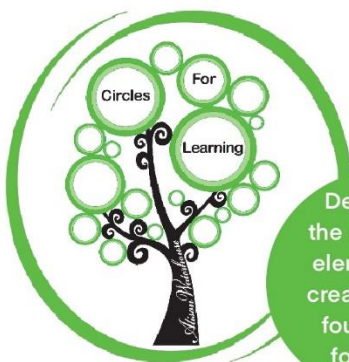




Circles for Learning in school projects **Impact, exciting practice and what worked.**

December 2019



Developing
the 5 essential
elements that
create positive
foundations
for MHWB

Circles for Learning

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the schools, practitioners, children, parents and young children who have taken part in all the Circles for Learning Projects. It has been a privilege to work with them all and to watch and learn from the wonderful learning journeys they have shared.

I would also like to thank the Circles for Learning Advisory Group who have always been there to support me develop the projects and have constantly believed in the way Circles for Learning develops positive foundations for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Executive Summary

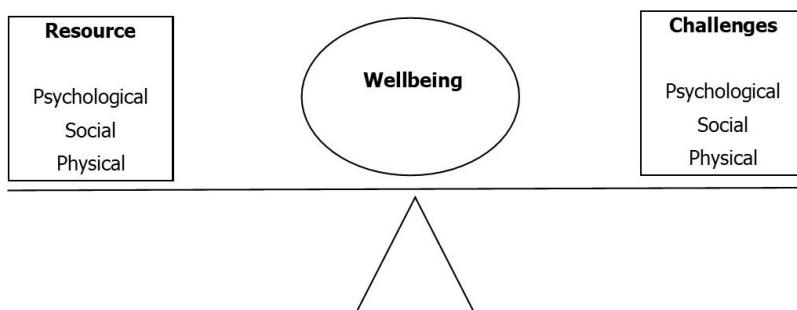
Defining and Understanding Mental Health and Wellbeing

In the 20th Century psychologists became interested in studying happiness. Several called for the inclusion of positive states in definitions of wellbeing, (Jahoda, 1958; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). This caused a shift in the understanding of mental health, no longer was an absence of mental illness a sufficient description for mental health but happiness was also seen as being important. Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) were therefore linked together. Mental Health includes our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing, it affects how we think, feel and act. Our Mental Health and Wellbeing helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices (Cohen, Kessler & Gordon, 1995).

Children's emotional wellbeing influences their cognitive development, learning, social skills and emotional skills. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnick, Taylor & Schellinger, (2014); Public Health England (2014).

Evidence shows that work on emotional and social competence and wellbeing has a wide range of educational and social benefits, including greater educational and work success, improved behaviour, increased inclusion, improved learning, greater social cohesion, increased social capital, and improvements to mental health. (Weare and Gray, 2003).

Identifying ways to support and develop wellbeing in school are therefore important if we wish the children & young people of today to grow into healthy well balanced and successful adults of the future. How to weave this into the curriculum in a way that supports both the teacher's knowledge and development and enriches the experience of young people, was the focus of the Circles for Learning project developed by Educational Psychotherapist Alison Waterhouse.



(Dodge et al., 2012 p 230) Figure 1: Wellbeing Balance

Dodge et al argue that stable wellbeing is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, physical or social challenge. When a person has more challenges than resources their see-saw dips along with their wellbeing and vice versa.

Introduction

Origin of Circles for Learning

Alison Waterhouse was the founding head of a Therapeutic Special School, and now works as Special Educational Needs and Wellbeing Consultant and Educational Psychotherapist in the south of England. She has always been fascinated by children's beliefs and thinking about their learning; what causes them to engage and make progress or stall or become stuck.

In 2001 a friend of her daughter's had a baby. She describes watching the curiosity and interest of her daughter's peers unfold and was reminded of her baby observation whilst training as a psychotherapist. During this time, she was working in a school supporting staff with Work Discussion Groups (WDG, Hanko, 2016). Alison found herself talking about attachment and learning and helping the Individual Needs Assistants (INA) to understand the Learning Triangle (Geddes, 2006), discuss the emotional responses to learning and the importance of early relationships in developing our ability and attitudes to learning. Also at this time, she undertook some work with Bristol University on the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory or ELLI, (Crick 2006). The Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) project identified 7 areas or dimensions that support learning (Crick et al., 2004). Each dimension is thought of as a spectrum with an emergent pole being positive for learning and a contrast pole which tends to inhibit learning.

1. Changing and Learning ←————→ Being Static or Stuck
2. Curiosity ←————→ Passivity
3. Meaning Making ←————→ Fragmentation
4. Creativity ←————→ Rule Boundedness
5. Learning Relationships ←————→ Isolation or Dependence
6. Strategic Awareness ←————→ Behaving like a Robot
7. Resilience ←————→ Dependence and Fragility

The culmination of these thoughts experiences and observations resulted in her developing the Circles for Learning Project.

Circles for Learning drew upon Alison's own experiences as a Class Teacher, Headteacher, and Psychotherapist. The project has been strongly influenced by the work and research of psychoanalysts, such as Bowlby (1969), Bion (1962), Winnicott (1960) and Klein (1958). It also drew upon the work of Vygotsky (1978), neuroscientists and other educationalists, such as Hattie (2014), Claxton (2001) and Rinaldi (2004).

Alison identified within the research five essential areas that are supportive of positive mental health and wellbeing:

- The ability to form and develop positive relationships
- The importance of self-awareness and the ability to self-regulate, show self-compassion and have a positive sense of self.
- Good emotional literacy
- Strong skills for learning both in and out of the classroom
- Understanding how emotions, cognitive processes and behaviour all link together.

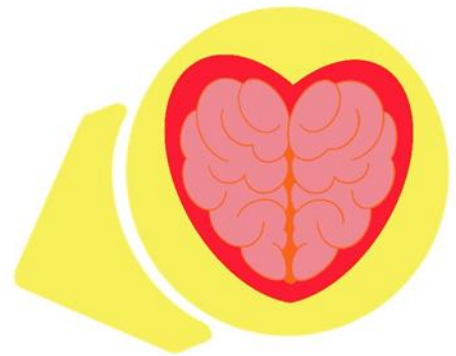
Each of these areas were then woven into the Circles for Learning Project and became the focus point for the observations and also the follow up work with the children and young people.

The Five Essential Elements to Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing

Creating Positive Relationships



Emotional Literacy

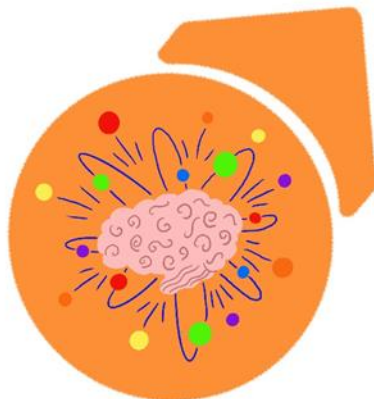


Self-development

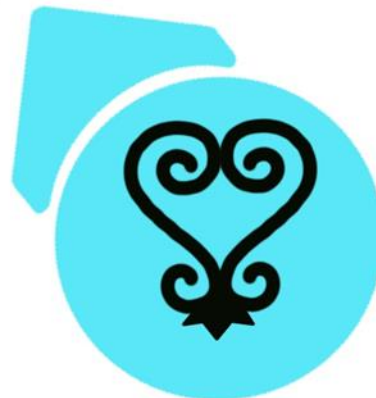


positive
foundations
for mental
health &
wellbeing

The Brain Learning and
Behaviour



Skills for Learning



Primary Schools Research Project

Initial research into the impact of Circles for Learning was undertaken in Primary Schools (2014-2015). The Primary Schools Project trained, supported and followed 5 Primary practitioners undertake the project within their schools for a year (Waterhouse, 2015).



5 primary schools signed up to the research project. The children were from across the year groups including a year 2 class, a year 3 class, one year 4, 5 and 6 class and two year 6 classes. The mother and baby were found from within the school community and included a speech and language therapist and her young child and an educational psychologist and her daughter. All the class teachers were trained together as a group to share and discuss what they had done and the response from their children supervised by Educational

Psychotherapist Alison Waterhouse, an Educational Psychotherapist. Teachers were supported within their own schools to set up the parent/young child observation sessions and observe/record the impact this was having on both themselves as teachers and the children and young people in their classrooms.

After each session the Alison shared research or academic papers that supported the learning and observations that the class teachers were experiencing or which were discussed during the sessions. Alison met with each teacher on a weekly basis to discuss the session they had undertaken and the themes that had come out of this. This enabled Alison and the class teacher to think together about the next steps they might take and to share resources they might like to use with the children as follow up activities. All the activities suggested explored a range of areas linked to developing positive strategies for mental health and wellbeing. Each primary school developed the Circles for Learning project in slightly different ways. Each class teacher was helped to make it their own, looking at the needs of the children and young people and the skills and strategies they already had in place. The project also supported the development of practitioners leading the project extending their knowledge and understanding of the five essential areas.



Results

Observation which acted as a stimulus	Follow up Class Activity	Outcome	Long Term Impact	PSS	PR	EL	SfL
Mum supporting baby to come into class	Temperament and how we manage new situations	Transition Policy written with the children to support their transition to Junior School.	Children were more able to support each other and think about how people were feeling in class.				
Baby struggling to put shapes in a shape sorter	Introduction of the word perseverance and discussion about resilience and the strategies you could use when you were struggling.	Class created a list of strategies to try when the going gets tough.	Greater resilience and ability to keep going on work. More supportive of each other and more able to problem solve.				
The enjoyment of Mum and baby when they looked at each other.	Class teacher posed the question 'Does love grow brains?'	Research looking for evidence to support different views to enable a debate.	Emotional literacy and an understanding of different points of view. Greater understanding of neuroscience				
Mum sharing with children her visit to the hospital and their class baby's sensitivity to milk	Research questions posed by the children	Individual research projects exploring a range of different areas. An exhibition for families.	Research skills, presentation skills, collaboration, Celebration that we are all different.				
Watching their class baby look for Mum when she got upset or overwhelmed.	What strategies do we use to self-regulate ourselves?	A word thermometer to show the many words that describe angry & sad from strongest to weakest.	Developing emotional literacy Strategies to use to self-regulate				
A baby trying different ways to put rings on a stick	What skills do you use when you are trying to learn something new? A debate on which skills are best.	Discussion and shared language for how we learn Introduction to the ELLI project.	A language for learning. Understanding about the skills needed and the emotions involved.				
A baby learning to crawl.	Learning & the brain. Enquiry—the best ways to learn our spellings	Deeper conversations about learning. We all learn in different ways.	Learning conversations and skills for learning. Greater support for each other.				

PSS – Positive sense of self

EL – Emotional Literacy



Areas of impact

PR – Positive relationships

SfL – Skills for Learning

Impact on Teachers and the Classroom Environment

Stimulus	Outcome
Understanding Attachment and its impact on learning within the classroom.	This led to working with the children on how to manage PPA time and the creation of a class folder for supply or cover teachers which the children helped to create. The folder contain important information on them and how to support them. This supported the relationship between class teacher and children and enabled a discussion to be had about how hard it was for the children when they are not able to be there.
How our thoughts impact on our behaviour	This led to one teacher sharing the thoughts, actions, feelings triangle with the children in their class this then supported behaviour management strategies. Some teachers reflected upon their own 'state' and the impact this had on both teaching and learning and children's behaviour. All teachers felt that the observations focused on the baby and how they felt and then behaved had a huge impact on both the way they talked to the children in their class and the way the children linked their feelings to their behaviour and then developed strategies with the adults to address these.
Emotional barriers to learning	The parent baby observations created a shared time to talk and think about what the children felt and believed which created better relationships with each other. It enabled discussions about how the children managed frustration, asking for help, accepting help and making mistakes. These supported the learning relationships between children and adults in the classroom.
Strengthening attunement between teacher and children. Emotional Competencies.	Due to difficulties with focus, concentration and observations the class teacher focused on teaching strategies to manage self-regulation and became more attuned to her children's needs. This in turn led to stronger relationships and ability to manage their behaviour within the classroom. Teachers felt more able to talk to children about how they were feeling and ways to support them. The focus on emotional literacy seemed to give the adults permission to talk to the children as well as the children the space and language to share how they were feeling and why.
Strengthening observations & supporting reflection questioning and finding out information.	The baby observations highlighted one of the classes poorly developed questioning skills, this allowed the class teacher to teach and develop this as a way of finding information and supported children making links with what they were learning. The focus of baby observation and noticing actions and responses heightened the skills of the teachers involved in the project and so they became more aware of and attuned to the children in their classes.
Observing learning	This led one teacher to use the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) dimensions for learning to support discussions about what & how the children were learning & to make links with other areas. For all teachers the opportunities created by the baby observations and a focus on how the baby learned and the emotions they experienced supported similar conversations and reflections with the children. All teachers felt that the language of learning had flourished as a result of the project.

Case Study

The case study was taken from the original pilot project led by Alison Waterhouse with a Year 2 class at an Infant School.

The first session when the children met Baby Anna was quite magical. All the children sat in the circle and watched the interactions between Mum and baby for a minute totally enthralled. They then took turns asking questions. What did baby Anna like to eat? What did she play with? What could she do and how had she changed since she was born? All the children were completely captivated by her and were left wanting to know more. Our learning journey together had begun.

'As baby Anna sat on the rug she looked around the circle of children watching her. Her face was still. One of the children waved at her to get her to look at him. She caught the movement of his hand and turned her head. He smiled at her and said her name. She moved her hands as if to wave back and then turned to look at her Mum reaching out her hand so that it rested on her Mums leg. Her Mum verbalised what had just happened saying 'he's saying hello, he's pleased to see you. I asked the children why they thought Anna didn't wave back?' Several children put their hands up. 'I think she's a little wary, she's only just got here.' I wondered aloud about why she had looked at her mum. 'She wanted to know if it was alright to come and see me.' Stated Tom, the child who had waved at Anna. 'I think she's feeling a little worried, look she's put her hand on her Mum's leg.'

This extract shows how observant and sensitive the children could be. They were able to make links between behaviour and how someone feels. This link was then easy to expand and use within the classroom; because of our shared experience, it enabled the children to think about their own behaviour and the behaviour of others.



When baby Anna came into class she snuggled into her Mum turning her head away from the children. I asked the children what they thought her responses might be telling us? They suggested that she might be feeling cross and didn't want to be in class or that she was feeling shy. One child then suggested that she just wanted to be held by her Mum because she didn't feel very well. Anna's mum nodded and explained Anna was teething and had not had a good night waking several times. She continued to explain because of this Anna was needing her to help her more and was not as brave as she often was.

Working with the children Alison was able to point out behaviours and interactions and ask questions which encouraged the children to consider and explore how Baby Anna might feel about being with so many

children in a strange place, and what might be helping her to manage. Questions such as 'How would we know if she was struggling to manage?' enabled the children to understand that Anna's Mum provided Anna with a feeling of safety - a 'Secure Base' - which she needed in order to be open to what was happening around her. From this understanding, they were able to create a list of what they needed in class if they were to be open to their learning. After this session Alison was able to explore with the children the different ways that people use to cope with the world when they are tired or worried. She supported this work with by using the book 'Big bag of Worries' which led to the children drawing and talking about their own Worry Monsters, which they shared with each other. Another activity Alison used to support this work was the creation of a Class First Aid Box. Into this the children and adults all put strategies they used to help them when they felt worried or anxious. The box contained a range of things from cuddles to chocolate and computer games!



Alison gradually extended this work, to explore what the children felt when they were learning in the classroom, linking this with how they felt when they were given work that looked too difficult for them. Not only were the children able to talk about difficult feelings, they were able to share ways of managing them. This work extended into the emotions they experienced with learning and as a class they were able to explore how they felt when they got stuck, became frustrated or worried about a piece of work. Through the observations, Alison and the children were able to discuss and then identify the need for a physically as well as emotionally safe place for learning to happen. By watching Baby

Anna, the children were able to make links with their own needs and abilities and then put these into words.

'I like to stand and watch before I try things out.'

'I tend to have a go and see what happens.'

These were just two of the comments made by two Year 2 children after the observations and 'What I need to learn' session. It led to further conversations over the following weeks and months, when Alison was able to ask children, 'What do you need, to be able to get your work done?' or 'What do you need so that you can manage?'

This discussion led Alison and the class to explore the work around temperament and how we deal with new situations. Were they the type of person who liked to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in straight away? Did they prefer to stand back and watch what others did and then tentatively join in? Or did new things frighten them and make them want to hide? During discussions the children were able to explore how each of them dealt with new things. One of the young girls said she didn't like new things as they frightened her. A group of boys found this very interesting and tried to understand this different point of view. This then led the class to discuss ways of helping each other move to their new school. The pilot school was an infant school and so the children were all due to leave later that year. As a class, they were

able to talk about transition and what they needed to make it positive. Alison and the children fed back to the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) meetings and created the Transition Plan for the year, which the children co-produced with staff. The children decided as a class who needed the extra day's transition and how they should be paired up. They decided that for those who didn't like change it would be good to be paired with those who found it exciting as they felt that the children who worried would need the confidence of those who enjoyed change. One child also pointed out that those who liked a challenge could sometimes get into trouble and if they were paired up with someone who was a little more anxious they might not get into trouble!!

The work on temperament and the need for a safe and secure base meant that when the children got to transition they all supported each other. 'Come on I know you don't like it but I'll be there to help you and soon you'll get used to it,' was one of the comments from the boys to their more anxious friend.

Circles for Learning as a Whole School Approach.

The Whole School Project was undertaken by an Executive Head working across two rural primary schools in the South East. The Head had run the project in her previous school and had been impressed by the impact it had had on the social and emotional competencies of the children and the discussions they were able to have around their learning.

The Head chose to train all the staff from across both schools and then run the project on both sites.

The Head chose Circles for Learning as she felt the schools needed to:

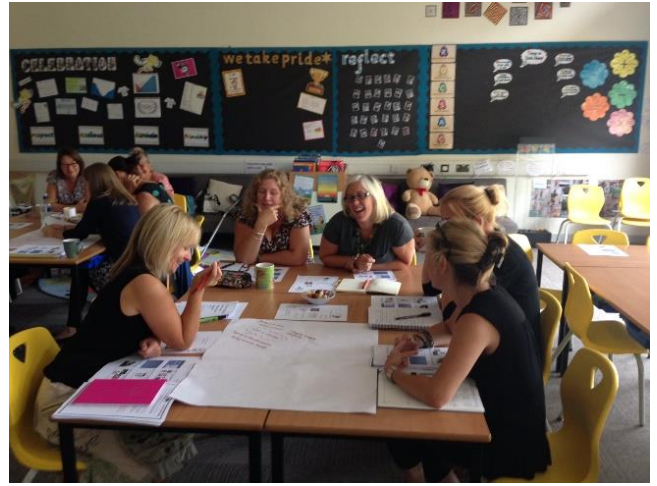
- Restore, grow and develop emotional and social well-being in the children and across the community.
- Develop shared values across the school community.
- Up-skill key staff in their understanding of barriers to learning and to develop a whole school approach to address and prevent these barriers.
- Develop a shared understanding on behaviour development; its management, and equally importantly, its prevention, by laying the fundamental emotional building blocks from early years onwards.
- To help children develop a sense of self in relation to others, strong emotional literacy and an increased ability to self-regulate.
- To support the continued development and understanding of the Peer Mediation and Restorative Practice that had been introduced previously.



- To develop and increase the knowledge and understanding of the Governors so that they had a more holistic view of children.
- To ensure safeguarding was robust and that staff, parents and pupils had the tools and strategies to address key issues in mental health and wellbeing.
- To develop a bespoke tool to help the schools explore cognition, emotions and relationships – School staff were clear that it could not be a rigid programme or a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Circles for Learning was introduced in three stages:

1. Whole staff training. This included all senior leaders, teaching staff, teaching assistants and higher level teaching assistants, individual needs assistants and 3 Governors.
2. Baseline assessment in Emotional Literacy using the Southampton Emotional Literacy Assessment for all children in KS2 across both schools. (60 children in school A and 65 children in school B 125 children altogether)
3. Introduction of the Circles for Learning project:
 - into the year 5/6 class in school A delivered by their class teacher and teaching assistant. (31 children)
 - into the small group provision in school B delivered by a higher level teaching assistant. (9 children) The children were referred by their class teachers. They were children who had been identified as vulnerable children and were making little academic progress.



Whole Staff Training Impact

Improved relationships with parents. Southampton Emotional Literacy Assessment led to termly parental questionnaire asking for feedback.

Greater awareness of barriers to learning.

Improved relationships between School and parents. Staff started became more focused on thinking about how children's behaviour helped them think about what the children needed.

Wellbeing targets introduced in pupil progress meetings

More detailed and professional conversations with outside professionals.

Staff more able to think about behaviour as a form of communication rather than a challenge to their authority, enabling them to think about what CYP needed.

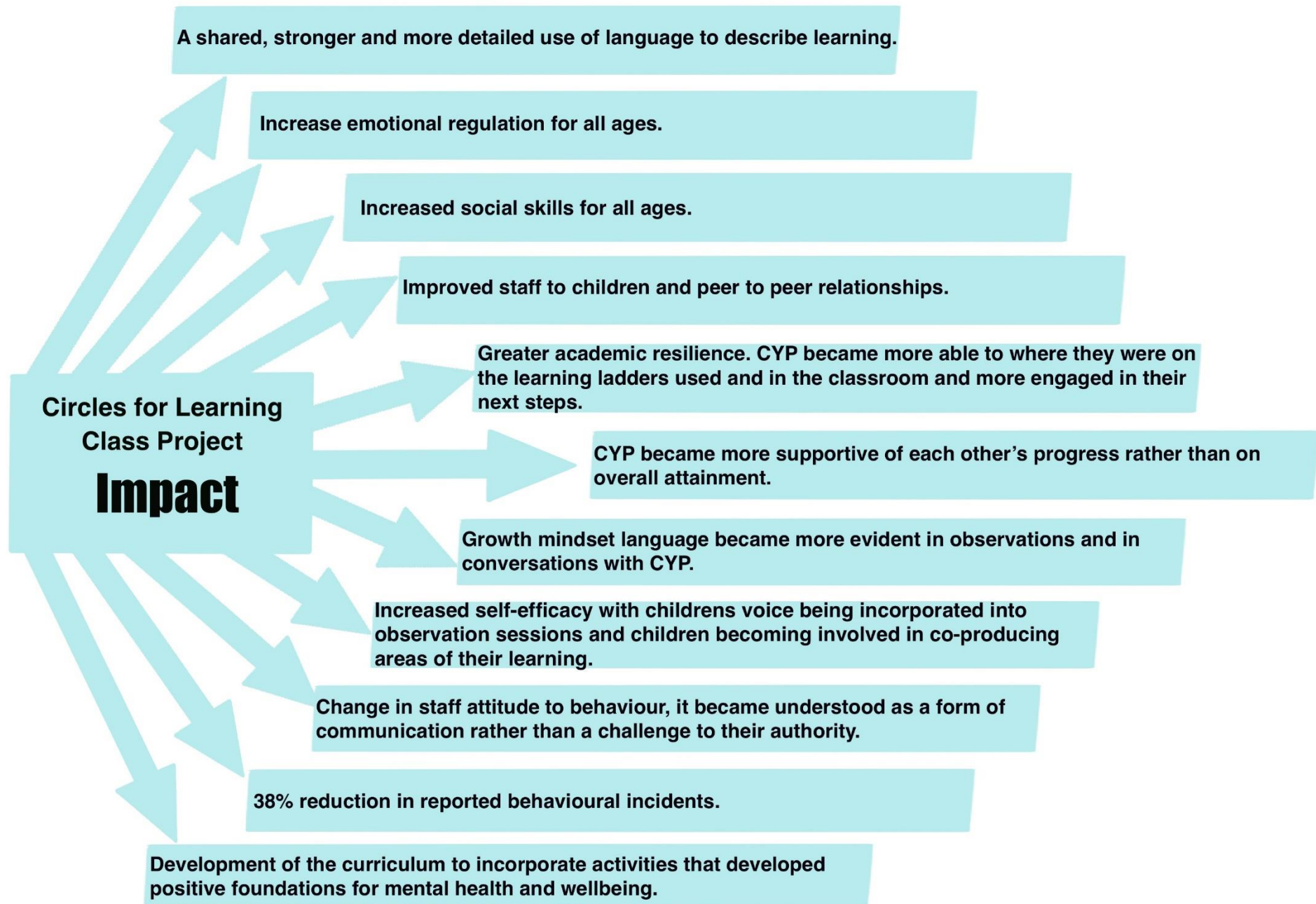
Circles for Learning resources used to extend and develop the curriculum to include focused lessons on supporting skills for MHWB

38% reduction in recorded behaviour incidents.

Lesson observations extended to include focus on emotional literacy.

Greater Governor interest and monitoring of emotional literacy, resilience and overall CYP wellbeing.

Governor interaction with CYP and staff started to have a stronger focus on Wellbeing which opened up conversations and a sense of working together



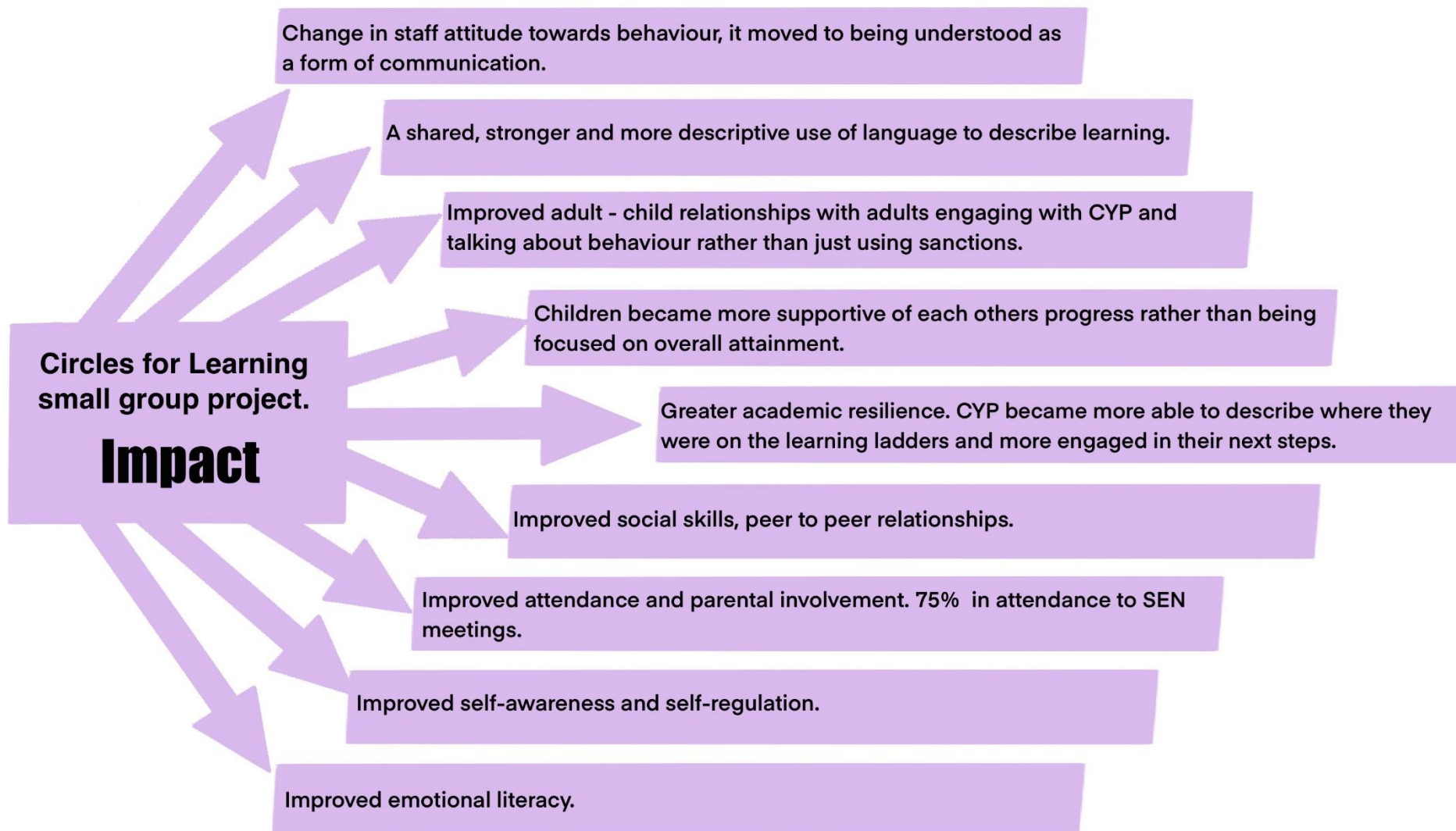


Table of Results for KS2

	Self-Awareness			Self-Regulation			Motivation			Empathy			Social Skills			Overall
	Same	Improved		Same	Improved		Same	Improved		Same	Improved		Same	Improved		
Year 3 (20 children)	40%	30%	70%	20%	60%	80%	30%	10%	40%	25%	45%	70%	25%	60%	85%	69%
Year 4 (9 children)		89%	89%		100%	100%	33%	33%	66%	66%	34%	78%	11%	66%	78%	82%
Year 3/4 (29 children)	24%	56%	80%	10%	80%	90%	31%	22%	53%	36%	38%	74%	19%	63%	82%	76%
Year 5 (21 children)	33%	62%	95%	33%	43%	76%	52%	43%	95%	48%	52%	100%	90%	10%	100%	85%
Year 6 (10 children)	40%	60%	100%	50%	40%	90%	40%	50%	90%	40%	60%	100%	70%	30%	100%	96%
Year5/6 (31 children)	36%	61%	97%	39%	42%	81%	50%	47%	97%	44%	56%	100%	80%	20%	100%	94%
KS2 (60 children)			89%			86%			75%			87%			91%	85%

Key Points

- **89% of the children who took part in the Circles for Learning Project became more self-aware.**
- **86% of children who took part in the Project showed an increase in self-regulation.**
- **87% of children who took part in the Project demonstrated greater empathy.**
- **91% of children who took part in the Circles for Learning Project showed improved social skills.**

Table of Results for Small Gorup

	Self-Awareness			Self-Regulation			Motivation			Empathy			Social Skills			Overall	
	Same	Improved		Same	Improved		Same	Improved		Same	Improved		Same	Improved			
Year 3 (4 children)		100%	100%	25%	75%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		
Year 4 (4 children)		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		
Year 5 (1 child)		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%		
KS2 (9 children)		100%			89%			100%			100%			100%			

Secondary Schools Research Project

This was undertaken as an MA in Education Research with the University of York.

The aim of the Circles for Learning project in secondary schools was to identify, explore and measure the extent to which the three strands of the Circles for Learning project, impacted on the positive mental health and wellbeing (PMHWB) of the children and young people. The project focused on three distinct areas:

1. Staff training in a range of areas that impact on PMHWB, including attachment neuroscience and learning, emotional literacy and emotional barriers to learning, social skills, learning dimensions and how understanding the brain supports managing behaviour.
2. Parent-young child observations within the classroom once a month for a year.
3. Follow-up teaching and learning sessions which have been inspired by the parent-young child observations or identified as being important to the CYP development by the teacher.

Sharing with teachers the knowledge of the importance of their role in the form of containment (Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry & Osborn., 1983), secure base (Howe, 1999; Pianta, 1998) attachment (Barrett & Trevitt, 1991; Alexander et al., 1987) and the way CYP think about themselves as learners (Watkins, 2001; Crick, Broadfoot & Claxton 2004) were key aspects of the project. It demonstrated that by



conducting training within these areas teachers were more able to understand how to extend their classroom practice, develop a range of strategies to support behaviour and vulnerable CYP and engage CYP in conversations about their learning and themselves as learners. This therefore developed a classroom environment more supportive of PMHWB.

The research chose a variety of schools to work on CfL. This enabled the impact

of the project on different group settings, within the secondary school system led by a range of practitioners.

School A was a Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) school in England for CYP aged 11-16. 8 Year 7 boys took part in the project. All CYP had an EHCP and seven had an ASC diagnosis.

School B was a larger than average non-selective school in England aged 11-18. 12 Year 9 CYP took part in the project, 3 were female and 9 were male. 7 CYP were on the SEN register.

School C was a non-selective Academy school in England. Age 11-18. 12 year 9 CYP took part in the project, 3 were female and 9 were male. 6 children were on the SEN register and 1 young person had an EHCP.

School D was a Local Authority Community Special School in England for children aged 3-19. 12 CYP took part in the project, 2 were female and 10 were male. All children had an EHCP.

School E is an all through Academy SEMH School in England for children from 4 - 16. This school withdrew in the very early stages of the project due to staff changes.

Research Questions

A mixed methods approach was used to explore the impact of the Circles for Learning (CfL) Project within a variety of secondary school environments over three terms. The design incorporated a capacity building element with three days staff training prior to the project. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected to look at the impact of the project on the five areas identified to form the foundations of Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing (PMHWB): Relationships, Emotional Literacy, Sense of self, Skills for Learning and Neuroscience and Learning. The project worked with 4 secondary schools from the UK with 44 CYP from KS3-KS5, six qualified teachers and three Teaching Assistants (TAs). All facilitators were teachers.

Staff were all trained to both introduce and deliver the project within their school environment using the Circles for Learning resources with the age range of their choice. All Lead Practitioners were trained teachers.

Assessments undertaken to measure the impact of the project on Children and Young People (CYP) included Emotional Literacy, Effective Lifelong Learning and Butler Self-image profile. Evidence from staff included semi-structured interviews which were then analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Staff feedback forms after training, Staff teaching logs and questionnaires pre and post project. A range of qualitative and quantitative data was collected pre and post project and utilised in answering the following research questions:



Does the implementation of Circles for Learning within secondary schools, including parent-baby observations once a month for a year, and follow-up teaching and learning sessions, develop:

1. a more positive sense of self?
2. stronger relationships, including adult to young person and peer to peer?
3. young people's emotional literacy?
4. a positive learning environment which is supportive of PMHWB?

All Schools Results

Table 13 All Schools Butler Self-image Profile (SIP)

		Pre-project				Mid Project - April 2018				Post-project			
Child	M/F	SI (+ve)	SI (-ve)	SD	SE	SI (+ve)	SI (-ve)	SD	SE	SI (+ve)	SI (-ve)	SD	SE
A1	M	59	14	3	28					51	14	5	8
A2	M	21	40	3	47					33	48		53
A3	M	Ass incorrect				47	33	4	29	53	39	3	36
A4		CANCELLED											
A5	M	Ass Incorrect				53	46	4	13	51	36	5	23
A6	M	Ass incorrect				57	23		16	47	30	6	44
A7	M					36	10	6	40	43	14	5	42
A8	M					28	38	4	27	15	28	1	74
A9	M					46	43	3	48	46	45	2	50
Child	M/F	SI (+ve)	SI (-ve)	SD	SE					SI (+ve)	SI (-ve)	SD	SE
B1	M	50	39	3	95					30	39	3	44
B2		6		3	6					41	22	3	30
B3	F	14	12	3	28					51	39	3	34
B4	F	12	15	2	27					64	14	2	27

B5	F	27	23	2	52					LEFT			
B6	M	23	17	3	40					35	41	3	40
B7	M	10	21	3	33					42	24	3	28
B8	M	18	6	3	24					40	33	3	38
B9	M	11	25	2	36					43	42	2	45
B10	M	6			6					LEFT			
B11	M	39	31	2	41					39	31	2	41
Child	M/F	SI (+ve)	SI (-ve)	SD	SE					SI (+ve)	SI (-ve)	SD	SE

Effective Lifelong Learning (ELLI) All schools

Dimensions	School A			School B			School C			All schools		
	Increase	Same	Decrease	Increase	Same	Decrease	Increase	Same	Decrease	Increase	Same	Decrease
Changing & Learning	6	1		6	1	1	2	2	2	14 67%	4 19%	3 14%
Strategic Awareness	5	1	1	6		2	2	2	2	13 62%	3 14%	5 24%
Resilience	3		4	4	1	3	1		5	8 38%	1 5%	12 57%
Meaning Making	5		2	4	1	3	1	3	2	10 48%	4 19%	7 33%
Creativity	5		2	5		3	4		2	14 67%		7 33%
Curiosity	4		3	5	1	2	4		2	13 62%	1 5%	7 33%
Learning Relationships	4	2	1	6	1	1	2	2	2	12 57%	5 24%	4 19%

Emotional Literacy All schools

Dimensions	School A			School B			School C					
	Increase	Same	Decrease	Increase	Same	Decrease	Increase	Same	Decrease	Increase	Same	Decrease
Self-awareness	4	1	3	3	3	4	6	4		13 46%	7 25%	7 25%
Self-regulation	5		3	4	5	1	7	3		16 57%	8 29%	4 14%
Motivation	3	1	4	3	4	3	7	3		13 46%	8 29%	7 25%
Empathy	4	2	2	4	4	2	8	2		16 57%	9 32%	2 7%
Social Skills	5	1	2	3	4	3	6	4		14 50%	9 32%	5 18%

Research Question 1: Does the implementation of Circles for Learning within secondary schools, develop a more positive sense of self?

Self-concept is the picture someone creates of themselves, it is made up of their self-image and ideal self. Self-esteem is the discrepancy between their self-image and ideal self (Rogers, 1959). For Circles for Learning, self-esteem was assessed using the Self-image Profile (SIP).



The SIP results across the schools indicated a range of differences (Table 13). School D was unable to undertake this assessment, as the language and concepts used were too difficult for the CYP to understand. The other three schools showed different profiles regarding an increase in positive sense of self, namely, 37.5% (n=3) of CYP at School A, 64% (n=7) in School B and 27% (n=3) in School C. In total from across the

3 schools able to undertake the SIP assessment a 41% increase in self-esteem was found.

The data elicited from the semi-structured interviews and IPA strongly portray the CYP's self-esteem being considerably stronger than the quantitative data suggests, with teachers observing CYP's increased ability to connect and interact with each other, better classroom dynamics, stronger student-teacher relationships and a greater ability to self-regulate and manage the classroom environment.

It is believed that the SIP assessments might have been influenced by the learning differences of the CYP. Research shows less is known about the development of self-image for CYP with different psychological and social experiences, which could impact on scores obtained. Although Thomas et al. (2011) indicate that CYP with learning differences are able to describe a variety of self-constructs when supported.

The ELLI results from across the schools highlight the development of Creativity, Strategic Awareness and Changing and Learning (Table 14). The creative end of the spectrum describes CYP who are able to 'imagine new possibilities' (Crick, 2006, p. 10) and enjoy playing with ideas. It could therefore be argued that Circles for Learning has tapped into a way of learning, which has enabled them to think differently.

Strategic Awareness describes CYP understanding themselves as learners, specifically, the ability to be more reflective, to be able to talk more easily about learning and to manage the emotions of learning better.

The Changing and Learning dimension shows an increased belief that learning itself is learnable, which shows that Circles for Learning has a positive impact on CYP's sense of academic self-concept. This demonstrates that the CYP experienced a sense of growth and development and that this could impact on life elsewhere. This was demonstrated in the CYP's ability to manage the social interaction in class better and their ability to share and discuss emotions. Maturation in this area suggests that CYP have developed a stronger positive mindset and are more open to believing that challenging situations can be overcome. This

is a key component of resilience (Rutter, 1999), who asserts that resilience is developed in encountering adversity.

The data demonstrates an increase in sense of academic self, a greater ability to discuss and manage emotions and better social interactions. These would all suggest that Circles for Learning has enabled CYP to have a stronger and more positive sense of self.

Research Question 2: Does the implementation of Circles for Learning within secondary schools develop stronger relationships, both adult to young person and peer to peer?



The development of stronger relationships in implementing Circles for Learning is demonstrated from several data sources. The ELLI Profiles show an increase of 57% (n=12) CYP in Learning Relationships (Table 14), an increase of 50% (n=14) in Social Skills, 57% (n=16) in Self-regulation and 46% (n=13) in Self-awareness (Table 15).

Discussion and thinking about social skills were initiated by the staff training, this then led Lead Practitioners (LP) to explore their thoughts and ideas on what social skills were, how they were taught and how they as practitioners, developed them within their environment. It was clear from the training that this was an area of interest. The second phase of development was the parent-young child observations, these provided a very visual and engaging way for the CYP to observe interactions and reflect on them with the support of the Lead Practitioner. The Lead Practitioner was able to act as a coach, pointing things out and asking questions, facilitating reflection and sharing of views.

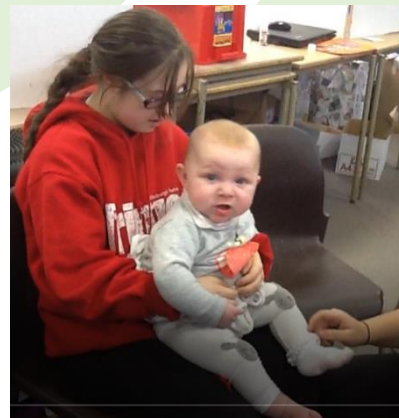
These observations and discussions enabled the LP to reflect on the CYP's abilities and support them on an individual level or through focused area. The interest, changes in practice and changes in the classroom environment can all clearly be seen to have supported the development of stronger relationships, which in turn supported better behavioural management. The results from both the qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate a strong link between Circles for Learning and the development of stronger relationships.

The training heightened my awareness of attachment and learning and emotional literacy ... It has made me more aware of CYP needs ... and why they may be responding in a particular way.

Research Question 3: Does the implementation of Circles for Learning within secondary schools develop CYP emotional literacy?

Being able to recognise and talk about how one feels and understand the feelings one experiences, are all important aspects of emotional literacy. Each of the schools developed this area in very different ways due to the needs of the CYP. Circles for Learning created a space to talk about and explore feelings and emotions. This linked with the observations where the CYP could observe, discuss and reflect on the feelings and emotions that their class-baby experienced enabled emotional literacy to become a focus.

The SELA results from across all schools show that all the areas have strengthened by at least 46% over the course of the project (Table 15). The strongest areas of improvement were self-regulation and empathy. Although it is not possible to state that the increase in scores in these areas are solely down to Circles for Learning, it is notable that the training and the project itself has had a strong impact on increasing the knowledge of the staff.



The data from Circles for Learning has demonstrated that supporting CYP understand why they respond in certain ways and coaching them to develop new strategies, relationships and prosocial skills has a positive effect on emotional literacy. The data would also suggest that by introducing such a project into the school environment it has given staff both the confidence and forum to develop emotional literacy in a very positive way.

Research Question 4: Does the implementation of Circles for Learning within secondary schools, develop a more positive learning environment which is more supportive of MHWB?

The results of the current study clearly demonstrate that Circles for Learning has supported the development of a more positive learning environment within all of the participating classrooms. It has shown that it increases the focus of relationships and the skills needed to develop and maintain these. It has highlighted the importance of emotional competencies and has given practitioners the understanding and permission to support CYP manage these. Finally, it has given a framework to exploring and discussing the skills needed to be a good learner through the use of the parent-baby observation and the use of the ELLI assessment.

Circles for Learning has developed a more positive learning environment in the classroom by:

1. Increasing the knowledge and understanding of practitioners on the importance of staff-student relationships, emotional competencies and skills for learning, and how they as practitioners can support their growth within the classroom.

2. Creating a forum for observing parent-young child interactions which clearly show relationships in action and how emotions can affect behaviour. The forum also offers the opportunity to coach CYP in social skills and interactions.
3. Creating a range of teaching resources that supports the follow-up work focused on developing positive foundations for MHWB.

Attachment for learning and emotional barriers to learning were two focus areas for the pre-project staff training. The training generated professional discussions which then had an effect within the participating schools. The teacher post-training feedback and the IPA themes, highlight a deeper understanding in areas that impact on teaching and learning and on behaviour.

The classroom environment became more thoughtful and supportive as time was made for emotions and feelings.

The parent-young child observation sessions were also seen by LPs as a time to observe the CYP's skills. These observations were then further enhanced within professional conversations with teams where a greater understanding of the CYP evolved. These professional conversations enabled reflection on individual needs and development of next steps for learning, as the following comment illustrates:

Both the increase in capacity to engage with learning and the positive effect of staff knowledge and understanding in developing stronger relationships is supported by

The project created a successful learning experience for the CYP and gave me information on those CYP which helped me support their development.

The project created an environment where CYP could be curious about a small child. ... This provoked children to remember, think about and share their own early experiences. ... Created a safe environment to discuss reflect and think about feelings and emotions.

These interactions and the observations focused on the class-baby's learning enabled the CYP to engage with and discuss their own learning. This interest in how CYP thought of themselves as learners (academic self-concept), was then developed throughout the project. This shifted the emphasis within the classrooms from a direct teaching focus, to a more collaborative focus of working with the CYP and their beliefs as the LPs stated: The use of parent-child observations enabled the special link between relationships and learning to be highlighted in a concrete way.

The class became a safer space where opinions, ideas and questions could be asked ... Children became more tolerant, accepting and able to listen to each other ... Behaviour

the data collect. This study demonstrated that Attachment Aware staff training had an impact on academic progress, professional practice, positive improvement on pupil behaviour and an impact on classroom environment that was supportive to both CYP and staff.

It is clear from both the qualitative and quantitative data that the current study has had a positive effect on both facilitating and developing a positive culture for learning within the classroom.

How did Circles for Learning impact on the Teachers and practitioners who undertook the project?

The training and the project provoked thinking and understanding about behaviour and behaviour management and about how to support the most vulnerable CYP.

The teacher's behaviour has a powerful effect on promoting children's exploration and curiosity (Engel, 2011). Acting as the Learning Guide, the class teacher was able to model asking of questions, making links between what they saw and how their class baby or parent might be feeling. The project showed that this encouraged the children and young people making them more curious, more able to explore what they were observing, ask questions, hypothesise and make links with their own development, learning and relationships.

The Circles for Learning Project demonstrated that by training teachers to facilitate parent-baby observations within a classroom, they were able to guide the CYP's observations of the parent-baby dyad and highlight areas focused on social skills, empathy and relationship development. The training and the parent child observations sessions seemed to have the effect of giving the teachers permission to meet the social emotional needs of the CYP they were working with as well as give a forum to talking and thinking about how we feel, why and how this impacts on what we do. For several teachers there was a surprise at how positively CYP responded to this. For others there was the surprise that by allowing feelings into the classroom they didn't lose teaching and learning time but actually increased the depth and breadth of what was happening in the class academically. The project clearly showed that the observations and follow-up work created a positive learning environment, including a group language around learning, positive social interactions, empathy, increased levels of emotional literacy, greater understanding of relationships and how emotions affect our learning. All of these areas were found to influence the development of positive foundations for MHWB within the classroom and have a positive effect on the teacher and CYP relationship.

I had never really thought about how to develop, or the importance of emotional literacy within my classroom.

We had Ofsted come in and they were asking what sort of stuff like extra-curricular do we do for emotional wellbeing of our students and the Teacher mentioned Circles for Learning, they were like 'that's amazing.

Introducing Alison Waterhouse: Founder of the Circles for Learning Project



Alison has had an exciting and varied career in Education over the past 30 years. She has worked as a class teacher, SENCo, Head of Inclusion, Head Teacher, Consultant and Educational Psychotherapist. She was the founding head of a Therapeutic Special school in Kent which gained an excellent reputation for managing both the academic and social and emotional needs of the children it supported. During her time as a Head Alison trained at the Tavistock and Portman Clinic in London and then The Caspari Foundation as an Educational Psychotherapist.

Alison decided to return to mainstream school in 2006 where she worked as a Teacher in Charge of the Social and Emotional Needs of the Whole School Community and Head of Inclusion before becoming an Independent Consultant for SEN and Wellbeing. Alison has also worked as an Independent Consultant for Young Minds, The Anna Freud Foundation and is an Advisor for Optimus Education advising schools on how to achieve their new Wellbeing Award.

Alison has been developing the Circles for Learning Project over the past 8 years and has had 5 books published by Routledge. The books form the Mental Health and Wellbeing Teachers Toolkit. The five books contain exciting resources for teachers in primary and secondary schools enabling them to teach and develop the five essential areas that create positive foundations for mental health and wellbeing: emotional literacy, self-awareness, the brain learning and behaviour, relationships and skills for learning.

Alison lives in East Sussex and has her own Educational Psychotherapy practice where she works with children, schools and families. She supports other school counsellors and therapists who work in schools and also undertakes supervision for Head Teachers. Alison is passionate about supporting teachers develop the skills to create a classroom culture that creates strong foundations for mental health and wellbeing and also help schools develop a whole school approach to the needs of children, staff and parents.

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Developing the 5 essential elements that create positive foundations for MHWB

