approaches related to restorative justice. SMSAs were encouraged to focus on what was working well alongside what needed to improve. They were also invited to consider the broader life context of children who attend the school as well

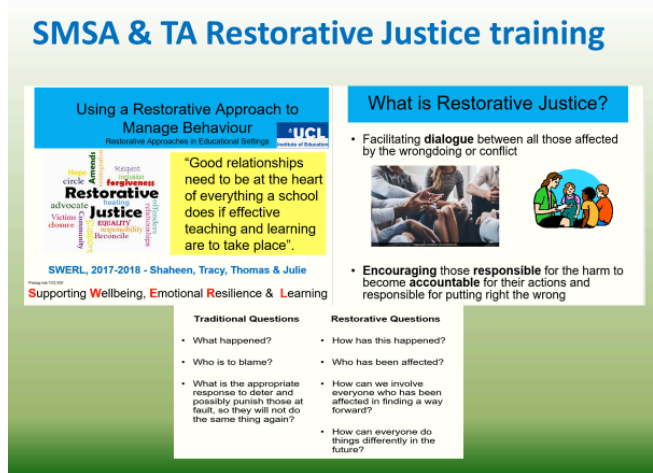
as exploring how emotions can drive a child’s behaviour. SMSAs also learnt new playground games that they could play with the children or explain to the children and supervise.

Pupils’ contribution to how lunchtimes could improve was included into the school PHSE programme. The SEMH advisory teacher attended PHSE lessons to discuss how the children could help to improve their own lunchtime experience and build more positive relationships with SMSAs. This was then extended to the broader topic of how to build relationships with other children and other adults.



## Outcomes

Before their training the majority of SMSAs indicated in a survey that they were not confident in understanding and dealing with behaviour that was challenging. After the SWERL project was completed, the majority indicated that they were confident. They talked about no longer shouting, not judging children – especially based on the child’s previous behaviour – being better at listening and responding, being much calmer and, in some cases, finding that talking less helps to reduce the stress in a challenging situation. They identified the value of having more knowledge and skills.



Observations indicate that adults interact more often with children and more positively with children now. Some of the SMSAs refer to their new skills in managing behaviour that is challenging and are also given space to meet and reflect on their practice.

There is a much clearer definition of the role and responsibilities of the SMSA and also how they are supported within the school community; the SMSAs will have an identified member of staff who will support them. Children are also clearer about their responsibilities at lunchtime. Playground incidents have reduced.

During the SWERL project a governor engaged with the project and the SWERL team and became SWERL governor. This role continues as an aspect of school governance. As a response to pupil voice the school is planning to alter aspects of the outdoor play space to incorporate cost-effective themed play spaces.

The SWERL audit process focus on building stronger relationships raised awareness of how the school could develop further its provision for staff wellbeing. A wellbeing team was created and wellbeing became a focus of staff INSET. A survey was conducted and this resulted in wellbeing actions being taken. Provision is now available for staff to meet to share their challenges and reflect on solutions. A wellbeing review will be part of the staff PDR cycle.

## Reflection

The audit process provided a forum for discussion about the implications of what could be provided for children who experience SEMH and how this may be beneficial for all children. The school found that the SWERL domains provided a robust framework for the analysis of whole school SEMH provision. The school will continue to use the domains.



# One Degree Academy, Enfield

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## Context

One Degree Academy opened in September 2016 as a mainstream 4–19 free school. Their vision is of university readiness for all their children, striving for excellence, step-by-step. Newly opened, they have 30 pupils on roll across Reception and Year 1, 70% boys and 30% girls with 50% receiving free school meals. The pupils are drawn from the local community and there is a mixed demographic. 40% of the children come from the most deprived 10% of wards nationally, with 60% not having English as a first language.

Their interest in becoming part of the SWERL pilot project was driven by their passion for getting things right for children and prioritising SEMH. They believe that as a new school they are in a unique position to create a supportive and informed culture for both student and staff in terms of emotional wellbeing and mental health.

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## Audit and domains

The audit tool was completed by all staff and it revealed differences in perception that were a surprise. This was valuable in itself. The audit highlighted the following areas of focus:

- **Supported and Informed Staff as a primary focus**
- **Building Relationships**
- **Graduated Response to Need**
- **Enabling Environment.**

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### **What did the school do?**

It was decided that:

- **staff would be surveyed about sources of stress and current coping mechanisms using a survey based on MIND Mental Health First Aid resources**
- **observation of staff practice would be used to monitor adoption and impact of support and training**
- **time for reflection would be built into the school day**
- **staff would be supported in identifying the strengths and skills they already have to draw on when faced with new challenges**
- **opportunities for collaboration and joint planning would be created, and also for joint problem solving with the senior leadership team**
- **learning logs would be introduced to capture impact of training – what went well and why? What would be even better?**
- **supervision and appraisal would be adapted to include reflection and personal target setting**
- **consideration would be given to introducing solution circles for staff**
- **the Assistant Principal would undertake training in solution focused brief therapy to increase knowledge of strategies and approaches that would positively support staff and ethos development.**

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### **Outcomes**

The training in solution focused brief therapy was very useful and some aspects were immediately adopted, such as using scaling questions to help children reflect on their learning and experience.

Appraisal meetings with staff now have a new shared agenda. Staff are better prepared and there is a sense of co-ownership of the issues and outcomes. This has led to more focused thinking about the way training is offered to staff and about how staff skills and knowledge can be shared within the school.

The learning logs have enabled reflection on what staff do well, and this has increased confidence and staff offers of help to one other. More work is needed on helping them to stay focused on the positives and analyse why things go well. Overall, this project has been particularly effective in empowering staff. It has also clarified and shaped the targets for CPD and for the approach of the senior leadership team.

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### **Reflections/Learning**

Staff responses on questionnaires tended to be 'safe' as there was a 'middle road' option. This option could be taken out. Staff may feel able to be more honest as their trust in the process and the aims of the senior leadership team grows. Support from the CIE facilitator provided a valuable reflective space as well as access to advice and guidance that was very helpful.





# Eversley Primary School

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## Context

Eversley Primary is a large three-form entry community school in the London Borough of Enfield with over 600 pupils on roll. Over half the pupils speak English as an additional language although few are at the early stages of learning English. The school's interest in the SWERL project arose from an increase in the number of children presenting with SEMH prompting a desire to make positive changes in the school to develop practice and improve outcomes for pupils with SEMH. In addition, they wanted to prioritise staff wellbeing to support staff in meeting the emotional and attachment

needs of the pupils. The school was already in the process of creating a calm space for children in distress.

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## Audit and domains

The SENCO and Inclusion Manager considered the domains within the SWERL handbook, narrowed the focus down to three domains, and then presented their thoughts to the Governing Body. This was enthusiastically received and the Governors refined the focus to:

- **Enabling Environment**
- **Building Relationships**

## Activities and interactions: How did you do it?



- Audit the rooms/spaces in the school to gain insight into the emotions experienced in different parts of the school.
- Combining exploration of emotions, relationships and spaces

### What did the school do?

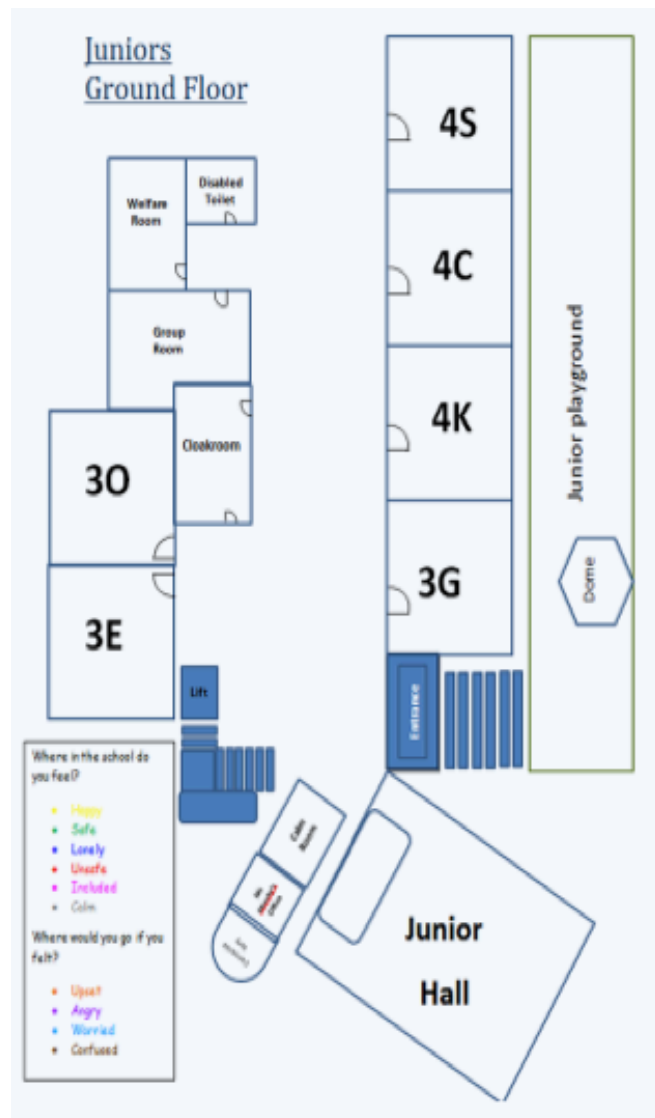
It was decided that staff and children would be surveyed to establish their feelings of wellbeing and safety, and children would be asked about their lunchtime experiences, as issues relating to behaviour and distress appeared to escalate after lunch.

The most urgent need was to support children with extreme SEMH behaviours such as running away, physical and verbal aggression, vandalism etc. This was affecting the wellbeing of staff and other children. Spaces in the school could be better used to reduce distress and stress in all children and this would impact on those who were showing the highest level of need. This would build on the planned refurbishment of a group room as a sensory room and calm space.

Year 4 was used as a pilot group to ‘map’ the physical areas of school where the pupils felt safe, happy, calm, included, lonely, confused and unsafe.

Three different methods were used to collect the data as a way of trialling what would be effective and efficient.

- **Whole class map: as a class, children identified through discussion how they felt in different areas of the school. This method was useful for Key Stage 1.**
- **Group maps: in groups of 6 children identified through discussion how they felt in different areas of the school. This method needed limited adult support.**
- **Individual maps: on their own children identified through discussion how they felt in different areas of the school. This method produced the most informative data.**



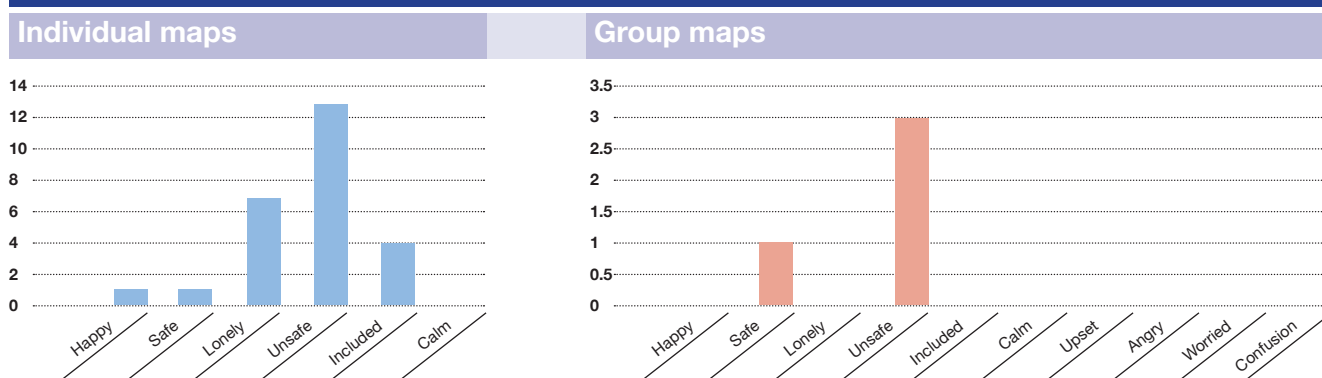
### Outcomes

The individual maps gave richer data than the whole class maps and indicated more differences in experiences for the children who responded.



The main findings are shown below:

**Cloakrooms**



	Cloakrooms		Classrooms		Playground		Calm Room	
	Group	Individual	Group	Individual	Group	Individual	Group	Individual
Unsafe	X	X				X		
Safe			X	X			X	X
Happy				X	X	X		
Included			X	X	X	X		
Lonely		X				X		
Calm							X	X
Confused				X				

These results indicate that the changes to the calm room have been successful. The audit has led the school to decide to close the cloakrooms from September, leading to children feeling safer and reducing TA stress and teacher workload in managing the issues arising from cloakroom incidents.

Staff are now referring to the project and audit in decision making, such as in relation to cloakrooms, staggering lunch times and changing the timetable of the day. There is now whole school commitment to prioritising wellbeing.

The audit will be repeated with other year groups, possibly using a more physical ‘school walk’ approach with younger children and involving more stakeholders. The school will also use a focus group approach to explore issues in more depth.

**Reflections/Learning**

The Year 4 teachers were much more positive about the exercise than anticipated and did not feel it was an additional demand. They all want to use the audit individually next time even though this took more effort to organise and collate. The teachers are willing to enter the results into a spreadsheet to help with collation and analysis.

# Hitherfield School

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## Context

Hitherfield School is a non-denominational co-educational primary school in Streatham, London. The school vision is to create a school community where everyone feels valued, has the opportunity to explore, develop their strengths and participate in new experiences.

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## Audit and domains

The project team considered the SWERL domains and selected the following three:

- **Supported and Knowledgeable Staff (but changed this to Staff Support)**
- **Enabling Environments**
- **Whole school planning and design**

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## What did the school do?

Hitherfield worked on creating spaces for children in stressful situations and better spaces for adults working with children or groups of children. There was an overwhelming need to make playtime more effective as relaxing outlets for children. Instead, many physical incidents were occurring which upset children and led to disturbances which interrupted after lunch lessons.

The school adjusted their behaviour policy. Previously, children on detention were missing Friday 'Golden Time'. A new policy changed the detention activities to include Yoga and mindfulness activities. There was a greater staff focus on managing playtime incidents, with an emphasis on greater staff interaction with pupils and the use of de-escalation strategies. Additionally, greater

structure was put into place with older children arranging activities for younger children under staff supervision.

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## Outcomes

Hitherfield used recorded behaviour incidents and playground observations to determine that negative playground incidents reduced as a result of the activities put into place. While there was insufficient time to see if this change was sustained, children who were more often in detention reduced number of detentions. Pupil voice elicited that children enjoyed the yoga and mindfulness sessions and felt that they were able to transfer the skills into other contexts in order to calm down.

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## Reflections/Learning

Hitherfield School had recognised that a small number of children seemed to be disproportionately in detention. Although the behaviour policy was carried out kindly, the school realised that children with frequent behavioural difficulties needed a similar level of scrutiny as other children with special educational needs. This led to a more structured focus on the 'graduated response to need' and a clearer behaviour policy.



# Queens Park School

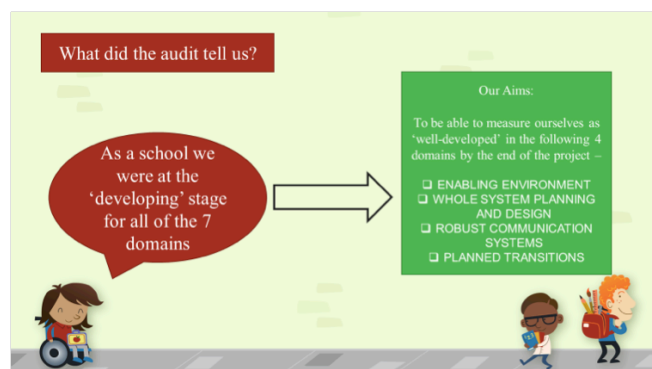
## Context

Queens Park Community School is a secondary school and sixth form with academy status, located in Queen's Park, north west London, in the London Borough of Brent.

## Audit and domains

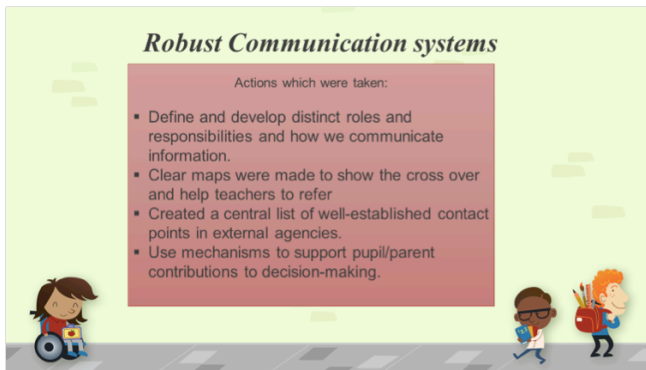
Queens Park Community School selected the following four domains:

- **Enabling Environment**
- **Whole System Planning and Design**
- **Robust Communication Systems**
- **Planning Transitions**



## What did the school do?

- **Enabling Environment:**
  - Have quiet and safe areas in the classrooms for children to access.
  - Integrate the whole-school program of Mind-up.
  - Have visual timetables.
- **Whole School Planning and Design:**
  - Participate in training and carry out base-line measurement.
  - Complete clear provision map for all areas of well-being and mental health.
  - Timetable interventions to be consistent to enable monitoring and accountability.
- **Robust Communication Systems:**
  - Define and develop distinct roles a ations are received and understood.
  - Define and promote understanding of cross-over between SEN and well-being provision.



• **Planned Transitions:**

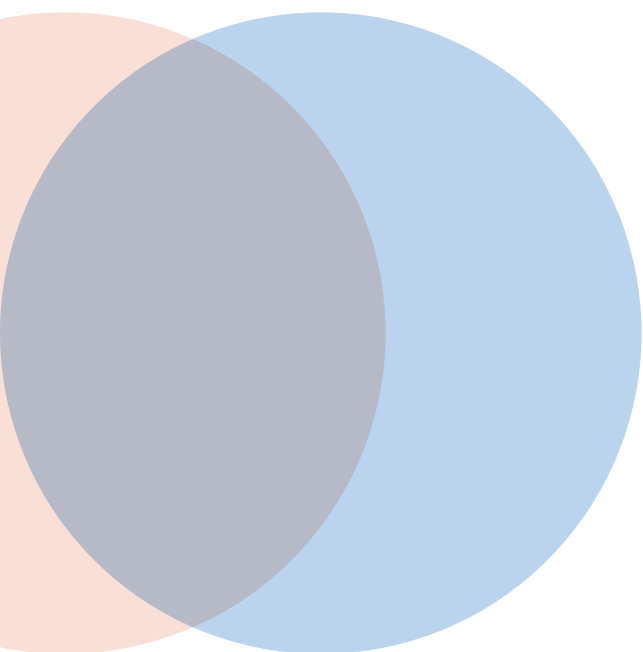
- Raise awareness of pathways and support networks for children transitioning into secondary school.
- Offer support for children struggling with life transitions.
- Manage and organise physical transitions.
- Promote transitions to develop emotional and academic resilience.

Queens Park school carried out an array of questionnaires, audits, observations and exercises to capture pupil voice in order to measure and understand the effects of the changes made. This included use of ‘The Happiness Scale’.

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**Outcomes**

Queens Park school found it difficult to ascertain exactly which changes had occurred as a result of the specific changes made by the SWERL project because they had already invested heavily in a wide range of measures to support and improve mental health and wellbeing in their school. They concluded that the audit tool and domains were a helpful way to understand their school’s journey and that the SWERL project had sustained and supported their long term journey.





# Woodford Green Preparatory School

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## Context

Woodford Green Preparatory School is a non-denominational co-educational independent school in the London Borough of Redbridge. There are over 380 pupils aged 4–11 on roll drawn from a wide catchment area. The aims of the SWERL project exactly aligned with the aims of the school and their intention to pro-actively promote mental health and wellbeing in staff and pupils.

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## Audit and domains

The project team considered the SWERL domains and selected three, based on their knowledge of the school, as being most relevant. They chose:

- **Supported and Knowledgeable Staff (but changed this to Staff Support)**
- **Graduated Response to Need**
- **Building Relationships**

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## What did the school do?

The SWERL team met with all staff to present the project using a tailored slideshow and to invite teaching, non-teaching and office staff to contribute to a ‘thought box’ in the staff room. Staff were then asked to colour code the items (red,

amber and green) within the 3 selected domains on the SWERL Project Audit Tool. The results showed a lot of consistency and the main area that emerged as a focus was Staff Support.

The team then used a focus group approach and some staff meeting time to explore this domain further and identified the demands from setting and marking homework and dealing with the email load as the priority areas for change.

It was agreed that the email protocols and policy would be reviewed and revised, and that alternative methods of setting homework would be researched and trialled, including surveying children and parents and providing parents with information about the benefits, purpose and expectations of homework.

In addition a general wellbeing/happiness survey designed in-house was used with pupils and staff.

Half way through the project the plan and actions were presented to the Governing Body and received very positively.

Regular feedback was provided to staff to ensure that the communication loop was complete and they were kept aware of the work that was ongoing and of the outcomes as they were identified.

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### Outcomes

The main wellbeing issue amongst pupils was anxiety and amongst staff was stress/workload.

A new protocol for homework was developed and piloted with Learning Grids being introduced offering a matrix of possibilities and a range of success opportunities across the spectrum from purely academic to purely practical/creative. Some parents actively steered their children towards always selecting academic topics. However, the children reported being excited by homework, being more independent in their choice, and being better able to negotiate with their parents. This has led to a new homework policy being developed to include choice and investigative learning, as well as clear communication with parents. Staff were also included in a redesign of the staff room to make it a more relaxing and social space, and this was seen as having a positive impact on their sense of feeling valued.

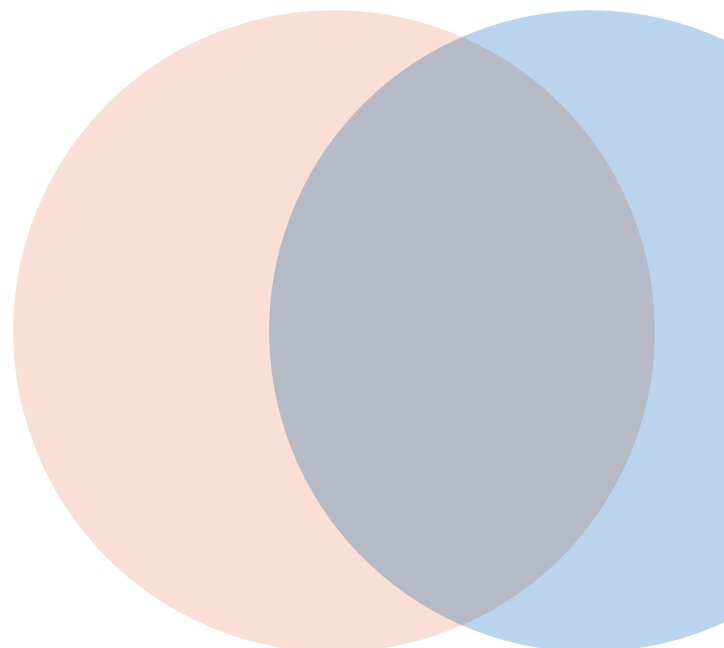
There were observable changes in practice in staff and a sense of culture change where both staff and pupils were more confident about voicing their opinions and worries and appeared happier and more animated. Governors commented on staff talking about SWERL as a positive experience and process.

The wellbeing survey will be repeated to identify impact on pupils and staff.

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### Reflections/Learning

Staff appreciated the opportunity to 'voice' their concerns to the project team. On reflection it would have been helpful to have a bank of people identified in advance as being willing listeners who would ensure concerns were aired. Full support from the senior leadership team is an enabler and motivator, so they need to be committed and pro-actively supportive. Staff are brilliant at generating ideas once they are invited to jointly problem solve. It was helpful to have facilitator support for the design and implementation of the action plan and evaluation/data collection methods.







# Gladstone Park Primary School

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## Context

Gladstone Park Primary School is a three-form entry, non-denominational, inner city school in the London Borough of Brent. It has places for 690 children. The school serves and represents a diverse community. There are a total of 47 languages spoken in the school, with Arabic, Urdu and Somali being the main three languages. 25% of the children speak English as an additional language. 10% of children in the school are refugees or asylum seekers. Some of these children speak no English at all and did not receive any formal education in their country of birth. 38% of children in the school live in overcrowded housing. 13.5% of children in the school are on the SEN register.

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## Audit and domains

The SWERL project was introduced to the whole school at a staff meeting including an explanation of the domains. The audit was then undertaken. Staff found the audit process helpful as it validated what they were currently doing in some of the domain areas. The two key domains were:

- **Planning Transitions**
- **Enabling Environment**

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## What did the school do?

One key area for development related to issues that arose at lunchtime. This included while the children were eating, while the children were playing outside and, as the staff described it, 'issues and conflicts' that 'filtered into the beginning of afternoon lessons and needed sorting out'. This often meant that the beginning of the first lesson after lunchtime was often spent resolving issues that had arisen in the playground so that the children could settle and focus on learning.

The SENCO met with the school council to discuss the audit and school council agreed that things needed to change. They discussed how to improve lunchtimes and how to ensure that children arrived at afternoon lessons ready to learn and succeed. Gladstone Park Primary values pupil voice and so children in years 1 to 6 were consulted to provide a baseline relating to how they processed their experience of lunchtime. 57% of the pupils were unhappy at lunchtime and only 25% reported being happy. Noise levels were reported as a key negative factor in the dining hall. The pupils indicated that the dining hall and playground

experiences were having a negative impact on the start of afternoon lessons. The class teacher and SENCO led another INSET where plans were shared with staff. All teachers agreed to give up some of their lunchtime to ensure that they could help reinforce the rules and praise children for their improved behaviour.

Consequently, the school set two SWERL-informed targets:

**1. To ensure that lunchtime is a calm and pleasant experience for all children.**

Throughout the year this involved the staff and children setting new rules for the dining hall. Adults deliberately noticed and praised children who were keeping to the rules. Training for School Meals Supervisory Assistants (SMSAs) about the new rules was initiated. A whole-school assembly took place where the rules and their intention were conveyed and explained.

**2. To ensure that all children experience success twice a day.**

This needed action to be taken both at the start of afternoon lessons and the beginning of lessons at the start of the day. It was decided that ‘mindful music’ would be played as children arrived into the room, children were greeted on arrival and the first lesson in the morning and after lunch always began with an errorless learning activity where every child could experience success. Initially this was trialled in two classes, then became available to all classes.

Before introducing mindful music and errorless learning 446 children (years 2 to 6) were asked to rate how relaxed they were at the start of lessons in the morning and the start of lessons in the afternoon. They were also asked to rate how confident they were and to what degree they felt good about themselves.

**Examples of errorless learning activities**

Plan your dream birthday party. (Who would you invite? What games would you play? What would be the theme? What type of birthday cake would you have?)

Create your own imaginary planet. What would it look like? What would you call it? Who would live there?

If you could ask your favourite celebrity a set of questions, what would they be? What would be your dream holiday? Where would you go? Why? Who would you go with? What would you eat? - draw it. - They came into Hawaiian beach music.



**Outcomes:**

**Target 1:**

When the children were consulted about the dining hall they said that they like what it feels and looks like at Christmas. They liked the atmosphere and order created by vertical rows of tables at Christmas. The school has now adopted this arrangement for all lunchtimes.

In the first two weeks of the implementation of the new rules, staff gave up some of their lunchtime to eat with the children and reinforce new rules. Many staff continue to eat with the children. Each SMSA was given a key fob with example comments on to support the new positive atmosphere. These comments enabled the SMSAs to have phrases to hand to thank the children for their politeness, good manners, using their indoor voices and for cleaning their tables.




When data was collected post action, happiness amongst the children had increased and unhappiness decreased. The children now referred to the calmness – for example lack of running around, the lack of constant loud noise, a cleaner environment, more praise from the staff and no longer being ‘blamed for things that we didn’t do’.




Leading and supporting SMSAs has now become part of the SEN assistant role. This is proving to be a successful way for SMSAs to receiving ongoing support so that they can help to provide an enabling environment. There is less food wastage now. The dining hall has been re-named by the children. It is now called ‘The Big Friendly Lunch Hall’.

**Target 2:**

When the project was completed children were asked to rate themselves again. There were noticeable positive alterations between how the children rated their self-related feelings before and after the introduction of

**Lunchtime votes - Post-intervention**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total	Percentage
	47	43	39	63	52	42	533	53.6%
	21	18	22	11	25	29	126	23.6%
	20	29	28	12	13	19	121	22.7%
Not participated	2	0	0	4	0	0	6	

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total	Percentage
	17	17	29	21	21	29	134	25%
	18	13	11	17	1	17	77	14.4%
	51	55	46	48	67	41	308	57%
Not participated	3	5	3	4	1	3	18	3%

mindful music and errorless learning. [B = Before. A= After].

Feeling relaxed B: 22%/A:55%

Feeling confident B: 31%/A:54%

Feeling good about myself B: 41%/A:57%.

78% of the sample agreed that mindful activities make them feel calm.

Errorless activities have become part of classroom practice and new staff will be inducted in how to use them.

**Reflection:**

It became evident that whilst change can be initiated within a year, some change requires a longer period of time and there are people who need to see the positive impact of change to be convinced that the change process has real value for the school community.

# St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School

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## Context

St Elizabeth Catholic Primary school is an aged 3–11 Roman Catholic inner city primary school in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. There are 402 children on roll, 28% of whom are eligible for free school meals. The school emphasises that it values the 4Rs – resilience, respect, responsibility and relationships.

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## Audit and domains

SWERL was introduced on a SWERL-dedicated INSET day for staff and Governors that was focused on the domains. Strengths and areas for development were identified in relation to each domain. The two domains that the school decided to focus on for the SWERL project were:

- **Planning Transitions**
- **Robust Communication Systems.**

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## What did the school do?

In discussion with their facilitator from CIE the school SWERL team explored the audit and which aspect of transitions and communication to identify for action. There were many transitions regularly under consideration in the school, such as the transition from primary to secondary school or within-school transitions. However, one transition-related experience that the school often encountered was being aware that, for some children – and often those children who experience SEMH – Christmas, rather than being a time for religious celebration, social celebration and sharing of gifts, could be a very difficult time. In the Autumn Term some children had begun to express anxiety

about the Christmas holiday period. The school decided that it especially wanted to make the Christmas period an easier transition for those in Year 1. This would also allow, in future, for new processes to be embedded at the end of the first term that children attended the school.

An action plan was created to focus on improving the transition from the end of the Autumn Term to the start of the Spring Term for those children who were in Year 1. This resulted in the school creating a buddy system. It was decided that each child in reception would have a buddy in Year 4. A meeting was organised with reception staff and it was agreed that key workers would talk with the children in Year 1 to explain the concept of having a buddy and to explain how the buddy project would work. Similarly, a meeting was held with Year 4 staff with the same intentions. Class teachers explained to Year 4 children how being a buddy to someone in Year 1 would have many mutual benefits.

In terms of creating a robust communication system for this buddy project, a letter was written to all parents and carers of children in Year 1 and Year 4. The letter explained the processes and purpose of this newly initiated buddy system. Year 4 children then wrote a letter of introduction to their buddy in Year 1. Each letter was unique.

In December, Year 4 children wrote another letter to Year 1 children. The key message within this letter was that I am your buddy, I will be thinking of you over Christmas and I



will be here for you when you get back. This helped the younger children feel a sense of belonging and continuity and was intended to reduce anxiety about returning to school after Christmas. The letters were presented to each Year 1 child when Year 4 and Year 1 met together. This was followed by a special playtime with the Year 4 buddy.

Just before term ended another letter was sent to parents and carers explaining that their child would be coming home with a letter from their Year 4 buddy. Parents were asked to read the letter with the child at the start of the Christmas break and also at the end of the break. On the first day of the Spring Term Year 1 and Year 4 enjoyed another playtime together so that each Year 1 child could spend time with their buddy and transition happily back into the school environment.

Feedback about the process was gained from both Year 1 and Year 4 children. Feedback was also gained from parents.

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### **Outcomes**

The buddy system was a success with data triangulated from Year 1, Year 4 and parents/carers.

The buddy relationship itself has developed. Currently, Year 4 visit Year 1 as their reading partners on a Friday afternoon. The Year 1 children talked about being more confident in school knowing that they have an older buddy. Year 4 children talked about enjoying the responsibility and friendship. A by-product of the buddy system is that there



are now increased informal opportunities for children in these year groups to talk about their feelings. The school is considering this system as a way of improving pupil resilience.

The benefits of being flexible in terms of school timetable and playtimes have become more evident and more available.

The buddy scheme will continue for these year groups next year as they move into Year 5 and Year 2. The buddy scheme will be introduced next year for Year 4 and Year 1.

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### **Reflection**

The SWERL buddy project has been identified as a template for use within other areas of the school community and the model can also be applied for a range of individual situations. Discussions have begun about how the buddy scheme might have benefits for adult groups within the school, especially those new to the school.

# Cranbrook Primary



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## Context

Cranbrook Primary School is a significantly larger than average primary school serving a diverse community in east London. There are approximately 980 pupils on roll aged 3–11 Years. The school has a high proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds (98.3%), largely from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with SEN support is lower than the national average though those with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), is higher than the national average. The school has an Additional Resource Provision – CUBE – standing for ‘Communication and Understanding of Behaviour for Education’ for primary aged children identified by the local authority as having social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), offering two short stay classes for up to 12 pupils in Key Stage 2, with ages ranging from year groups 2–6.

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## Audit and Domains

The school has recognised the issue of social, emotional and mental wellbeing (SEMH) in its School Development Plan for the past few years and was interested in developing wellbeing across the school and for all stakeholders. The SWERL team went through the audit tool provided by CIE and then held a whole school INSET to discuss the SWERL project and work through the audit in year groups. Staff worked together to go through each domain identified by the

CIE literature review and come up with areas to focus on in the SWERL Action Plan. A particular concern common to many groups focused on school playtimes, related to the combined domains of:

- **Building Relationships**
- **Supported and Knowledgeable Staff, especially those dealing with breaks and lunchtimes.**

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## What did the school do?

The SWERL team made an online questionnaire, delivered to all teaching staff and midday staff, and held two focus group sessions in which they spoke to teaching staff and to midday meals supervisors about issues that arise in the playground. Questions focused on how supported they felt in dealing with SEMH presentations from pupils and in employing de-escalation techniques. A six-week programme of buddying was proposed between teachers and midday staff in order to share knowledge and build more robust informal communication paths between both teams and results from this are still in the data collection phase at the time of writing.

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## Outcomes

The school surveyed staff using a questionnaire and a 20 point rating scale (1 lowest – 20 highest) and an excerpt of this is shown below:



### SWERL Questionnaire

Please take one minute to answer these four questions which focus on this theme in order for the SWERL team to reach a better understanding of how best to design an intervention project.

1. How confident do you feel in de-escalating anxious or stressed behaviour?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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Not at all confident.

Very confident.

2. How supported do you feel in managing challenging behaviours (this could be by colleagues, line managers, SLT, school environment etc)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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Not at all supported.

Very supported.

3. How well does your team (Year Group, midday team etc.) communicate and share knowledge with regards to managing challenging behaviours?

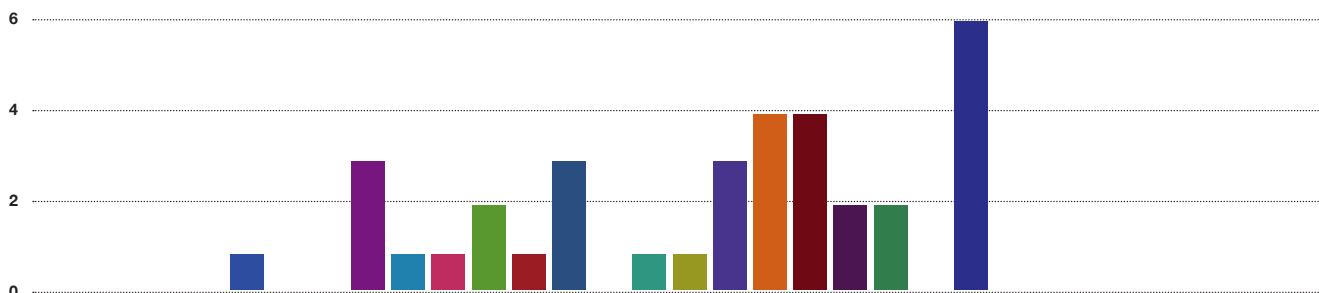
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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Not well at all.

Very well.

Representative data from staff was anonymised and colour-coded, relating to the first question as follows:

#### 1 How confident do you feel in de-escalating anxious or stressed behaviour?



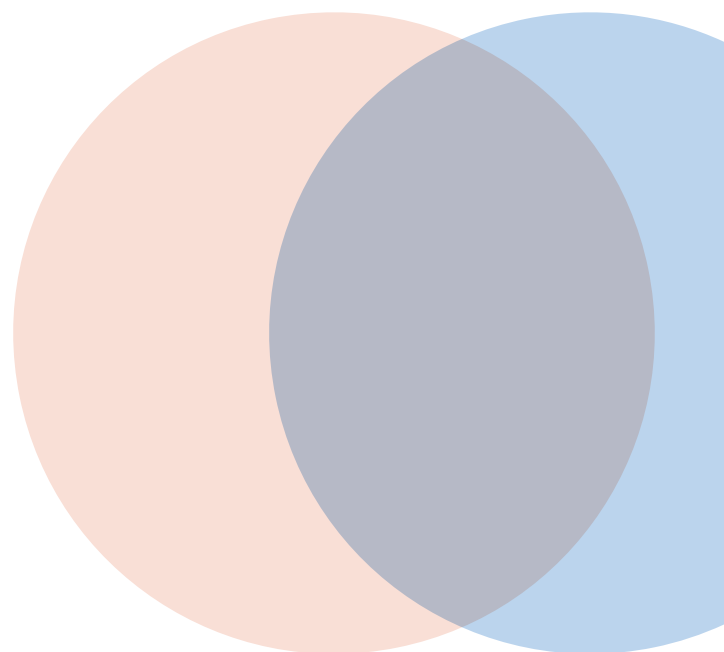
1 = Not at all confident - 20 = Very confident

From this baseline data the school has now revised its Action Plan for the next academic year and aims to collect opinion from all pupils on what de-escalation techniques they feel are working best in school. It will then identify four key teaching staff from KS2 as well as four midday assistants to participate in a 'buddying' programme who will go out at lunchtime to share and model good practice. They will then resample staff and pupil opinion and compare with behaviour logs about playground incidents year group by year group.

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### **Reflection on the SWERL process from facilitators viewpoint**

For this school SWERL has augmented their skills and thinking in particular about identifying achievable targets and aims with limited resources and very busy timelines set down in schools. The SWERL team had the experience of moving between what they hoped to achieve and what everyday life made possible and this will serve them well as they move forward with the various strands of their Action Plan in the future.





# Aldersbrook Primary School

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## Context

Aldersbrook is a three-form entry primary school in east London with 670 pupils on roll, including those in a Nursery. The school serves a diverse economic and social community, with over 40 languages being spoken. The school is part of a local Teaching Alliance and local authority Partnership Group.

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## Audit and Domains

The school recognised the issues of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) in its School Development Plan (2017–18) and was seeking ways to further improve and develop provision in supporting children with mental health concerns, for example anxiety and attendance issues. Senior Leaders were also aware of pressures on teaching and school staff generally and wanted to consider ways to reduce stress and help staff with mental health concerns. At a series of staff meetings the school used the SWERL audit process to look at relevant domains and the following areas were chosen to form the focus of the school Action Plan for the academic year 2017-2018 and beyond:

- **Supported and Knowledgeable staff**
- **Enabling Environment**

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## What did the school do?

1. Supported and Knowledgeable Staff:  
Firstly the school carried out an eight-question survey of all staff asking them to rate levels of confidence in dealing with issues such as:

Q. My knowledge of what puts pupils at risk of anxiety or mental health issues

Q. My ability to recognise the signs and symptoms of anxiety or mental health issues

Q. My ability to provide appropriate information to students and families about mental health concerns

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## Outcomes:

As a result the school:

1. Formed a team (Mental Health leader, Mental Health first aiders for each Key Stage, Senior Leadership Team Member, Governing Body)
2. Policies – reflected on all policies in the light of mental health as they came up for review
3. Staff training to help teaching & support staff to identify and support pupils with

anxiety and mental health concerns

4. SWERL project (input from SWERL facilitator on Supporting Wellbeing, Emotional Resilience and Learning)
5. Supported pupils with anxiety & supporting pupils with attachment issues (Looked After Children and adopted children from PAC UK)
6. Supported pupils with gender issues (ELOP organisation)
7. Considered our curriculum eg Forest School/ Big Question/ visual timetables etc

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## 2. Enabling Environment

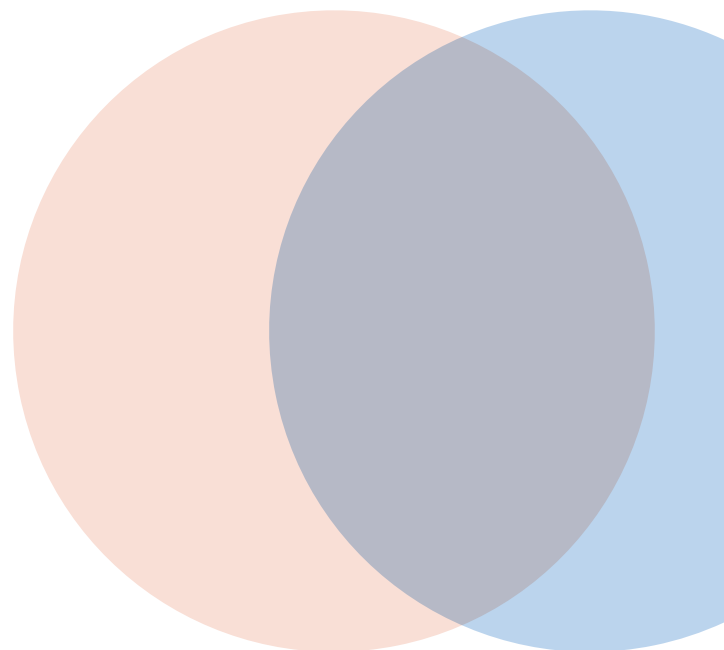
Developments for this domain will take place in the future and are likely to include:

1. Train the mental health first aiders
2. Mental Health garden and 'quiet' spaces throughout the school
3. Continue with staff training following wellbeing survey 2
4. Staff Handbook developed by staff!
5. Parent & pupil workshops
6. Consider transition issues
7. Get a school dog

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## Reflection on the SWERL process from facilitator's viewpoint

For this school SWERL has augmented their skills and thinking. Not everything they had hoped to address in the first year was achieved but this now forms the basis of developments going forward. It will be interesting to see how staff confidence has grown and developed when the second whole staff survey is carried out as the work done so far provides a rigorous baseline to judge future progress.





# Clare Tikva School

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## Context

Clare Tikva is a voluntary controlled primary school in east London with, at present, 467 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11. It is a Jewish Pluralist two-form entry school though accepts children from all faiths from a wide geographic area and differing social and economic backgrounds. The school has a newly appointed senior leadership team and a recent OfSTED (2018) noted the strong sense of community which underpins the school ethos and work. It should be noted that this inspection occurred in the middle of the SWERL programme and inevitably impacted the scope of what the school hoped to achieve though the SWERL audit formed the basis for future development.

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## Audit and Domains

The school recognised the issues of social, emotional and mental wellbeing (SEMH) in its School Development Plan (2017–18) prior to joining the SWERL project and were interested in equipping pupils, staff and the wider school community with strategies to deal with their own and others' emotions, social behaviours, mental health and wellbeing.

At a series of staff meetings the school used the SWERL audit process to look at relevant domains as identified by a 'deep' literature

review undertaken by staff at CIE. As a result of this consultation process it was decided that two areas would form the focus of their SWERL Action Plan for the academic year 2017-18:

- **Supported and Knowledgeable staff**
- **Enabling Environment**

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## Outcomes

### 1. Supported and Knowledgeable staff

The school designed and carried out a survey of staff using a questionnaire and a rating scale of 1–10 (1 lowest – 10 highest) looking at questions such as 'regular and structured opportunities for CPD', 'clear information on recognising emerging SEMH needs in young people', 'awareness of one's own trigger points' etc. This questionnaire was given to all adults working in the school and was returned by 25 teachers, welfare and support staff. The average point-score across the survey gave a score of 5.5 and 'eye-balling' the data showed that staff felt supported and knowledgeable in terms of training and procedures but would like more access to shared support and guidance on 'what works'.

As a way of beginning this process the SWERL team arranged for a 'shout-out' board to be placed in the staff room with



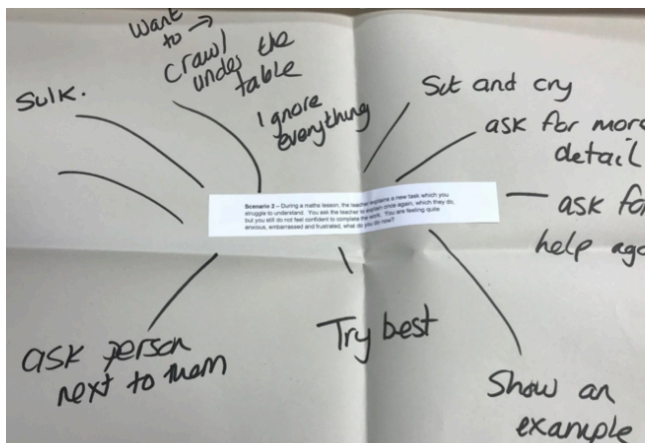
post-its used to detail positive events that had happened to someone that day or a thank you to a pupil or another member of staff, or brief details of an intervention that had worked with a pupil or a group of staff. SWERL staff found that staff were a little reticent in using this, though over time it worked far better after they took the time to model its use in acknowledging staff and pupils' positive actions. This display is frequently updated with motivational posters, wellbeing strategies and information.

The SWERL team had wanted to match staff in small problem-solving groups to address the issue of more widely sharing strategies and skills. The team had done a lot of work on the logistics of this but inevitably time was taken up by preparations and debriefing for their inspection visit. The staff survey will be administered again in the near future to provide more data on progress since last year.

**2. Enabling environment**

It was felt that the school grounds were not fully suited to the needs of all children, especially those with SEMH needs, in terms of providing quiet, calm and reflective places. To find out what the children felt about their school environment staff asked them to complete a Wellbeing Survey and to discuss areas within the school which they would visit to reduce stress and anxiety and to feel calm. The children were then asked to draw their ideal outside spaces that would provide a quiet, calm and reflective area.

Children were also asked how they might react to certain situations, such as not understanding a Maths question:



Analysis of the results led the SWERL team to focus resources on enabling the pupils, year group by year group, to create a herb garden, which they would plant and grow in pots and then combine in a newly designated part of the playground, with each herb chosen to signify a different emotion, as well as sensory experience, for example Reception were given Lavender, standing for Devotion and Virtue, Year 6 were given Marjoram, standing for Joy and Happiness. This herb garden coincided with a Jewish festival celebrating the birthday of the trees and the concept 'To Plant a Seed' for supporting wellbeing, emotional resilience and learning was created.



A quiet, calm reflective and sensory space in the playground was designated and a whole school competition was organised for each class to create a name for this space and the winning name 'The Getaway' was chosen.

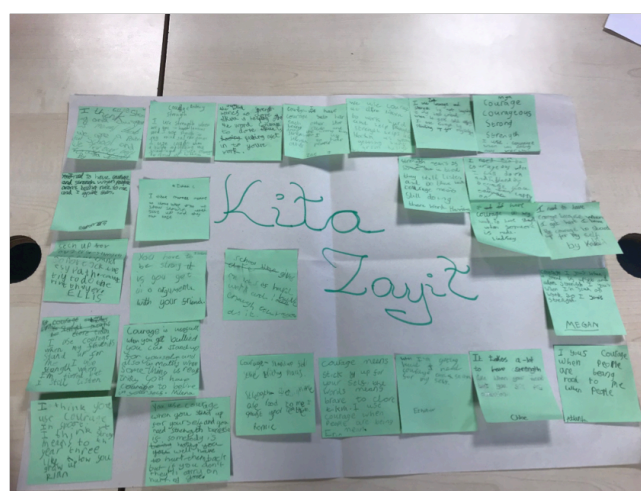


Lastly the pots of herbs were gathered in The Getaway area and a bench was painted blue, associated with calm and reflection, and will be used to encourage all the children, as well as those with SEMH, to enjoy and be used as a teaching area. An arbour was donated by the school's Parent Association and this was also painted blue. Colourful tyre plant pots have been built which are both eye-catching and interesting to the touch. Sound producing wind chimes, bells and windmills have been hung around the area and promote calmness. The Getaway is used every day by children at lunchtimes. It has been noted that many children use this space to reflect and one pupil, as she sat in the arbour watching the wind spinners, described the area as 'satisfying'. This area will continue to be developed with sound producing plants, long grasses and colourful flowers. Over time the school will once again survey the pupils and gauge what difference this change to their environment has made.



Future plans to support wellbeing, emotional resilience and learning include revisiting the staff survey and creation of staff problem-solving groups. A wellbeing display will be placed in the main corridor to promoting five ways of wellbeing. Two assemblies are being organised for key stage 1 and key stage 2 focusing on mental health and wellbeing. All classes will be asked to update their

Classroom Charter to include a wellbeing statement. The school also hopes to join other Jewish organisations to help raise the profile of mental health and wellbeing in the Jewish Community. Children have been encouraged to think about the emotional symbolism of herbs. For example 'Rosemary for Remembrance' encouraged children to share touching memories of departed loved ones. Other herbs symbolise 'courage' (see below).



### Reflection on the SWERL process from facilitator's viewpoint

For this school SWERL has augmented their skills and thinking as this was a journey they were already about to make. The school has shown remarkable resilience in continuing with the SWERL programme at the same time as going through an inspection process, which all involved in education agree, is an occasion of high accountability and can be experienced with a sense of anxiety and potential threat to staff and pupil wellbeing. In this case the school had the capacity to incorporate the work and thinking they had done regarding whole school SEMH to help validate inspection findings.



## Furze Down School, Buckinghamshire, SEN school for pupils aged 2–18.

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### Context

Furze Down School is a special school for pupils aged 2–18 with communication and interaction needs. There are currently 160 pupils on role, 31% are diagnosed with ASC as their primary need. 4% have SEMH as their primary need. 1 in 5 pupils are entitled to free school meals. 22% are pupil premium. 6% are LAC pupils. 30 pupils within the school are currently allocated a social worker.

The school believes that these statistics are important when thinking of emotional resilience and factors that impact these. The school has a high percentage of pupils who require extra support with their emotional wellbeing.

During the first half term, it became apparent that the new intake of Year 7 and existing

Key Stage 3 pupils were find it challenging to relate to each other and build relationships. Pupils were coming into school in a highly emotional state and this was exacerbated by their social difficulties during their time in school. As the term progressed, teachers recognised this as the biggest barrier to learning for their pupils and much time was spent dealing with social, emotional and mental health issues.

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### Audit and Domains

The project team considered the SWERL domains and selected three based on their knowledge of the school as being most relevant:

- **Supported and knowledgeable staff**
- **Graduated response to need: role of the teacher**
- **Building relationships**

Domain	Strengths	Area for Improvement
Whole system planning	Governor monitoring visits take place. Regular meetings (e.g. PEP, LAC, CIN, EHCP review) Trips, WOW days and clubs	Provide opportunities for parents to meet socially and share experiences
Building relationships	Pastoral support through PSHE curriculum Face work - positive interactions from Goffman 1967	Make sure we are an attachment aware school
Robust communication systems	CPOMS Home school communications, books, phone calls, meetings Questionnaire feedback	Parent workshop opportunities Develop communications with external agencies
Planned transitions	Transition booklets Careers curriculum Work experience	Equip pupils with skills to cope with change to reduce anxiety

The multi-disciplinary team at Furze Down identified a number of key interventions they decided would be beneficial to pilot.

- **Friends for life (Paula Barrett)**
- **Thinking Together (Neil Mercer)**
- **Comic strip conversations (Carol Gray)**
- **Zones of regulation (Leah M. Kuypers)**
- **When the adult changes, everything changes (Paul Dix)**
- **Class hour/Solution Circles**

Intervention: Friends for Life by Paula Barrett  
This was an intervention suggested by the Speech and Language Therapist and is described on the Friends for Life website as a social skills and resilience building program that has been recognised by the World Health Organization as an effective means to prevent anxiety for children aged 8–11. It is proven to reduce anxiety and provide participants with the tools to rise to life's challenges and make the most of setbacks and adversity. Friends for Life also improves

participants' social and emotional skills, ability to focus, confidence, and the capacity to relax and regulate emotions.

#### **Intervention: Thinking Together by Neil Mercer**

Thinking together is a dialogue-based approach to the development of children's thinking and learning. It promotes children's awareness and use of talk as a tool for thinking: they learn to not merely interact but to interthink. It connects the development of children's 'thinking skills' to the development of their communication skills and curriculum learning. It emphasises the importance of both teacher–pupil and pupil–pupil talk.

What pupils did –

- **Shared their ideas and asked the opinions of others**
- **Learnt strategies to negotiate when there was a difference of opinion**
- **Used prompt cards to take turns in conversation**



**Intervention: Zones of Regulation by Leah M. Kuypers**

Initially staff focused on zones of regulation to develop pupils’ language and vocabulary relating to emotions, then learning strategies to regulate emotions first with support then more independently.

This then led to using comic strips after having whole-centre training. Conversation comic strips were used to identify and share triggers for emotions and then to structure a talking point to look at what could have been done differently and how to put things right.

**Intervention: Solution Circles**

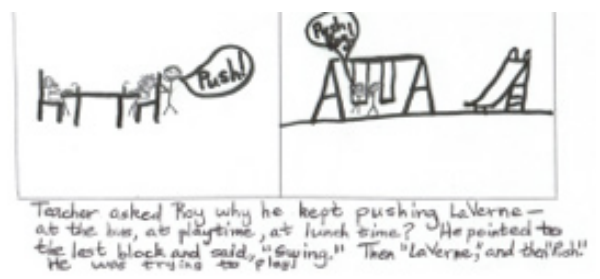
This is a short and powerful tool that takes no more than a half hour. It is effective in getting ‘unstuck’ from a problem in life or work. A team of teachers across KS3 and 4 worked together to share experience of dealing with a variety of issues. All ideas were valued, and as a result staff felt comfortable to bring many different issues to the table. Developed the ethos of TOGETHER WE’RE BETTER.

**Changes in practice**

Linked to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs the school adapted the timetable to have class breakfast at the beginning of the day followed by a lesson with the tutor. Previously the pupils would have a shorter registration and possibly go to a lesson with another adult. This timetable change gave the pupils some time to regulate their emotions and act as an opportunity to speak to key adults if necessary before starting the day.

SALT were timetabled to be in break and lunch time clubs to support pupils with their interactions and offer helpful suggestions in context. Consequently, this led to pupils coming back to lessons more in control of their emotions and ready to learn.

KS3 and KS4 were given staggered break and lunch times to support pupils to make the right choices as their anxiety would be heightened during these times.



Break times were used as an opportunity for 1:1 adult lead restorative conversation. This was sometimes carried out via use of comic strips as opposed to a negative sanction; slowly the ethos is changing across the school.

A staff member was employed to contact hard to reach families and attend CIN/LAC meetings. Staff also intervene on a daily basis when pupils are finding their emotions challenging to deal with.

- **We built into the timetable a lesson each week to focus on SEMH.**
- **Timetable to include longer tutor time in the morning and end of the day.**
- **Timetable change to make transitions and unstructured times less busy.**
- **Timetable change to have more tutor time at the end of the day**
- **SEMH curriculum rewritten to reflect different interventions and capture accurate assessment and build on this throughout the school.**

- **All staff put emotional wellbeing of pupils as a priority.**
- **PPA blocked in year teams.**
- **Family liaison worker employed.**
- **Break and lunch clubs better resourced – games and SALT staff.**
- **Response planning on transition days-share LTP.**

Five different methods were used to collect the data as a way of trialling what would be effective and efficient;

- **Pupil questionnaire**
- **Staff stress test**
- **Pupil comments from lessons explicitly focused on anxiety**
- **Comic strip examples**
- **Teachers notes on pupil observations**

### Outcomes

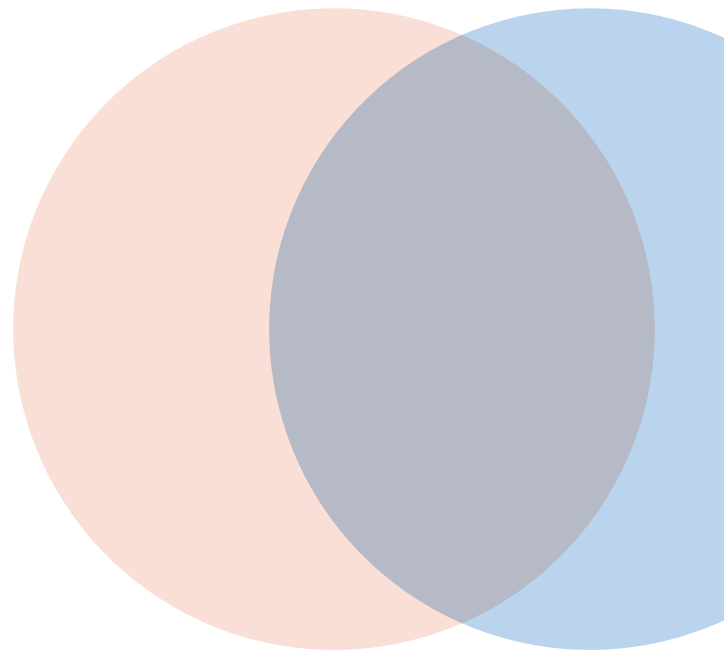
The following key messages were identified resulting from the research project.

Intervention/resource	How it will be shared/embedded
Comic strip and Zones of Regulation	All staff trained by OT/SALT and used in every year group
Thinking Together by Neil Mercer	Explicit lessons taught in Autumn term for Year 7 Opportunities for collaborative work planned across curriculum
When the Adult Changes, Everything Changes by Paul Dix	Developed through book club
Friends for Life by Paula Barrett	Long-term plan created for skills to be built upon throughout KS3 and 4 Each year group will focus on a different intervention in their allotted SEMH timetabled lesson
Solution Circles	INSETs to be dedicated to continuing this with more staff involvement
SEMH being top priority across the school	Rewritten the curriculum to make it user friendly and split in to 3 stages to ensure progression of skills



### **Reflections/Learning**

The staff have decided that their focus for next year will be creating separate mindfulness rooms for staff and pupils. They will seek to find opportunities to include pupils' opinions and ideas on curriculum design, learning walks, policy reviews, learning styles and learning menus. They will also appoint a designated mental health officer in line with government requirements and provide staff with adequate training to champion mental health issues within schools. They will also start discussions about mental health issues across the curriculum, e.g. looking at suicide issues raised in English Literature, History or Art such as when studying the work of Vincent Van Gogh.



# Thank you

UCL Centre for Inclusive Education would like to thank the children, parents, staff and governors of all our SWERL pilot project schools for enabling us to showcase their inspiring journeys.



SUPPORTING  
WELLBEING  
EMOTIONAL  
RESILIENCE AND  
LEARNING

Supporting Wellbeing, Emotional Resilience and Learning (SWERL) is a knowledge exchange programme that aims to support the development of practice in schools and to expand the evidence base to ultimately improve wellbeing for pupils and practitioners.

For further information on the programme please contact:

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