

# Improving Social & Emotional Learning in Primary Schools - EEF Guidance Report<sup>+</sup> 'At A Glance'

## Recommendations

- 1 Teach SEL skills explicitly**  
 Use a range of strategies to teach key skills, both in dedicated time, and in everyday teaching. Teach children to be **self-aware, socially aware** and how to **self-regulate** by expanding **children's emotional vocabulary**, supporting them to **express emotions** and learn **self-calming strategies**. Help them to think positively about themselves and view/empathise with others' perspectives. Use stories for points of view and role play to **demonstrate good communication and listening skills**. Explicitly teach **problem-solving strategies and responsible decision-making**.
- 2 Integrate and model SEL skills through everyday teaching**  
**Model** the social and emotional behaviours you want children to adopt. **Give specific and focused praise** when children display SEL skills—do not rely on 'crisis moments' for teaching skills. **Embed SEL teaching** across a range of subject areas: literacy, history, drama and PE all provide good opportunity to link SEL. **Use simple ground-rules** in groupwork and classroom discussion to reinforce SEL skills.
- 3 Plan carefully for adopting a SEL programme**  
 Use a **planned series of lessons** to teach skills in **dedicated time** from a suitable and carefully selected, **evidence-based programme** (use evidence summaries such as those from EIF and EEF as a quick way of assessing the evidence programmes). **Regularly review progress** and adapt the programme with care.
- 4 Use a SAFE curriculum: Sequential, Active, Focused and Explicit**  
**Skills should be built sequentially** across lessons and year groups. **Think long term. Balance teacher-led activities with active forms of learning**, such as role-play, discussion and small group work, to practise skills. **Focus your time:** quality matters more than quantity. **Be explicit:** clearly identify the skills being taught and why they are important.
- 5 Reinforce SEL skills through whole-school ethos and activities**  
 Establish **schoolwide norms**—expectations and routines that support children's social and emotional development. Align your school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies with SEL. **Seek ideas and support from staff and pupils** in how the school environment can be improved. Actively **engage with parents** to **reinforce skills in the home**.
- 6 Plan, support and monitor SEL implementation**  
 Establish a **shared vision for SEL**. Ensure it is connected to (not competing with) other school priorities. **Whole-school involvement:** Involve teachers and schools staff in planning SEL and provide training and support covering: readiness for change, development of skills and knowledge and support for embedding change. **Prioritise implementation. Monitor** implementation and **evaluate impact** of approach.



### Resources from the EEF guidance report:

- [single page pdf summary of recommendations](#)
- [Full guidance report - comprehensive, actionable evidence-informed guidance](#)

### Complementary EEF guidance reports include:

- [Improving Behaviour in Schools](#)
- [Implementation Guide](#) —Putting Evidence To Work
- [Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning](#)
- [Metacognition & Self-regulated learning](#)

### Complementary Framework:

- [UCL SWERL\(Supporting Wellbeing Emotional Resilience & Learning\)](#)

### Further reading/listening

- See references in Guidance Report P40-43
- [EEF Podcast](#)—Improving SEL in Primary Schools (<https://evidencebased.education/podcast-archive/>)
- SEAL Community (<http://sealcommunity.org/resource-panel>)
- PSHE Association (<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources>)
- [BLOG: SWERL in Suffolk-When Implementation meets well-being](#) by Andy Samways (Unity Research School Director)
- Book: [Special Educational Needs and School Improvement by J. Gross](#)
- Book: [An Educator's Guide to Mental Health & Wellbeing](#)
- Book: [Inner Story—Understand Your Mind. Change Your World](#)



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