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Searching for Dumbledore: A reflection upon the outcomes of a tailored emotional literacy programme on three key stage 2 children

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Abstract

Some children may be only able to express feelings of anxiety, frustration, stress or sadness through angry behaviours, which may prove challenging for schools (Barnes *et al*, 2016; Shechtman and Tutian, 2016). This is problematic when considered in relation to research evidence highlighting the negative impact such behaviours may have upon social relationships and academic outcomes (Sloan *et al.*, 2017). The aims of this study were to explore whether a tailored emotional literacy programme can be used effectively to extend children's emotional lexicon and strategies for the self-management of behaviours. Three children with social-emotional difficulties were taught in twelve weekly sessions. The findings from this study suggests positive benefits regarding the use of a programme, tailored to meet a child's specific needs, rather than implementing a programme without any adaptations, which may be an effectual tool in supporting children to change established patterns of negative behaviours.

Key words: Anger Emotional Literacy behaviour emotional self-regulation
social emotional and mental health needs

Introduction

Anger may be externalised or internalised. The focus of this study was upon externalised behaviours which may be observed through angry or aggressive verbal or physical outbursts. These behaviours may impact negatively upon children's relationships and interactions, during academic and social activities (Garwood *et al*, 2017; Slade, 2008). Moreover, these behaviours may act as a barrier to the child's learning (Barnes *et al*, 2016; Knivsberg *et al*. 2007). The negative impacts may also ripple out to the learners' peers, influencing their learning and emotional well-being (Heydenberk and Heydenberk, 2007; Moore, Anderson and Kumar, 2005). Whitehouse and Pudney (1996, p.8) suggest that, 'children's anger often provides us with a challenge or dilemma.' When working with a child who experiences difficulties with behaviour, many teachers request an external agency, such as the Educational Psychologist, to magically transform the situation.

This study was undertaken in response to an increasing frequency of requests to the researcher for support with managing the needs of children who exhibited frequent angry or aggressive outbursts. This article argues that the implementation of tailored emotional literacy programme (EL), informed from assessment of a child's strengths, interests and needs, supports children with understanding and articulating their feelings about a situation assertively and appropriately within a school context.

Government policy in England has placed an increasing importance and weighting upon the inclusion of pupils with diverse needs, including Special Educational Needs (SEN), in mainstream schools (Glazzard, 2013). Inclusion involves all school staff working to meet the diverse needs of children, including social-emotional difficulties (Fredrickson and Cline, 2015). The tensions arising from the dual demands of inclusion and high standards are heightened when learners exhibit challenging behaviours. The angry eruptions observed from these learners evolve from the need to release internal stress (Sunderland, 2003). The resultant explosion may be frightening for the adults and peers around the child. It may also reflect the child's inability to convey their frustrations, or distress, in a more assertive and appropriate way. Indeed, the aggressive responses may be the only medium

the learner feels able to use (Shechtman and Tutian, 2016; Luxmoore, 2006). This highlights the importance of interventions to address these needs within schools.

The traditional perception of a school's educational offer is that there should be a focus upon academic learning. More recently, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of supporting emotional development (Hills, 2016; Long, 2009). This is supported by Sloan *et al* (2017) who contend that emotional well-being is linked to a child's ability to learn.

Emotion within the school context

Emotions are a key component in setting our goals and a cornerstone of our decision-making process (Humphrey *et al*, 2007; Corrie, 2003). Emotions provide the motivation and passion which underpin the organisation of our actions (Morris and Casey, 2006). The notion of the interrelationship between emotions and learning was disseminated by Goleman (1996) within his work on emotional intelligence. Other closely aligned terminology used within schools seeking to develop their learners' understanding about emotions has included EL (Long, 2009).

Schools may experience more difficulty in dealing with anger as compared to other emotions (Schechtman and Tutian, 2016; Luxmoore, 2006). It has been proposed that incidents involving aggressive behaviours may be increasing in frequency across a wider age range (alavinezhad, Mousavi and Sohrabi, 2014). Both viewpoints are reflected in my professional experience over twelve years, as a SENCO and an Advisory Teacher, during which there was a high frequency of requests for support with learners displaying angry behaviours towards peers and adults across the Early Years, Primary and Secondary phases.

Children who frequently express their anger aggressively may underachieve academically and may be at risk socially (Baker *et al*, 2017; Barnes *et al*, 2016; Humphrey and Brooks, 2006). This is because angry outbursts may act as a barrier to learning interpersonal and academic skills (Moore, Anderson

and Kumar, 2005). Further disruption may be caused by exclusions which result from these behaviours and the child's subsequent negative perceptions of school (Faupel, 2002). It has been proposed that angry behaviours exhibited by a child may cause disruption to their peers' education (Bevington and Wishart, 1999). This may be because of stress arising from an unstable and problematic learning and social environment, affecting peers' and teacher's emotional well-being (Pullen *et al*, 2015; Pellegrini and Blatchford, 2000). Furthermore, anger may damage relationships between people, including those between school and the child's family (Cummins, 2006; Faupel, Herrick and Sharp, 1998).

Anger has both constructive and destructive aspects. It is an essential part of the body's mechanism for surviving dangerous circumstances (Barnes *et al.*, 2016; Colasante, Zuffianò and Malti, 2015) and may stimulate imaginative responses to solving problems (Luxmoore, 2006). However, the surge of energy which accompanies the angry feeling may lead to behaviours which have a negative impact upon others (Corrie, 2003; Lindenfield, 2000). When angry feelings are articulated assertively there is the potential for positive outcomes, such as changes for the better in circumstances or relationships with others (Faupel, Herrick and Sharp, 1998).

A child who has positive feelings about themselves is likely to learn more effectively at school, and their social relationships may positively influence the way they perceive their school-experience (Hills, 2016; Sharp, 2001). Conversely, a child who is less able to discern their own feelings is more at risk of being engulfed by their emotions, which may impact negatively upon their social relationships, self-esteem, motivation and ability to learn (Ripley and Simpson, 2007; Goleman, 1996). Hence, the ability to positively communicate feelings is an important competence for learners to develop for both social relationships and academic learning.

One of the difficulties for positive communication of feelings arises from the limitations of children's emotional vocabulary (Yew and O'Kearney, 2015). This hinders their ability to distinguish the degree

of anger they are feeling, owing to the use of the term 'angry' for the whole barometer of anger from mild to extreme emotion (Luxmoore, 2006). The limited emotional lexicon may leave children unable to express feelings of anxiety, frustration, stress or sadness in any other way than via angry behaviours (Luxmoore, 2000). Observable behaviours may include: violence, verbally abusing or being challenging and antagonistic towards adults or peers (Cummins, 2006; Luxmoore, 2006). These negative behaviours may be observed as recurring cycles of detrimental behaviours (Cummins, 2006; Corrie, 2003).

Why do children become angry?

A multifaceted interaction of biological and environmental elements may underlie the development of angry aggressive behaviours (Barnes *et al*, 2016). Luxmoore (2000, p.118) suggests that angry behaviours may stem from the child's inability to manage their "private, internal conflict" of emotions; indeed, the release of the frustrations may be cathartic (Faupe, Herrick and Sharp, 1998).

The relationships between parent or carer and child may provide risk or protective factors, influencing the development of angry behaviours (Guenther *et al*, 2015). Children experiencing neglect, or high prevalence of conflict, may be at increased risk of externalised angry behaviours (Guenther *et al*, 2015). Furthermore, if a child experiences strong aggressive approaches to behaviour management within their family, they may develop a belief that aggression is the route to attaining needs or desires and supremacy (Lee and Kim, 2017; Shechtman and Tutian, 2016).

There may be connections between physical and / or mental health and anger, including lifestyle factors which may influence health such as sleep patterns (Guenther *et al*, 2015; Pullen *et al*, 2015; Ho, Carter and Stephenson, 2010). Guenther *et al* (2015) and Steele *et al* (2008) suggest that there is a need for more longitudinal research to investigate these relationships in greater depth.

From an educational perspective, inappropriate teaching methods may trigger feelings of frustration, or powerlessness, leading to anger (Humphreys and Brooks, 2006; Corrie, 2003). This may be observed in children with learning difficulties, or very able children, for whom work has not been sufficiently differentiated. This may stem from a fear of failure in the former case, or feeling unchallenged in the latter case. Anger may also be triggered in response to critical comments, embarrassment or feeling ignored (Pullen *et al*, 2015).

Emotional Literacy (EL) as an intervention

EL relates to awareness and competences with managing and communicating feelings appropriately to facilitate one's goals (Sloan *et al*, 2017; Camerelli *et al*, 2011; Hills, 2016; Ripley and Simpson, 2007). An EL curriculum focuses upon developing children's recognition and management of their emotions, which may help to develop their resilience and benefit both their psychological and physical health (Heydenberk and Heydenberk, 2007). Furthermore, an increased understanding of emotions may help children's approaches to problem-solving in academic and social activities (Jones, Brown and Aber, 2011; Corrie, 2003). Thus, an EL programme focused upon developing understanding, and assertive communication, of emotions may increase the opportunities for developing successful social relationships, necessary for collaborative learning activities (Camerelli *et al*, 2011; Ripley and Simpson, 2007).

Social-emotional skills do not necessarily develop automatically (Ho, Carter and Stephenson, 2010). Some children need more targeted support to control their impulsivity and develop more successful relationships in school; this is an important element in effective inclusive pedagogy (Adams, 2006; Marris and Rae, 2006). Anger management is often requested for pupils who are exhibiting aggressive behaviours. However, this needs to be embedded into an EL programme to be effective, so that alongside developing competences with managing their behaviours children learn how to express their feelings assertively (Luxmoore, 2006; Rae and Simmons, 2002).

Children have to handle a variety of challenges impacting upon their emotions. Successful management of their emotions may allow them to handle differing situations. Advocates for teaching emotional literacy argue that social-emotional competences may be viewed as a set of proficiencies, thus the social context of schools are appropriate places for coaching them (Nixon, 2016; Camerelli *et al*, 2011). In this respect advocates of EL challenge traditional views of education, which focuses on an academic curriculum (Humphrey *et al*, 2007). Teachers may express the concerns regarding managing the demands of an academic curriculum and adding an EL programme into an already crowded timetable (Elias, Hunter and Kress, 2001). This view is supported by Brooker (2005) who suggests that many teachers feel inhibited from giving precedence to teaching social skills owing to great pressure from expectations to fulfil the demands of statutory regulations and the standards agenda. Research Studies exploring Personal, Social and Emotional Health Education (PSHE) have identified that school leaders' perceptions of the purpose of education influence the status given to PSHE. These studies suggest that when school leaders identified an explicit relationship between social-emotional competences and learning (and hence standards), then higher status was conferred to PSHE within the curriculum (Willis, Clague and Coldwell, 2012; Formby and Wolstenholme, 2012).

Methodology

Design

A qualitative interpretivist approach was selected in order to afford a firm foundation to fulfil the research aim, which was focused upon gaining insight. This study follows a case study approach, with some elements of action research. A key strength of qualitative data is that it is collected in real-life situations thus providing a clear picture (Denscombe, 2007). This facilitates gathering 'chains of evidence' to answer the research questions and ensure validity (Yin, 2003, p.34, 36, 305). The case study approach adds to the strengths of the research as much of the data collected is concerned with emotional responses and personal reflections and is aimed at constructing an understanding of

social situations and the issues that affect the behaviours which occur (Ghesquière, Maes and Vandenberghe, 2004, p.12; Yin, 2003, p.1).

The broad aim of this study was to explore a tailored programme designed to enable children recognise and to manage their own feelings, facilitated through four research questions:

- ✦ In what ways does an EL programme enable children identify emotions and recognise how they are feeling at a particular time?
- ✦ In what ways does an EL programme enable children to manage their anger?
- ✦ In what ways does an EL programme enable children to improve social skills, particularly resolving disputes with their peers?

A tailored EL intervention programme was taught in twelve weekly sessions. The implementation followed an action research methodology (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Hence, the interventions were reviewed regularly to inform planning in response to ongoing evaluations, making the programme highly relevant, and purposeful, for each of the children in the study.

Participants

This research was undertaken in a junior school in a small town in a rural county in the South West of England. The school is two form entry with the age range 7 to 11 years. The majority of its pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils identified as being eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. At the time of the study, there were slightly over 200 pupils on role of which 25% were on the SEN register; 42% of the pupils with SEN were identified as having social-emotional difficulties. Three children from this group were selected for the study by their class teachers and the SENCO: one boy from Year 3 (Y3) and one boy and one girl from Year 4 (Y4).

Method

The data collections tools were chosen to facilitate gathering 'detailed and rich' data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.461). Semi-structured interviews were conducted before and at the end of the intervention programme. A schedule of observations was planned of the children in several different lessons and at playtimes, over several days, at the beginning and end of the study (Denscombe, 2007). Observations and interviews were undertaken and transcribed by the researcher.

Potential limitations arise from accurate recording of observations by a participant-observer, which may be hindered by difficulties of time and being in an appropriate place to see what is happening or being able to view incidents from different perspectives (Yin, 2003). To ameliorate this, questions were asked about incidents as they occurred in order to improve the description of events and to encourage reflections.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was sought from the Headteacher, parents and all the interviewees. The school and participants have been anonymised to ensure confidentiality. The programme was described to the children as activities to learn about feelings and behaviours. The children were given the opportunity to withdraw from any activities if they did not wish to take part, and were carefully monitored. None of the children withdrew. Transcripts of the interviews were shown to each interviewee so they could be assured that their responses had been recorded and interpreted accurately. This aimed to enhance the validity of the data.

Analytical strategy

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. The objectives of the research were used to structure the organisation and analysis of the data. One interview and one observation was focused upon in-depth to generate initial themes and codes and the subsequent analyses of the remaining interviews and

observations used that framework to consolidate or remove themes (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

The Tailored Emotional Literacy Intervention

The individualised programme

The Y3 boy was experiencing severe difficulties with managing anger, resolving conflict and maintaining relationships; frequently engaged in angry or aggressive outbursts. His mood changed between calm and furious in a matter of seconds. This child was very reluctant to listen and talk through situations with an adult and accept responsibility, or consequences, for his actions. He was a talented artist but would frequently destroy his work, stating it was 'rubbish'. His parents and teachers believed his self-esteem and self-belief were low. Resilience at times of making any errors was low. His usual response was to become angry, refuse offers of help and stop working; he would also physically and verbally attack his peers to provoke them. Corrie (2003) suggests that the degree of children's self-esteem has an impact upon their behaviours and attitudes.

The Teacher expressed their concerns regarding the high level of stress that working with this child was causing his peer group and the adults. Faupel, Herrick and Sharp (1998) and Luxmoore (2006) both acknowledge the problems and stress caused from dealing with an angry child to their peers and teachers. This stress may be increased if they have to endure such behaviours for long periods of time (Squires, 2001).

A holistic individualised approach was planned working to develop academic and social-emotional skills. It was felt that an individual approach was needed owing to the severity of the boy's difficulties.

An EL programme of 12 sessions working 1:1 with the Y3 boy was planned. The foci were upon:

- increasing understanding of emotions and related vocabulary
- developing awareness of triggers for his anger

- teaching calming strategies
- developing his abilities with communicating his feelings and scripts for solving disputes
- increasing self-esteem and self-belief.

The initial sessions were focussed upon building a rapport with the child as well as beginning to teach EL skills. Adams (2006) suggests that working to develop trust in the early sessions of an EL programme is essential to the success of the programme. Within each of the sessions, opportunities to play games and thereby practice turn-taking skills was provided.

The initial three sessions focussed upon extending his knowledge and understanding of emotion vocabulary related to happy, sad and angry. The vocabulary was introduced in verbal and colour coded written format; the colours were chosen by the child. The repetitive activities included sorting and discussing these words and matching them to photographs of Scenarios (focusing upon facial expression and body language) to encourage his understanding and retain the words in long-term memory (Adams, 2006).

During the fourth and fifth Sessions a thermometer was used to provide a visual scale for each of the three emotions. The purpose of this is to enable the child to be able to gauge how they are feeling and describe it more successfully to others. Words used to describe each emotion were plotted onto the scale through discussion and comparison. This may also support decision making to help self-manage emotions and solve the difficulties causing their frustration (Webster-Stratton, 1999; Faupel, Herrick and Sharp, 1998). Photographs and vignettes were discussed to plot emotions to the thermometers and reasons for the people's responses. To reinforce this learning, the child was asked to share situations from class or playtime to illustrate emotions we were discussing and reinforce his learning (Ripley and Simpson, 2007).

Sessions six to eight focussed on anger. Analysis of story scenarios were undertaken to identify reasons for anger. Vignettes provided prompts for the boy to examine his own experience and

identify comparable situations for a similar analysis. The purpose was to develop his awareness that other people experience different feelings and to encourage him to reflect upon both his own and others' feelings (Adams, 2006). The discourse included physical responses to anger. Helping the boy to identify potential triggers to his anger was vital to support planning strategies to support him with self-managing his behaviours (Faupel, Herrick and Sharp, 1998).

A variety of calming strategies were practised to identify successful strategies; this identified two strategies he could use in the playground and the classroom. He drew pictures to make cue cards to give him a visual reminder. His Teacher talked through these visual cue cards with him each day to try to reinforce the skills he was learning.

The final four sessions focussed upon dealing with conflict. Problem cards were read to the boy and discussed. He found the concept of impulsive behaviours quite difficult to understand. To give him a more concrete understanding, the child and the researcher were each given a sweet and told that he could eat it straight away or wait. If he waited five minutes he would be given two more sweets (Adams, 2006, p. 57). Repeating this concrete example enabled the boy to talk about impulsiveness and impulse control. Conflict scenarios were analysed. Potential solutions were examined to establish whether these would result in positive or negative outcomes. A 'traffic light' strategy (Richardson, 1996) was taught to support with self-management of behaviour. This provided visual cues to prompt actions, for example red light stop and use a calming-down strategy. This was reinforced in class by his Teacher. The boy produced his own pictures. Visual cues appeared to help him absorb a concept or skill.

The tailored group programme

Maintaining social relationships for learning and play was observed to be challenging for the Y4 children. Both children appeared to need to be in control of any situation. In group tasks or social activities, they both were unable to cooperate or share in their peers' ideas, frequently triggering

arguments. Responses to adult intervention involved angry outbursts and a long calming-down period, disrupting their engagement in lessons. This behaviour may be an indication of poor impulse-control (Webster-Stratton, 1999) or be directed at evading events they find menacing (Long, 2002). Children who have difficulties handling relationships may be at danger being rebuffed by others (Ripley and Simpson, 2007). Teachers and parents believed the children's behaviours were impacting negatively upon their academic progress and self-esteem and upon their peers' well-being.

A small group EL programme for six children was planned, the remainder of whom were role models. The group met weekly for twelve sessions, each of 30 minutes. The foci were to develop friendship skills and the ability to recognise and assertively express emotions. The activities followed a similar pattern to individualised programme and provided opportunities to learn and practice specific skills within a safe space. The group activities facilitated discussions enabling the two focused children to hear the views and opinions of others. Richardson (1996) suggests that talking through problems to find solutions may help children control over impulsive behaviours. In addition, the children engaged in role-play of problem scenarios and potential solutions. The group enacted negative as well as positive solutions to the problems given and analysed the different outcomes together after the role-play activities. Richardson (1996) argues that role-play may be an effective vehicle for encouraging alterations of thoughts and behaviours.

Learning objectives and key skills being taught were shared with teachers, so they could support this work within learning and social activities.

Discussion: Key Findings and Critique

The scrutiny of the data identified that:

- The children had a reduction in the number of incidents they were involved with at playtimes and were starting to independently use a calming strategy.
- Repetition and overlearning of skills was vital for the children to absorb new skills.

- The children developed some skills in recognising emotions within themselves and others.
- Although there are some positive changes identified, the children still needed to work to develop scripts for solving disputes, particularly when collaborating in a group.
- Reinforcing the skills and strategies being taught 1:1 or in a group within class is vital. Therefore good communication between staff is essential, requiring time and commitment from all staff.

The rich detail generated from using case studies has created images of pupils who were experiencing difficulties with social interaction. The research aimed to draw out similarities and differences between the cases with the purpose of informing judgements to be made regarding the effectiveness of an EL programme. As the aims of the research were focused upon gaining insight, qualitative approaches were an appropriate vehicle through which to do this.

The EL programmes did not take place in isolation, for example the Y3 boy had additional 1:1 support with literacy skills, the Y4 children had been involved in work in class focussed upon being a good learner. It is not possible to measure the impact of other influences upon the children. It is important to note that this is a small-scale study and thus results from this study may not be generally applicable. A longer time-scale for the EL programmes would have facilitated the development of scripts and pro-social behaviours for solving disputes.

Does an EL programme enable children to identify emotions and recognise how they are feeling at a particular time?

All three children extended the range of their emotional lexicon. The use of visual resources supported their learning of 'reading' facial expression and body language to identify how others may be feeling (Mills *et al*, 2017). The use of a scale, such as an 'anger thermometer' (Webster-Stratton, 1999, p. 311; Faupel, Herrick and Sharp, 1998, p.60), was aimed at facilitating the children's awareness of their own emotion. All three children appeared to find this visual representation of the intensity of emotions beneficial. The Y3 child found this self-analysis particularly difficult, particularly

in relation to anger. Discussions focused on relating their own experiences to the levels of emotion identified on the scales, were also valuable to developing their understanding. This is supported by Camerelli *et al* (2011) who suggest that dialogue may be an effective medium to encourage, and support the development of, comprehension and new competencies. The two Y4 children were able to talk through incidents and identify their own and their peers' emotions. However, the Y3 boy was not able to do this consistently. Sharp (2001) argues the importance of developing emotional awareness to be able to avoid being engulfed by feelings and thus be able to control impulses and plan appropriate behaviours. Overall, the data may support the assertion that an EL programme can help children identify and recognise emotions.

Does an EL programme enable children to manage their anger?

Throughout the programmes, the children were taught that all feelings are normal healthy emotional reactions to events (Long, 2002; Lindenfield, 2000), but the behaviours which arise from these emotions may not be acceptable (Luxmoore, 2006; Whitehouse and Pudney, 1996). Lindenfield (2000) suggests that effective management of anger starts from understanding patterns of behaviour which arise from anger. Thus, the discussion of real-life experiences was key to helping the children develop self-management skills, as children were able to learn from their own and others' experiences and feel validated within a safe space (Camerelli *et al.*, 2011).

The children were responsive to being taught calming strategies. The two Y4 children began to use this self-management strategy independently, whereas the Y3 child needed prompts from adults to support this activity. This skill had improved but was not yet mastered, which may be owing to the severity of his difficulties. All three children were unable to resolve a dispute independently, but an increased willingness to accept adult support with conflict resolution was noted. Thus overall some progress had been made, but skills were not fully mastered. This suggests that an EL programme may support children begin to manage their anger, but does not provide a complete solution (Luxmoore, 2006). Webster-Stratton (1999) and Marris and Rae (2006) advocate that programmes to

teach specific skills need to be reinforced across the curriculum in order for the skills to become generalised.

Does an EL programme enable children to improve social skills, particularly resolving disputes with their peers?

Ripley and Simpson (2007, p.12) suggest that some studies have found that developing the skill to understand others does not guarantee success in developing pro-social behaviours towards others. The findings from this study suggest some congruence with this perspective. The Y3 boy and the Y4 girl were able to build friendships with a particular friend, although still experienced difficulties when playing or working with a group of children. A component of the success of the small group intervention for the Y4 children, was the careful choice of role models within the group. These role models were successful at explaining their ideas clearly without dominating the group. Activities, such as role-play, predicated upon experiential learning approaches, may also support comprehension and developing new competences (Daunic *et al*, 2013; Camerelli *et al*, 2011). Overall, the data suggests that although some pro-social behaviour had improved, the children's ability to resolve disputes had not.

Conclusion

Children's lives do not exist in a series of boxes. Their experiences from home and school, and their physical health, may impact upon one another (Guenther *et al*, 2015). In this study, this was evidenced within discussions between parents and teachers sharing concerns and other facts specific to each child, which may have impacted upon the children's social-emotional behaviours. There may also be innate factors, such as neurodevelopmental disorders, which may present risk factors for some social-behavioural difficulties (Lindenfield, 2000). Hence, there may be some children who need explicit teaching with regard to social and emotional skills.

Developing children's EL facilitates changing established patterns of behaviour (Daunic *et al*, 2013; Corrie, 2003). This may be conceptualised as a means of empowering children to understand and manage emotions to enable them to handle social situations (Camerelli *et al*, 2011). Furthermore, encouraging positive emotions may promote resilience (Lindenfield, 2000) which will help children cope with adversities (Erwin, 1993). This study has shown that children may benefit from having specific skills taught individually, or in small groups. However, these skills may need to be reinforced across the curriculum to facilitate mastery. Thus, there needs to be clear communication, agreed goals and strategies implemented consistently by all adults working with the child, whether directly or indirectly. This implies that working to develop children's social and emotional awareness is a whole-school issue, not just a concern for a teacher of a child who experiencing difficulties with social interactions (Weare, 2004). Luxmoore (2000) supports this perspective in his proposal that staff need time to reflect upon their professional practice with colleagues.

Research studies investigating schools' engagement with implementing interventions to support developing social-emotional competences have suggested that this may be an effective tool, which has a positive influence upon emotional health and well-being (Hills, 2016). Furthermore, these interventions may be cost-effective (Sloan *et al*, 2017; Shechtman and Tutian, 2016). It is important to acknowledge that more longitudinal research may be needed to inform judgements as to whether EL programmes impact positively upon academic achievements (Hills, 2016; Carnwell and Baker, 2007; Morrison and Matthews, 2006).

The planning of the interventions within this study was informed from assessment of each child's strengths and difficulties, tailored to meet their specific needs rather than following an inflexible programme delivered to every child regardless of their specific area of difficulty. This approach sits within the graduated approach required by the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2015). Indeed, the planning and enactment of inclusive pedagogical approaches, aimed to meet the diverse needs of individual children, requires teachers to take a holistic and flexible approach (Sharp, 2001). I would

like to propose that the tailored approach informed from assessment, provides the key ingredients of supporting children with understanding their emotions and self-management of their behaviours, rather than implementing any programme without any adaptations being made or undeniably any waving of a magic wand.

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