



Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools

An Education Endowment Foundation **Guidance Report** Summary

'Ask any primary school teacher, and they will tell you that alongside the 'core business' of teaching literacy and numeracy, a large and often unrecognised part of their job involves addressing children's emotional, social and behavioural needs.'

Sir Kevan Collins, Education Endowment Foundation CEO

Evidence shows that:

- **Childhood SEL** is associated with better outcomes at school and beyond, with benefits that include improved academic performance, behaviour and mental health.
- **Children's skills** can be improved purposefully through school-based SEL programmes and that these results are long-lasting.
- **The benefits of SEL** extend to staff, with teachers reporting lower stress levels, higher job satisfaction and better relationships with their students.

The 6 implementation recommendations the report gives are:

- **Teach SEL explicitly**

This approach means setting specific time aside to teach SEL to students using simple strategies like vocab games, mindfulness exercises and role-playing activities.

- **Model SEL in usual teaching**

SEL becomes embedded in everyday life with approach 2, primarily through teachers modelling SEL skills to their students. SEL is implemented as a passive part of regular teaching.

- **Plan carefully**

This recommendation focuses on the importance of organisation in implementing SEL and suggests structured, school-specific programmes that are planned carefully in advance.

- **Use the SAFE method**

The 4 key principles of the SAFE method are sequenced activities, active learning, focussed time and specific targets. This method leads to more uniform success.

- **Involve the whole school**

This approach involves using SEL as the basis for a whole school ethos change, implementing strategies like a student council and suggestion boxes to improve climate.

- **Support and monitor**

Monitoring the effectiveness of SEL implementation through regular review processes is key to maximising success, with increased coordination leading to improved outcomes.