

Minster in Sheppey SEND and Learning Behaviours Case Study

Introduction

Minster is a large primary school in the Isle of Sheppey with approximately 18% of pupils with SEND. We took part in the SEND and Learning Behaviours programme in the Summer 2021 cohort and launched our change plan in September 2021. We used Evidence Leader in Education (ELE) support to signpost and discuss research evidence, review implementation, monitor impact, and plan next steps.

What problem were you looking to solve?

We identified that some of our pupils were finding it difficult to self-regulate their behaviour and that this sometimes led to disruptions in lessons. Our teachers were using a variety of tools and strategies in their classes but there wasn't a consistent approach and there was a tendency to refer pupils for Wave 2 and Wave 3 intervention too quickly. Pupils needed to develop their understanding of emotions and take ownership of the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others. We also identified that many pupils did not have the vocabulary to express their emotions. We wanted to introduce a consistent approach into Quality First Teaching, establishing active ingredients to our Wave 1 approach to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). We wanted to explicitly teach our children key skills of self-awareness and self-regulation and integrate these skills into everyday teaching. Aligned to this, we wanted to review and develop our tiered approach to SEL so that there were clear expectations and a shared understanding of the approach, ensuring that Wave 2 and 3 interventions supplemented rather than supplanted Wave 1 teaching. Our overarching aims were to:

- Develop shared understanding and clarity of expectations and vision to ensure consistency in implementation across the whole school.
- Develop pupils' self-awareness, self-regulation and ownership of behaviours and their impact on others.
- Broaden our support to reach more pupils and intervene before specific additional support is required.

What were the anticipated barriers/challenges?

There was an over-reliance on additional intervention, with teachers referring pupils to work with the pastoral support team or to refer them for additional intervention outside the classroom so that they could minimise the disruption to other children's learning, and we anticipated that this might be difficult to change.

Some teachers had long-established strategies for managing behaviour and we knew that some teachers may be reluctant to change practices and that there would be concerns about the challenge of fitting something additional into the teaching day.

To overcome the barriers, we sought to develop shared understanding and ownership from the beginning. We used staff questionnaires and discussions to gather staff views and to find out about the challenges. We developed a hierarchical approach, outlining the tiers of support already on offer in our school and how these strategies interrelate. We planned a programme of frequent training, monitoring, review and feedback and involved staff in implementation. When we launched our plan, we started with a few agreed actions and provided documents and resources to support teachers.

What did we do?

We introduced a spectrum of colour emotions barometer and developed clear progression in the vocabulary of emotions so that teachers could teach pupils to express their emotions using words. We asked teachers to actively teach the vocabulary and understanding of emotions in line with the progression map. Children used the emotional barometer to reflect on their emotions at different times in the day. We introduced a consistent shared language for all staff to use in all areas of the school. We established expectations for the classroom environment, agreed strategies and modelling (our active ingredients), whilst trying to balance teacher creativity and autonomy with consistency. We trained staff in the approach and reintroduced the graduated approach with more clarity about the connections between the tiers of provision.

We ensured that our approach aligned to our vision to 'Be the Best that you can be', making sure that this was explicit throughout the whole school. For example, through our weekly well-being assemblies and displays across the school.

We developed staff ownership through a programme of training and active involvement. For example, we involved year group leaders in modelling and monitoring, sharing successes and listening to challenges.

We identified good practice and positive impact, looking for 'champions' to model and disseminate.

How are you monitoring the success of this intervention?

We identified review points throughout the year and planned frequent, varied monitoring activities, making sure that we keep the profile high. We communicate our findings at regular staff meetings and with individual feedback, clarifying misunderstandings, celebrating successes, and making adjustments to our plan. Our monitoring activities, shared with other leaders, include learning walks, pupil voice, staff surveys and team meetings. Year group leaders were actively involved in reviewing and developing practice in their year groups.

We use our Evidence Leader in Education (ELE) support for joint monitoring, evaluation, and review at specified points in the year. This helps to identify strengths, inconsistencies, and areas for development and to plan next actions.

What has is the impact of this project?

There have been significant improvements in reach, fidelity and acceptability of the approach and a shift in culture so that our vision is now evident everywhere in the school. There is consistency across year groups and strong provision in many classes, with evidence of pupils using language effectively to describe emotions and strategies they use to self-regulate. Across the school, teachers are making links between literacy and the emotions barometer, for example when exploring feelings of characters, and this is having an additional impact on their writing. The strong practice in Reception is providing a solid foundation for pupils to continue their social and emotional development in their journey through the school.

We used our approach to underpin the end of year transition, providing a carefully thought-out transition plan, which has enabled pupils to understand, voice and manage their emotions successfully.

The school's reviewed Wave 2 provision is rich and led by well-trained staff, who model the whole school approach effectively. Strategies have been effectively adapted for some individual personalised plans and this is supporting these pupils' emotional regulation well.

Social and emotional health and well-being are at the core of our vision and translate into our practice and support for all members of our community, which includes monthly parent and staff well-being newsletters.

Leaders have been determined and committed to implementing change and proactive in developing their own leadership skills. We have enrolled on the Kent Inclusion Leadership Programme to further enhance our leadership skills and inclusive practice at our school.

The school's Ofsted report (9/10 March) says:

There is a well-planned curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) in place. Behaviour within the school is calm, and pupils are highly motivated in their learning. Pupils told inspectors that adults at the school would always resolve any playground conflict quickly and supportively.

End of Key Stage 2 data for 2021-2022 shows that 66.7% of the school's SEND children (10 pupils) reached the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths combined. (Reading 77.8%, Writing 70%, Maths 100%). This is an indication of the improvements in learning behaviours.

Next steps

We revisited expectations with the whole school team in September 2022 and have identified next steps for the coming academic year to ensure that the approach is fully embedded.

We aim to embed and sustain Wave 1 SEL by maximising classroom opportunities, so that it becomes integral to Quality 1st teaching and there is further reduction in Wave 2 interventions. We plan to achieve this by:

- Reviewing the connections between Wave 1 and Wave 2 approaches
- Continuing to keep the profile high through regular reviews and celebrations of successes with the whole school staff.
- Continuing to monitor provision so that improvements are sustained.
- Developing parental involvement in supporting their children with the SEL strategies at home, including providing a toolkit of strategies and bespoke activities.