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## Welcome!

Welcome to the fifth newsletter of the SEAL Community. The theme is SEAL in the early years, with case studies from a nursery in Wales and work in Reception classes at a school in Bristol. We've also been looking at the potential of apps to develop children's social and emotional skills across the age range, and include a feature on what's available.

If you missed our earlier newsletters, you'll find them in the Newsletter archive on the SEAL Community members' pages. The theme of the first (Keeping SEAL alive and growing) may be of interest if you have been using SEAL resources for some years and are looking to refresh your approach. The second focuses on diversity – how schools and settings have adapted SEAL so as to meet the needs of different groups of learners (children with SEN, looked after children, boys who don't respond well to too much talking.) The third is all about Ofsted/Estyn, and the fourth is about SEAL and academic learning.

## News Update

### Threat to PSED focus in early years...



The government in England are planning to introduce a new baseline assessment, to be undertaken by teachers in the first few weeks of their Reception year. The current Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) will no longer be compulsory. The change will take place in 2016.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum itself remains unchanged. It will, government say, 'continue to be statutory, supporting children to experience a broad and engaging programme of learning in reception'.

The new baseline assessment will, the guidance notes, 'sit within teachers' broader assessments of children's development – which we know go wider than any single baseline assessment can accurately capture'. Nevertheless, there is a risk that the new baseline assessment will be less broad-based than the EYFSP. DfE will be looking for coverage of areas shown to be the best statistical predictors of children's attainment in reading, writing and maths at age 11. They will also



be looking for commercially available assessment tools, and for tools that are simple and easy to use when teachers do not yet know children well. It is possible that these will not look at personal, social and emotional development. If so, there are real fears that the new assessment may drive changes in practice, as the focus becomes increasingly on early literacy and numeracy development.

Read Reforming *assessment and accountability for primary schools* at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-national-curriculum-primary-assessment-and-accountability>

#### **New Ofsted PSHE grade descriptors**

Ofsted have published updated grade descriptors for PSHE education. They include a greater focus on promoting pupils' resilience and mental health. You can read an outline of the changes and download an updated summary of the links with SEAL on our members' pages at <http://sealcommunity.org/member-resource/how-be-outstanding-your-pshe-provision>

#### **Government's new Child Poverty Strategy calls for schools to devote time to improving children's social skills, resilience, self esteem**

The government have just published their new Child Poverty Strategy for consultation. It notes that 'character' or non-cognitive skills such as social skills, self-esteem, resilience and self-control matter for how well children do at school and impact on their later earnings and employment. Gaps in behavioural and social skills between poorer and richer children are apparent at primary school. One study found that around a fifth of the link between parent's income and children's income can be explained by differences in non-cognitive skills, mainly due to the positive impact of non-cognitive skills on educational outcomes. The strategy also claims that government is giving schools increased freedom so that they can improve character skills, by 'slimming down the National Curriculum, allowing schools time to look at their wider school curriculum, so they can devote time to issues such as improving character skills.' You can find the consultation at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/285387/Cm\\_8782\\_Child\\_Poverty\\_Strategy\\_Consultation\\_Print.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/285387/Cm_8782_Child_Poverty_Strategy_Consultation_Print.pdf)

#### The politics of social and emotional learning



Recent speeches by politicians shed light on the different views of the two main parties on social and emotional learning, and what might go in next year's election manifestos. Both Michael Gove and Shadow Education Minister Tristram Hunt have emphasised the need for character education within schools, but offered a radically different interpretation of the concept.

For Michael Gove, it's about extracurricular activities. Classrooms are for academic learning, but a future school day 'nine or ten hours long' would allow time for the clubs and sports that can build character. For Tristram Hunt, character education is a cornerstone of Labour party policy and not an add-on. "This is about learning from the rigorous academic discipline that is character education", he says "and implementing a holistic approach that goes beyond extra-curricular activities and into the classroom. We should encourage all schools to embed character education and resilience across their curriculum."

#### Schools urged by MPs to promote social and emotional learning



An all-party parliamentary group has issued a Character and Resilience Manifesto and report (<http://www.appg-socialmobility.org>) which argues that more importance should be given to the development of character and resilience. The Manifesto says schools should make it part of their core business to nurture pupils' self-belief,

perseverance and ability to bounce back from set-backs. The report notes that 'there is a growing body of research linking social mobility to social and emotional skills, which range from empathy and the ability to make and maintain relationships to application, mental toughness, delayed gratification and self-control. These research findings all point to the same conclusion: character counts'. The Manifesto calls for Ofsted to build character and resilience measures into its inspection framework, and for teacher training and career development programmes to explicitly focus on the area.

**Minister says he has been 'slow to grasp' that many schools don't see PSHE as central**



Urged in a debate in the House of Lords to make PSHE compulsory, Education Minister Lord Nash affirmed his own commitment to PSHE as a central feature of good schools, but noted that 'perhaps I have been a little bit slow to grasp ...that not all schools share the belief that PHSE and SRE are so central and important.' The Minister said that he intended to

ensure a 'culture change' – not by making PSHE statutory, however, but by giving schools 'all the help we can to link them to organisations which are specialists in the various areas and are able to update their advice, guidance, training and so on in a dynamic way, keeping abreast of the changes'.

**Report finds that Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development is now peripheral in schools**

RSA report *Schools with Soul* has found that SMSC is 'sliding to the margins' in the education system. A survey of teacher education courses found that many offered only a single-session introduction to SMSC. All the headteachers interviewed for the report said that it was difficult to prioritise SMSC development in the context of current accountability frameworks, despite their strong feeling that it should be a core purpose of schools. The report's authors also found a lack of consistency in how Ofsted inspectors evaluate SMSC provision, with a tendency to focus on only one aspect rather than all. The authors make a number of recommendations, including a clearer Ofsted inspection framework which changes the current behaviour and safety category to one of pupils' personal development.

Read the report at <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/learning,-cognition-and-creativity/education/reports-and-events/reports/schools-with-soul>

**Business leaders and economists call for schools to develop non-cognitive skills**

In a report called *Careers 2020: Making Education Work*, an independent advisory group of business leaders and economists published a set of recommendations on the transition from school to work. One of the group's key recommendations was that 'non-cognitive skills and attributes such as teamworking, emotional maturity, empathy and other interpersonal skills are as important as proficiency in English and mathematics in ensuring young people's employment prospects.'

Read the report at <http://uk.pearson.com/content/dam/ped/pei/uk/pearson-uk/Campaigns/making-education-work/making-education-work-online-pdf-report.pdf>.

### New government guidance on preventing and tackling bullying

In March of this year the DfE issued updated guidance for schools on preventing and tackling bullying. It retains the definition of bullying used in the SEAL resources but includes new sections on cyberbullying. There are useful links to relevant organisations such as ChildNet International, who provide specialist resources for young people to raise awareness of online safety and how to protect themselves. The updated DfE guidance has a greater emphasis on punitive sanctions than previous versions, including the powers teachers have to discipline pupils for bullying outside school premises. But there is still also a strong emphasis on a whole-school approach and on prevention, with work to help students understand 'issues of difference' and enable them to be 'clear about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders'.

Details can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

### 1.26 million young people are experiencing extreme cyberbullying on a daily basis



The annual cyberbullying survey carried out by charity Ditch the Label found that seven out of ten young people aged 13-22 are now the victims of cyberbullying, with 37% very frequently cyberbullied. An estimated 1.26 million have been subjected to extreme cyberbullying on a daily basis. Boys and girls were equally at risk. Facebook, Ask.FM and Twitter are the most likely sources of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying was found to have a catastrophic effect

on the self-esteem and social lives of up to 70% of young people affected. The report calls for all teachers to have an understanding of the severity of the problem and the level of trauma it can cause.

Read the survey report at [www.ditchthelabel.org/downloads/the-annual-cyberbullying-survey-2013.pdf](http://www.ditchthelabel.org/downloads/the-annual-cyberbullying-survey-2013.pdf)

## Resource round-up

### New resources for Relationships and Learning about Me SEAL theme – work on empathy, love and loss, families and feeling embarrassed

Check out the new resources on the SEAL Community website for work on empathy, love and loss, families and feeling embarrassed. They link to the SEAL primary **Relationships** and secondary **Learning about me** theme. You will find the primary resources at <http://sealcommunity.org/member-resources/292> and secondary at <http://sealcommunity.org/member-resources/291>. They include film, whiteboard resources and medium term planning, cross-curricular ideas and discussion points. Do try the brilliant empathy in a shoebox lesson.

### Apps for social and emotional learning: a look at the future

Children's digital media – apps, games, virtual worlds – are increasingly being used to help develop a range of skills, including social and emotional skills. Because of the unique power they have to motivate and engage children, some of the new products are definitely worth exploring. Here are five we have come across.

#### IF...



<http://www.ifyoucan.org/what-is-if/> and <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/if.../id709306030?mt=8d>

IF... is an adventure game devised by video game creators and experts in SEL. Children navigate adventures and challenges in an imaginary town called Greenberry, while developing their ability to manage emotions like frustration and disappointment, show empathy for others, persist through



failure, collaborate with others, and make good decisions. The game has been designed to support the transfer of the skills learned in the game to real life. At intervals in the game, characters encourage the child to stop playing and try out the skills and strategies they've been modelling. Tools like breathing exercises to calm down and win-win strategies to resolve conflicts are examples.

The game provides a way for parents to be involved, through a personalized IF... app which shows them what and how their children are learning and suggests ways they can provide back-up reinforcement.

### **Smiling Mind**

<http://smilingmind.com.au>

Smiling Mind is a unique web and app-based programme which helps young people learn how to meditate.

### **Positive Penguins**

<http://positivepenguins.com/>

Positive Penguins is a fun educational app developed by children for children to help them understand why they feel the way they do and help them challenge their negative thinking. Teachers and parents can use this app to help children understand that their feelings come from their own thoughts not the situations. The four positive penguins take children on a journey to help them understand that feelings arise from our thinking and if they challenge negative thoughts successfully they may be able to see things in a more realistic and even optimistic way.

This app featured in the Apple app store under New and Noteworthy and in the top 10 education apps.

### **Feelings with Milo**

<http://www.wisenapps.com> and <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/feelings-with-milo/id747457929?mt=8>

Feelings with Milo is a mobile application for parents, teachers and therapists that helps children to understand, manage and express their feelings. The app provides a simple and fun way for parents and therapists to work with children to explore their feelings and demonstrate that, however



powerful, they come and go. Children identify the image of Milo that best represents what they are feeling. This allows them to see that their feelings are normal and shared by others. The Feelings Train then shows children how their emotions have changed over time, showing that no matter what they are feeling right now, it won't last forever. The Feelings Train also provides parents and therapists with an easy way to keep a record of the context for each reported feeling.

### **Karisma Kidz**

<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/mar/04/karisma-kidz-app-children-stress>

The Karisma Kidz Moodville is aimed at 3-9 year-olds. It gets them to create a character and explore the virtual world of Moodville, playing games, listening to audiobooks and learning about how to deal with stress. It is available for iPad and Kurio tablets.

The app and linked toys are aimed at boys and girls alike – this is why they're called "toys" and not "dolls" – with Karisma Kidz intended to become a brand that spans digital and physical products just like Moshi Monsters or Angry Birds do.

## **Interesting new research**

### **Reception teachers – give your children a group to belong to**

Master, A., & Walton, G. (2012). Minimal Groups Increase Young Children's Motivation and Learning on Group-Relevant Tasks. *Child Development*, 84 (2), 737-751.



This study looked at the effects on motivation and task performance of assigning four and five year olds to a group with its own identity. In one experiment, children were given a difficult jigsaw puzzle to complete. In another they had to learn the names of "alien toys" – names like "fupp" and "jang". Children were told beforehand that they were part of "Blue

Group" that "do puzzles" /"learn aliens' names", or that they were "Child #3" who "does puzzles"/"learns aliens' names". A control group were not given any special identity before attempting the puzzle.



When given up to ten minutes on their own with the puzzle, children who had been told they were part of a group persisted in trying to complete it for 29 per cent longer than those given an individual role and 35 per cent longer than the control group. Children did better on the learning names task if they were told they were part of a group. But was the group identity effective because children were told it was linked to puzzles/learning names, or because of a more general sense of belonging?

In the second experiment children were randomly assigned to be told either that they were part of 'Blue Group' that "does puzzles" or simply "Blue Group" without mention of a task-related role. In this case, children in the group given a task-related identity persisted for 35 per cent longer. In other words, it was not group membership alone that provided a positive boost to motivation; a direct link to the task was also required.

The researchers note that the desire to belong to a group is a basic human need. Even young children seem to have internalised a motivation to support and champion their group. This affects their learning behaviour even when there are no other children or teachers around encouraging them to persevere or conform.

#### **Soft skills have hard outcomes**

Gutman, L. and Schoon, I. (2013) *The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people: Literature review*. London: Education Endowment Foundation, Cabinet Office and Institute of Education.

This important report reviews research on the links between academic achievement and non-cognitive or soft skills such as motivation, perseverance, and self-control. It summarises the evidence on how such skills can be defined and measured, assesses whether the skills have a causal impact on later outcomes, and examines the impact of interventions that aim to improve non-cognitive skills in children and young people.

The authors conclude that a large body of research has shown that non-cognitive skills are associated with positive outcomes for young people. Factors such as self-control and school engagement are correlated with academic outcomes, financial stability in adulthood, and reduced crime.

There is no single non-cognitive skill that predicts long-term outcomes. Rather key skills are inter-related and need to be developed in combination with each other.



Within school, effective teaching, the school environment, and social and emotional learning programmes (SEL) can play an important role in developing key non-cognitive skills.

Outside of school, evidence from intervention studies (mostly from the US) suggests that programmes such as 'service learning' (volunteering) and outdoor challenging activities can also have an impact.

#### **Character is a skill not a fixed trait**

Heckman, J. (2013) *Fostering and measuring skills: interventions that improve character and cognition*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: National Bureau of Economic Research

In this paper economist James Heckman reviews the recent literature on measuring and boosting cognitive and noncognitive skills. He concludes that character is a skill, not a trait. At any age, character skills are stable across different tasks, but skills can change over the life cycle.

Character, Heckman argues, is shaped by families, schools, and social environments. Skill development is a dynamic process, in which the early years lay the foundation for successful investment in later years. High-quality early childhood and primary school programs improve character skills in a lasting and cost-effective way.

There is good evidence also that character skills are more malleable than cognitive skills like IQ, whilst rivalling IQ in predicting educational attainment, labour market success and criminality. They are also more malleable until later ages, right into adolescence, because of the relatively slow maturing of the relevant areas of the brain. This suggests that interventions to boost character skills in adolescence may be more powerful in shaping academic and life outcomes, and a better investment, than interventions focusing on cognitive skills.

Read the paper at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19656>

#### **Does the Penn Resiliency programme work?**

Cutuli, J. et al. (2013) Preventing adolescents' externalizing and internalizing symptoms: Effects of the Penn Resiliency Program. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, Volume 5, Number 2, pp 67-79.

This study reports on the impact of the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), a relatively brief universal cognitive-behavioural depression prevention program for secondary aged children. Students (N =



697) were randomly assigned to PRP, PEP (an alternative intervention), or no intervention conditions. The PEP programme was designed to control for intervention ingredients that are not specific to cognitive-behavioural interventions, such as social support and the discussion of stressors. The researchers examine the effects on parent-, teacher-, and self-reports of depression/anxiety, somatic complaints, social withdrawal symptoms and behaviour (conduct) problems over three years of follow-up. Relative to the no intervention control group, PRP reduced parent-reports of symptoms beginning at the first assessment after the intervention and persisting for most of the follow-up assessments. There was no evidence, however, that the PRP program produced an effect on **teacher-** or **self-report** of adolescents' symptoms. Overall, PRP did not reduce symptoms relative to the alternate intervention (PEP), although there is a suggestion of a delayed effect for conduct problems, with a small difference in favour of PRP emerging after two years.

#### Mixed results for Zippy's Friends

Holen, S. et al. (2012). The effectiveness of a universal school-based programme on coping and mental health: A randomised, controlled study of Zippy's Friends. *Educational Psychology* 32(5), 657-677.

Zippy's Friends is universal, school-based SEL program which aims to prevent psychological problems in children by helping them develop a broader range of coping skills at a young age (6-8 years). Children listen to stories about the lives of cartoon characters including Zippy, a stick insect, and explore the issues they raise in 24 weekly sessions facilitated by trained teachers. The programme was devised in Scandinavia and now used in two dozen countries, including some schools in the UK.

Early evaluations of Zippy's Friends in Denmark and Lithuania found that the programme improved children's social skills, particularly their coping skills. A later study, following the same children, reported that children who had taken part coped better with the transition from kindergarten to school than those who did not.

A new study has now been published, involving nearly 1500 children from 35 schools. Children were randomly assigned to the intervention or control group. Results showed that Zippy's Friends did have some impact on coping skills among girls, but not among boys.

The researchers also measured emotional and behavioural problems, as well as the impact of the problems on children's levels of distress and social impairment. Although there were no significant improvements for these mental health outcomes for the intervention group as a whole, teachers



reported an average improvement in the impact of emotional and behavioural problems among boys who had received Zippy's Friends.

#### **Boys *can* do empathy**

Castillo, R., et al. (2013). Effects of an emotional intelligence intervention on aggression and empathy among adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 36, 883-892

A study in Spain has shown that SEL work to develop empathy has particular benefits for teenage boys. Nearly 600 secondary students in eight schools took part in a two-year study. Some were randomly assigned to follow a programme of 12 one-hour SEL sessions delivered over six months in each of the two years, while a control group followed normal weekly tutorial lessons prescribed by the Spanish school curriculum. The SEL sessions consisted of emotion-focused activities, including games, role-play, art projects, group work and reflective activities.

Students were assessed before and six months after the program using questionnaires designed to measure physical and verbal aggression and also different aspects of interpersonal reactivity, including 'perspective taking' and 'empathetic concern'.

At the end of the SEL programme, the students who took part exhibited significantly lower levels of verbal and physical aggression, hostility, and anger than those in the control group. There was no statistically significant gender difference.

However, when it came to measuring empathy, improvements were only evident among boys. Levels of 'empathetic concern' had fallen among males in the control group, but not among those who took part in the SEL programme.

An explanation of the lack of an empathy effect on girls, the researchers think, may be that their empathy scores were already higher than those for boys before the intervention took place. This meant that they had less to gain from the empathy-building aspects of the program.

#### **Sharing practice: case studies from local areas, schools and settings**

##### **The Foundations of SEAL: Bishop Road Primary**



Bishop Road Primary is a popular four-form entry school in Bristol. Here SEAL has over the years proved an important element of the work that Reception teachers need to do with each new class – from establishing a framework of expectations and routines, helping the children recognise and manage the volatile emotions of the very young, and helping them learn how to work towards goals and tolerate frustration and setbacks.

### **SEAL and the revised curriculum**

Louise Scruton-Evans, a highly experienced YR teacher at Bishop Road, works with her colleagues across the four classes to develop planning in the EYFS. She has found a very good match between SEAL learning opportunities and the Personal, Social and Emotional (PSED) elements of the revised EYFS. SEAL is, she has found, a brilliant way of helping children demonstrate that they exceed expectations for their age in PSED. The best fit descriptors for the ‘exceeding’ judgment on the Foundation Stage Profile seem tailor-made for SEAL.

Children talk about the things they enjoy, and are good at, and about the things they do not find easy

They know some ways to manage their feelings and are beginning to use these to maintain control

They understand that someone else’s point of view can be different from theirs. They resolve minor disagreements through listening to each other to come up with a fair solution

They can stop and think before acting and they can wait for things they want

They know when and how to stand up for themselves appropriately

They understand what bullying is and that this is unacceptable behaviour

Particularly helpful too are the links between SEAL and the EYFS characteristics of effective learners, on which the school reports to parents and Y1 teachers, such as;

- being willing to have a go: seeking challenge, having a 'can do' orientation, being willing to take a risk in new experiences, and developing the view of failures as opportunities to learn
- keeping on trying: persistence even in the face of challenge or difficulties
- choosing ways to do things: approaching goal-directed activity in organised ways, making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks, planning and monitoring what to do and being able to change strategies.

Louise also notes that following the SEAL themes ('New Beginnings', 'Getting on and Falling out', 'Going for Goals' and so on) provides an anchor to which PSED work can be attached. 'The new framework is very demanding academically', she says, 'so PSED can get forgotten unless there is an anchor. The themes ensure coverage in the areas that can get squeezed out.'

Another interesting feature of the revised EYFS is the weight attached to PSED Early Learning Goals in determining whether a child has reached a good level of overall development; Louise has noticed how markedly the percentage of children achieving this good level will go down if children don't achieve the PSED Early Learning Goals.

### **SEAL in planning**

Louise and her colleagues in the other three YR classes use the SEAL learning opportunities from the national materials as a bank of ideas on which to draw, rather than as a blueprint to follow rigidly.



Planning starts from assessment: where are the children now in the three elements of the PSED area of learning, and in relation to the characteristics of effective learning? Where do we want them to move to next? Louise and the team then look at the SEAL resources to identify relevant learning opportunities and activities.

SEAL is woven into termly topics. When the topic was Superheroes, for example, the SEAL theme at the time was 'Good to be Me', which helps children consider their gifts and talents. Each child created his or her superhero character based on their unique gifts; they drew them and had a dress-up day where they came to school as the superhero they had created. Louise dressed up as super Patchwork Woman, because she is good at 'patching up when people feel sad'. Children were also told that a superhero was coming to school who had powers so strong she'd forgotten how to work with other people. A colleague dressed up as this character and children played cooperative games like Lotto, and had to explain how to work together to the visitor.

In another example of weaving SEAL into other work, when the class topic was pets Louise introduced a cuddly toy and worked with the class on how to treat the toy gently. She had found that some children did not have any concept of what gentle means, so she needed to teach it in a multisensory way – telling the children she can see the soft toy is happy and liking it when they pass him round the circle gently, or saying how much she herself likes it when children come up and gently stroke her hand. One little boy learning English as an Additional language now often comes up to her and says 'Look ... gentle, gentle' and talks about how he or other children have been gentle to each other.

#### **Key SEAL themes**

'New Beginnings' is a very important theme for the Reception classes at Bishop Road. Before children start at the school they make an All About Me collage with their families, then bring it in to class. In the first few weeks of term there are lots of circle times to learn about the class golden rules and develop children's sense of group identity and belonging – particularly important in a school of this size.

'Going for Goals' and 'Good to be Me' are key to helping children demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning – recognising their unique gifts and talents but also identifying ways they want to develop and setting goals, asking for help when they need it, persisting and bouncing back after failure. When a child is finding something difficult Louise invites other children to think of ways of



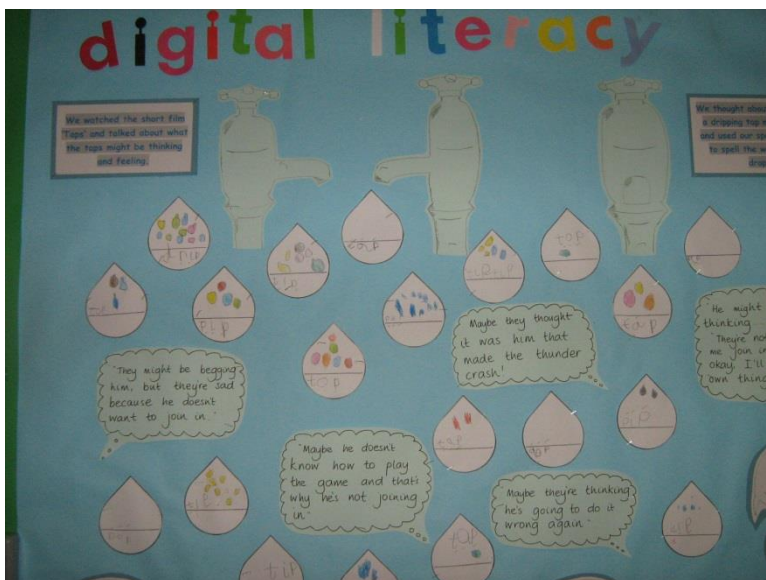
helping them. Children often whisper to each other the various mantras from SEAL, like 'keep on going' or 'you can do it'.

'Changes' is another key SEAL theme towards the end of the year. Children with SEN or attachment issues make small books with photos of their new classroom to take home and share with their parents, and there are regular 'moving on' circle times when all the children share things they are looking forward to and things they will be sad to say goodbye to.

### Promoting positive behaviour

SEAL is about 'growing good kids, not fixing the naughty ones' and this is the principle that underlies Louise's work with her children. She uses a lot of specific praise to highlight the effect of children's behaviour on the group, coupled with brief time out periods if children make a choice that breaks a golden rule and will hurt others. Children are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour using the language of choice – 'I made a really good choice because...'. Sharing and the concept of fairness are taught using the language and routines of 'My turn ...your turn' originally developed for children on the autistic spectrum but useful for all children, Louise thinks. When there is a tussle over a piece of equipment she will go over and say to the children 'Let's find a way we can do my turn/your turn'.

### Digital literacy



A very interesting piece of literacy work was recently planned to coincide with the SEAL theme 'Getting on and falling out'. The teachers used clips from the British Film Institute's 'Starting Stories.' One film is an animated story about three taps, two of which are dripping together, and a third who wants to join in. The children had an interesting

discussion about why the third tap got left out, writing speech bubbles for the characters to show how they all felt and how they resolved the problem.

In ways like these, children are helped to develop personally, emotionally and socially within their work in **all** the EYFS areas of learning. This is backed up by regular explicit, adult-led PSED learning opportunities, and reinforced in self-initiated activities across the day.

The use of SEAL as a central part of the PSED curriculum at Bishop Road helps ensure that the Foundation Stage lives up to its name. Skilled implementation of the revised EYFS means children leave their Reception year with a secure foundation. They have developed the essential skills they will need in the next stage of their learning – and in life.

For more information about SEAL in the Foundation Stage at Bishop Road, or if you would like to visit, contact Louise Scruton-Evans: [beachhutterrier@yahoo.com](mailto:beachhutterrier@yahoo.com).

### **SEAL in the earliest years at Fairoak nursery school**

Fairoak Nursery School in Newport, Wales is a stand-alone nursery working with almost 200 children a day on part-time placements. Children start at a Flying Start playgroup linked to the nursery in the term after their second birthday and move on to the nursery school in the year they become three. The nursery serves a very disadvantaged area.

Heather Morgan, the Headteacher, first became involved in SEAL as a Foundation Phase leader at her previous (primary) school, as part of a local-authority wide initiative to roll the programme out across all its schools. She brought that work to her current post, building on the SEAL resources with her own creative approaches.

### **Puppets and stories**

As Fairoak works with very young children, and has a high number of children learning English as an additional language, much of the SEAL work needs to be highly visual. Staff use large puppet characters to enact stories. The stories help children understand their own feelings and learn to solve problems in





their lives. Often the puppets are used to play back real situations the children have had difficulty with, and explore how people felt in the situation and what choices they might make.

Each puppet has its own characteristics. 'Rosie', for example, is a bit of a Power Ranger – she hits first and thinks afterwards. 'Toby' is a boy who loves to wear pink and is learning that mistakes are not a bad thing but part of how we learn. 'Seren SEAL' always comes out when the children are going to hear a SEAL story.

Heather has made up a whole set of age-appropriate stories which are used proactively with the children to explore SEAL themes. For perseverance and resilience, for example, there is a story about a little fish (a salmon). He leaves his family to explore the ocean but then decides he wants to go home. He has to struggle to swim back upstream; on the bank are various creatures telling him he can't do it and must give up. The salmon says to himself 'I've got to keep trying' and is eventually reunited with his loved ones. Puppet Toby listens to the story and relates it to the children's own experiences and needs: 'I think I'll need to keep on trying to learn how to hold my pencil, even though it's hard'.

#### **Parents**

The stories make a great impression on the children and they often talk about them at home. They also apply ideas from the stories. For example, after hearing a story about how Rosie was unkind to Toby in the nursery and snatched a toy, they started to use Toby's words ('Stop! don't do that. I don't like it') with brothers and sisters. Parents began to ask Heather to make up stories to match problems their children were having, as when one little girl took some sweets from a shop and didn't seem to realise it was wrong.

Parents are invited to drop in to the school every Friday to find out what their children have been learning and what they will be learning next. Heather explains what the SEAL story for the next week will be and puts up a relevant quote – like 'Apologising isn't giving in to something, it's making it better', or 'Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.'

There are workshops for parents too, where parenting skills are explored through the lens of parents' own feelings. Parents might discuss, for example, how they feel when they go to a party and their child hits another child, and how they might handle the situation.

### Curriculum planning and staff development

The Foundation Phase in Wales for 3-7 year olds has seven areas of learning:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
- Mathematical Development
- Welsh Language Development
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development.

At Fair oak, support for personal and social development runs through planning for all areas of learning. SEAL is also planned for within Language, literacy and communication, and Knowledge and understanding of the world.

Both communication and language and personal and social development are promoted through lots of small group and whole-group talk. Interestingly, Philosophy for Children (P4C) is successfully used in the nursery. Children have in-depth discussions following a stimulus, which is often a picture book. *What's a penguin to think when he wakes up pink?* for example, was chosen to help children think out loud about diversity and gender stereotypes. *The cow who laid an egg* allowed children to think about looking after and helping each other, and about being different.



Staff initially relied on Heather for the SEAL stories relevant to their children's needs. SEAL is now so embedded, however, that they are confident in making up their own stories and slipping in and out of the puppet characters in order to respond to events. Practitioners also model the themes of SEAL in their everyday behaviours and attitudes, making SEAL a 'lived' experience at the nursery, rather than



just a curriculum to be taught.

### **Impact**

There is evidence to show that the work at Fairoak has had a real impact. Over a period of two years, children's progress was tracked using parent-completed questionnaires about their children's attitudes and behaviour. Parents reported significant changes; their children did actually use the strategies and language they had learned, in real-life situations. They had become more able to make friends, handle conflict, be motivated to learn and confident to make and learn from mistakes.

### **To find out more**

Heather's stories and the inspirational quotes that go with them are available from Futurelink publishing (<http://www.futurelinkpublishing.co.uk>) as *PSED [SEAL] stories for the early years*.

Puppets Heather particularly recommends come from Puppets by post ([www.puppetsbypost.com](http://www.puppetsbypost.com)) and Folkmanis – especially their character puppets ([www.folkmanis.com](http://www.folkmanis.com))

Information about Philosophy for Children is available at [www.sapere](http://www.sapere)

For more information about SEAL at Fairoak, or if you would like to visit, contact Heather Morgan at [mogtheteacher@aol.com](mailto:mogtheteacher@aol.com), tel: 01633 259415.

## **Practical tools**

### **A good idea for transition times**

Here's a good whole-school idea from Frobisher Primary and Infant School, adapted from Louise Bomber's *Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools*. Children across the school make 'Calm Boxes' into which they put things that make them feel happy and calm. These might be photos of happy times, pictures of pets, a cuddly toy, a special book or a little pot of their mum's perfume. Children share their boxes in school, talking about why they have chosen their items. Over the summer holiday they take their boxes home, bringing them back in the autumn to their new class to use when they feel anxious or upset.

## **Upcoming newsletters**



## The SEAL Community Newsletter

### No.5, May 2014 SEAL in the early years

The next newsletter will be themed around SEAL in secondary schools

Please contact us, using the 'Contact us' option on the website or email [jean.gross@btinternet.com](mailto:jean.gross@btinternet.com) directly if you have interesting practice to share on this or any other issue. Let us know the best phone number and times to contact you. Or just email with useful resources you have found, or your top tips. We'd love to write your work up as a case study, too, so do get in touch.

**We want to hear from you!**