



**What are the practical curriculum connections being made between wellbeing and achievement? To what extent have curriculum innovations, eg local adaptations of Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) drawn a link between the wellbeing and achievement agendas?**

*QCA PROBE 5 FINAL REPORT*



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## Introduction

This probe is the fifth in a series designed to illustrate and explore practice surrounding curriculum development in context. On this occasion, we focus on how teachers who are planning and enacting curriculum innovations are able to effectively design curriculum experiences that promote student wellbeing as well as achievement.

For the purposes of this probe, we are defining wellbeing as a condition of existence, or state of awareness, in which children and young people's social, emotional and psychological needs are met, in order that they can become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

The following report is in five sections. In Section 1 a short description of each secondary school is followed by an overview of the school's approach to promoting students' wellbeing through curriculum development. Section 2 offers an analysis and synthesis of the effective practices across the four schools. In Section 3 we offer some conclusions based on our synthesis and explore connections with the wider research evidence, and in Section 4 we suggest some tentative implications for policy and practice. Finally, Section 5 describes our method and includes references, full case studies of the four schools and technical appendices.

## **Section 1: The schools and their approaches to promoting students' wellbeing through curriculum development**

In this section we offer a short insight into the contexts of the four case study schools and their approaches to curriculum and wellbeing. More detailed reports are included as appendices to this report.

These four schools were selected because they were known to the project team<sup>1</sup> to have a track record of promoting student wellbeing. Further detailed scoping confirmed that approaches to wellbeing were well integrated into the curriculum. By working with teachers, students and school leaders in these schools, we aimed to illustrate with detailed examples from practice the processes that underpinned the development of a range of effective curriculum experiences that attended to both wellbeing and achievement.

These schools are not, therefore, offered as being in any way representative, aside from the fact that they are in different parts of the country, serve different kinds of communities and address specific challenges to wellbeing and achievement in different ways.

### **Bottisham Village College**

Bottisham Village College<sup>2</sup> is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive school and specialist humanities college with around 1,050 students in a relatively affluent rural area to the north of Cambridge. In its last Ofsted report in September 2007, Bottisham was described as a 'good school with many outstanding features'. Its approach to the curriculum was regarded as outstanding, with 'improved attendance and positive views expressed by students with wide ranging ability and interests' supporting this judgement. The report highlighted exemplary procedures for helping students to transfer from primary to secondary school, as well as noting that Bottisham provides outstanding care, guidance and support to its students and that the relationships between students are exemplary.

Achievement in Bottisham is good and the standards are above national average: for example, in 2009, 80 per cent of students reached the five A\*–C benchmark in their exams at GCSE level, with 68 per cent reaching the target including English and mathematics.

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<sup>1</sup> The project team included Dr Colleen McLaughlin, an expert in student wellbeing in education, based in the School of Education, University of Cambridge.

<sup>2</sup> [www.bottishamvc.org/index2.php](http://www.bottishamvc.org/index2.php)

### **The school's approach to the curriculum**

Changes to the curriculum introduced in the last few years provide students with the opportunities to both enjoy their learning and achieve high results (Ofsted report, 2007). The school aims to design the curriculum from the point of view of students' experience of it and to seek young people's feedback in order to guide its development (College curriculum statement policy). Senior leaders see the purpose of curriculum development as increasing the level of choice and flexibility as Bottisham students progress from core curriculum to more specialisation. New courses and forms of accreditation, including vocational ones, have become available to the students in recent years.

The staff take an evolutionary approach to curriculum development: building on existing strengths and at the same time introducing, for example, combined courses and cross-curricular approaches as an alternative way of delivering selected aspects of the curriculum. Personalisation is another important principle of curriculum development in Bottisham.

### **The school's approach to wellbeing**

Developing wellbeing (for both staff and students) is part of the college improvement plan and is one of three priorities chosen by staff, governors and students. Designing curriculum experiences that create a positive learning environment and establish good relationships are seen as critical factors in students' wellbeing and achievement.

The school's approach is guided by research suggesting that 'a "relationship-driven" approach to teaching will enable curriculum demands to be met without sacrificing relationships if teachers view relationship building as a complement to academic performance rather than as a competitor with academic goals' (Vitto, 2003).

Through practitioner enquiry the staff identified teacher behaviours that from students' perspectives help to develop positive teacher–student relationships. They identified as important:

- a friendly and flexible approach, for example using a tone of voice that signals care and interest
- enthusiastic and engaging lesson delivery, for example using attentive body language
- noticing talent and achievement, for example valuing and developing students' spoken contributions



- personal interactions, for example offering constructive assertive, good humoured and positive comments
- effective classroom management, for example praising students to help them feel successful.

In addition to the relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning, there is a culture of students helping each other through programmes and structures such as students as leaders, buddies and mentors. Some departments have made peer relations an explicit learning objective and implemented strategies designed to improve them, for example teachers talk about positive interactions, model them and praise students for working well with their peers.

### **Caludon Castle School**

Caludon Castle School, a business and enterprise school and leadership specialist<sup>3</sup> is a large 11–18 mixed comprehensive school in Coventry with over 1,500 students on the roll. Students come to Caludon Castle from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds, although the number of students entitled to free school meals (9 per cent) is slightly lower than the national average. A recent (2008) Ofsted report described Caludon Castle as an outstanding school, noting that ‘Achievement is good and frequently exceptionally good, and improving because the school makes a point of providing a very high level of care, support and academic guidance for all pupils and students’. The report highlighted excellent relationships between the staff and the students, exemplified by a quote from one of the parents: ‘Staff have taken the time and effort to get to know my child as an individual’.

The school’s examination results at GCSE level have improved steadily over the past four years with the 2008 figure for 5+ A\*–C passes standing at over 75 per cent, and in 2009 at 92 per cent, which is above the local authority and national results. The school’s contextual value added score is high, placing it within the 14th percentile of schools in the country.

In its vision statement Caludon Castle declares that it aims to ‘create an innovative learning environment which promotes high standards, celebrates excellence and personal achievement and encourages mutual respect.’

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<sup>3</sup> [mail.ns-venus.com/~caludonc/index.html/](http://mail.ns-venus.com/~caludonc/index.html/).

### **The school's approach to the curriculum**

Since 2007 the school has been developing a cross-curricular programme, 'building learning power'<sup>4</sup> (BLP), based on the work of Professor Guy Claxton (Claxton, 2002), aimed at helping Caludon students to become independent learners. In years 7 and 8 all students receive two BLP lessons each week.

Schemes for learning, developed by the BLP team, are mainly project based and cross-curricular. For example, the 'power of image' scheme of learning links such areas of curriculum as English, art, history, drama and ICT. BLP lessons are designed to allow students to work across the curriculum; to become familiar with Claxton's concept of 'learning power'; to become immersed in an explicit 'language of learning' and to develop their skills around four Rs: reciprocity, reflectiveness, resourcefulness and resilience. BLP skills are further developed in traditional subject settings (mathematics, English, drama, art, ICT, etc) where teachers encourage students to transfer and apply their skills and understanding learned in BLP lessons in other contexts.

### **The school's approach to wellbeing**

Caludon Castle has developed a whole school, strategic approach to wellbeing. Alongside student support systems such as anti-bullying, transition and peer mentoring programmes, staff have begun to blend the established BLP programme (many aspects of which, for example resilience and reciprocity, directly relate to students' wellbeing and develop their wellbeing related skills) with ideas and activities based on the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), to promote and strengthen a wellbeing agenda. Practice aimed at enhancing students' wellbeing includes:

- highlighting resilience, reciprocity and emotional intelligence in the school improvement plan
- creating a wellbeing focus for lessons in addition to the learning objectives
- promoting learning strategies based on group work

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<sup>4</sup> Building learning power is a commercially-produced programme of activities and resources, based on research and development work led by Professor Guy Claxton. It is designed to engage students more actively in their own learning. BLP has at its heart four Rs: resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity; skills and attributes that are developed through programme activities.

- establishing peer mentors, mediators, student voice groups and other forms of peer-to-peer support
- creating a physical climate that supports wellbeing around the school, such as poster displays
- building on primary school experiences of SEAL.

## **Chantry High School**

Chantry High School<sup>5</sup> is an 11–18 mixed comprehensive school and specialist humanities college with around 1,200 students. It is a National Challenge school, located in an area of social disadvantage in Ipswich, Suffolk. In its last Ofsted report in February 2008, Chantry was described as a 'good school with some outstanding features.' Its approach to both curriculum and personal development and wellbeing were regarded as outstanding, highlighting 'the school's exceptionally supportive, caring and welcoming atmosphere.' The school is in wave 6 of the Building Schools for the Future programme with a new building planned for 2012–13. It is also part of the South West Ipswich and South Suffolk (SWISS) Partnership, which plans to combine member schools' sixth forms into a new 16–19 centre for over 2,000 students from September 2010.

Chantry describes its aims as being:

- listen to each other more
- achieve more
- look after each other more.

These values are displayed symbolically throughout the school and provide a foundation on which the school's approach to learning, curriculum and wellbeing is based.

### **The school's approach to the curriculum**

Chantry is in the process of moving towards a four-phase 'curriculum model', which includes:

- a focus on transition and developing basic learning skills
- developing skills in context
- accreditation

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<sup>5</sup> [www.chantryhigh.co.uk/](http://www.chantryhigh.co.uk/).

- specialised learning.

The curriculum review is underpinned by the school's dual emphasis on building effective learning relationships among students and staff; and the development of a range of skills that can be applied to a number of curriculum areas. Central to this is the school's overhaul of the year 7 curriculum, begun in September 2008, which involves embedding personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) into the planning and delivery of all aspects and schemes of work of the year 7 curriculum.

### **The school's approach to wellbeing**

Chantry High School does not have an explicit policy on wellbeing. However the school's emphasis on developing PLTS was closely associated with its developing interest in relational schooling<sup>6</sup>. There was a perceived need to improve relationships between students, and a traditional behaviour policy based on stricture and exclusion was considered unlikely to be appropriate or effective in the Chantry context. The focus on relationships was also associated with engaging as many stakeholders as possible and establishing a dialogue, particularly with students, to extend consultative and student voice mechanisms already in place in school.

### **Marlowe Academy**

Marlowe Academy<sup>7</sup> opened in 2005 in Ramsgate, Kent and transferred to its current site in 2006. It has around 800 students and a dual specialism in performing arts and business enterprise. According to the Ofsted report of March 2008, over half the students have a learning difficulty and the proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is well above the national average. Ofsted inspectors noted that 'warm and supportive relationships underpin the significant improvement in attitudes to learning since the academy opened.'

### **The school's approach to the curriculum**

The academy's prospectus emphasises its difference from other schools in the area, notably through its foundation on a '21st century working day' which is designed to encourage flexibility and enable students to take more responsibility for their own learning. The academy day runs from 8.30am to 5pm, divided into four two-hour learning periods and

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<sup>6</sup> Relational schooling is an approach, rooted in transactional analysis, which prioritises relationships in teaching and learning. Principally associated with Giles Barrow, an educational consultant working in England, relational schooling sometimes features in discussions about ways to promote behaviour for learning. More info available at: [www.relationalschools.com/index.html/](http://www.relationalschools.com/index.html/).

<sup>7</sup> [www.marloweacademy.co.uk/](http://www.marloweacademy.co.uk/).

students are encouraged to do homework in school. The extended lessons and school day were introduced to encourage students to engage with curriculum subjects for longer and to have opportunities to learn more deeply.

### **The school's approach to wellbeing**

The school's approach to wellbeing is centred on building strong relationships between students and school staff and among students. Staff at Marlowe perceive a need to raise aspirations among students, many of whom come from 'deprived and unsettled' backgrounds. They attempt to do this by promoting emotional literacy<sup>8</sup> among students and staff and by providing consistent support and clear boundaries for student behaviour.

Staff at Marlowe are also finding new ways to relate to students in the academy to help young people to become 'more comfortable dealing with adults in an appropriate way'. For example lining up for assembly and school bells have been abolished as a way of symbolising trust and mutual respect among students and staff.

Vulnerable students in year 7 can be referred to a 'nurture group' by their teachers and be withdrawn from some lessons to take part in sessions, led by a specialist teacher, which have a specific focus on improving their confidence as learners.

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<sup>8</sup> Emotional literacy is 'the ability to recognise, understand, handle, and appropriately express emotions'. (Sharp, 2001)

## **Section 2: Practical connections between wellbeing and achievement: emerging themes and common approaches**

In this section we explore how teachers who design effective curriculum experiences do so in ways that link wellbeing and achievement in the four case study schools, to identify common themes and activities.

### **2.1 An explicit focus on building effective learning relationships**

In all four case study schools students, teachers and school leaders were explicitly interested in the quality of the relationships that existed between them. Establishing and maintaining positive learning relationships was the focus of whole-school initiatives and teachers also explicitly considered the influence of and effects for learning relationships when designing curriculum experiences.

2.1.1. Two of the schools, Bottisham Village College and Caludon Castle, run peer mentoring schemes in which some students are offered formal support to develop the skills they need to help other students. In these schools, being a peer mentor is seen as a high-status activity and many more students apply than can be included in the formal programmes. In Bottisham, around 70 year 10 students are selected each year, of whom 35 train as buddies to year 7 and 8 students while the other half train as learning mentors. Further development opportunities are available for students who wish to continue beyond year 10 and mentors doing an especially good job are entered for the Princess of Wales mentoring award. In Caludon Castle, year 9 and 10 students are trained to mentor year 7 and 8 students. Arrangements are formal and explicit and include a contract between the mentor and the 'client' students, who are referred by their teachers to the scheme. Peer mentors work in pairs to offer each other mutual support. In these schools, specialist training and support is provided by the local authority youth service and a teacher within the school is responsible for overseeing the scheme.

Their approach and these aims grew from a need to address poor relationships and high levels of exclusions, incidences of which have since been significantly reduced. Staff received training in emotional literacy on a recent 'wellbeing day' and the school has used workforce reform to create new pastoral roles for support staff, whom students consider 'easy to contact'. Students themselves regularly take part in relationship building activities such as a year 7 camp and a year 10 skills day in which they learn alongside their teachers as peers.

In Marlowe, widespread commitment to building positive relationships is demonstrated through the appointment of an emotional quotient (EQ)<sup>9</sup> coordinator and in the attention paid to relationships in the design and management of social and learning spaces in the new school buildings. Bells to mark transitions between sessions and students lining up before entering a class are common practices that have been abolished in Marlowe. Teachers and students mix freely over lunch in a shared social space, which teachers value as a way of 'breaking down barriers'.

2.1.2. What characterises these examples is that they represent a practical investment on the part of students and staff in developing good and positive relationships within the school. In all four schools, adults and children consistently articulated beliefs and values about the importance of good relationships; showing respect for one another; taking responsibility for one's own behaviour and being sensitive to others' needs and feelings.

*'It's a mutual respect thing. We don't promote "you must respect the teacher" here. It's a given that you can't get respect if you don't give respect.'* (teacher, Marlowe Academy)

A parent in the same school noted that students 'tend to all look after one another. It doesn't matter which year group they are. It's really surprising'. (parent, Marlowe Academy)

Elsewhere, teachers spoke of 'trying to create an atmosphere in school where children feel safe and comfortable (by) building good relationships with the children. Knowing where they're coming from is very important'. (teacher, Chantry High School)

Students we spoke to welcome this kind of personal interest:

*'They say things that show they understand me. They ask about how I am and about my personal interests outside of their lesson. They listen to what we have to say by asking our opinions. They seem to value ours as much as they value their own. They talk to us with respect, like we are more mature. They smile at us in the corridor and say hello.'* (excerpt from student focus group, Bottisham Village College)

For vulnerable students in the nurture group in Marlowe Academy, their relationship with the coordinator was especially important to them:

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<sup>9</sup> Emotional quotient as in intelligence quotient. Based most recently on publications by Daniel Goleman (Goleman, 1996), EQ is suggested as a way of measuring emotional intelligence.

*'He listens more. He's really calm and can sort out problems with other teachers. He encourages you and pushes you a little bit.'* (excerpt from student focus group, Marlowe Academy)

Good relationships were perceived by teachers as being key to creating a positive learning environment and for overcoming barriers to learning, so they attended carefully to this when planning and enacting curriculum experiences. Students attending Chantry High School, for example, come from a deprived community where low expectations and low achievement have been prevalent for years. By encouraging and teaching students to listen to and look after each other and by modelling these behaviours themselves, school leaders and teachers believe they are actively promoting wellbeing by compensating for the 'lack of support' that they perceive students receive outside of school. Similarly in Marlowe Academy, teachers spoke passionately about the need to raise aspirations and to compensate for the 'deprived and unsettled' backgrounds of many students. Interestingly, both schools also actively seek to involve the wider community and, in particular, parents and carers through a range of complementary initiatives. However, their firm focus remains on engaging students in their learning and in the community of the school through effective curriculum experiences.

2.1.3 Beliefs, values and practices surrounding relationships are made explicit and visible and are enacted in a range of nationally and locally designed curriculum frameworks and physical resources used around the schools.

Where formal curricula such as SEAL or BLP (see below) are in use, related frameworks for talking and thinking about learning and relationships help teachers to collaborate and to offer a consistent approach for students. National programmes in use in the case study schools were:

**SEAL** in Marlowe Academy and Caludon Castle is a comprehensive approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and wellbeing of all who learn and work in schools. It proposes that the skills will be most effectively developed by students and staff through:

- using a whole-school approach to create the climate and conditions that implicitly promote the skills and allow these to be practised and consolidated
- direct and focused learning opportunities (during tutor time, across the curriculum, in focus groups and outside formal lessons)



- using learning and teaching approaches that support students to learn social and emotional skills and consolidate those already learnt
- continuing professional development for the whole staff of a school.<sup>10</sup>

**BLP** (in Caludon Castle) is a commercially produced programme of activities and resources, supported by training for teachers and is based on research and development work led by Professor Guy Claxton.<sup>11</sup> It is designed to engage students more actively in their own learning. BLP has at its heart four Rs: resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity that are developed through programme activities.

Schools using BLP characteristically develop a set of BLP lessons in which the skills for the four Rs are brought to the fore and the curriculum becomes the vehicle for developing the skills. They combine this with the integration of BLP skills into normal lessons, where BLP moves into the background and becomes an enabler of effective teaching and learning.

**PLTS:** Personal, learning and thinking skills (in Chantry High School) is a QCDA framework that applies to all young people aged 11–19.<sup>12</sup> What is effectively a skills curriculum is made explicit in the PLTS framework, but it is designed to be embedded in the broader curriculum offer so that skills development forms an integral part of teaching and learning in a school.

The framework comprises six groups of skills:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers
- effective participators.

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<sup>10</sup> Secondary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SSEAL) [nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/66367?uc=force\\_uj/](http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/66367?uc=force_uj/).

<sup>11</sup> Building Learning Power (BLP) website: [www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk/blp/What\\_is\\_BLP.html](http://www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk/blp/What_is_BLP.html)

<sup>12</sup> Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS): [www.qcda.gov.uk/13476.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/13476.aspx).

PLTS promote effective learning relationships by highlighting that working well in a team and participating, for example, requires students to develop specific skills and provides a curriculum for teachers to support them to do so.

Although these curriculum frameworks differ in purpose and in emphasis, what they share is a focus on the role of the student as a proactive learner within a community of learners and the specification of the skills and dispositions that s/he needs to be effective in that role. Similarly the role of the teacher in relation to learners is cast differently; they are facilitators of learning and may need to learn new skills and acquire new dispositions too:

*'The kind of relationship you get in a chalk and talk lesson is completely different to the kind of relationship you have in a lesson that encourages students to work in groups and ask questions. In the former the teacher has control over learning; in the latter students have the ownership and the teacher and students become co-learners.'* (teacher, Bottisham Village College)

Locally designed curriculum frameworks in use include Caludon Castle's curriculum, which aims to develop emotionally literate students who are able to:

- understand themselves, their strengths and how to overcome limitations
- manage their feelings and be empathetic towards their peers
- build and maintain strong relationships so fostering a team ethos
- take risks in their learning within an enterprising environment of persistence, resilience and optimism.

Elsewhere there are questionnaires and audit tools in use, for example Bottisham Village College's 'shooting stars', a self-evaluation tool for students to help them to reflect on their personal development in five key areas:

- How well do you get on with others?
- What views do you have of yourself as a student?
- How well do you capture information?
- How good is your organisation?
- Which lessons are you most interested in and why?

Marlowe's EQ base lining and evaluation tool uses five scales: intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability and general mood to derive an EQ score.

Posters and graphical images, for example setting out BLP skills or the school's values, around all the schools helped to make visible and accessible to all students and staff the commitment to building positive learning relationships and ensuring wellbeing.

It is important to note that in all four schools, the focus on relationships and skills development for improving them was embedded in and delivered through the curriculum so that effective relationships were taught in context, not abstracted and delivered in isolation from real curriculum experiences:

*'Wellbeing doesn't need to be a lesson. It needs to be an approach, a mindset. It takes willingness and awareness.'* (teacher, Marlowe Academy)

In fact all of the curriculum frameworks and tools were under almost constant review and adaptation and were being used in various combinations by teachers in the schools; 'PLTS are the bricks and SEAL is the glue' (senior leader, Chantry High School); 'we think that PLTS are the QCA equivalent of BLP' (teacher, Caludon Castle); and 'we use SEAL for resources rather than as a way of working' (teacher, Marlowe Academy).

Frameworks such as SEAL and PLTS work by holding a set of concepts and related behaviours stable so that students and teachers can learn the frameworks and associated language and protocols, and can participate and contribute with confidence within them. They are also evidence based. Teachers making local adaptations to formal frameworks and protocols might indicate a vibrant curriculum, adapting to local needs and circumstances. But it also introduces some risk in that deviating too far from the framework could result in low fidelity to the original models and weaken the connection to the evidence base that underpins them. This risk seemed to be managed in the case study schools in two ways:

- by ensuring that teachers understood enough of the rationale, principles and theory underpinning approaches, so that when they made adaptations for context they did so in ways that were less likely to diminish effectiveness
- by making such changes collaboratively and with leadership and support from specialists in the curriculum and/or the approach, and ideally both.

Embedding the development of skills in building and maintaining effective relationships, at the same time as attending to the quality of the curriculum experience, is demanding of

teachers. A technique that teachers in Caludon Castle were using to help them achieve this was derived from the BLP approaches and is called 'split-screen thinking'. To help them make sure they construct tasks and environments that stretch a specific aspect of students' learning, on one 'screen' inside their heads teachers think about how to help students grasp the content or focus of the lesson, on the other 'screen', at the same time, they are thinking about how to help students develop their skills (Claxton, 2006). In Caludon, this approach is being used to create a 'screen' for students' wellbeing and the development work required to help teachers improve their skills is undertaken in development teams and supported through co-coaching.

## **2.2 Using the distinctive features of specific areas of the curriculum to promote wellbeing**

By embedding support for students' wellbeing in the curriculum, as well as making explicit and modelling the skills and dispositions they need to develop to be successful, teachers in the case study schools created opportunities to use the characteristic features of different subject disciplines to enhance student wellbeing.

### **2.2.1 Drama: confidence and risk taking**

The nurture group in Marlowe Academy is an intensive early intervention designed to engage vulnerable year 7 students in the school. Year 7 children are identified at the beginning of the school year by senior year 7 staff and placed into the nurture group in order to integrate them into the school and build their confidence. The group is taught in a mixture of ways; as a discrete group for some subjects, and included in mainstream classes, notably mathematics, English and science, for others. Some students in the group receive additional support, for example from the school's emotional and behavioural difficulties unit. At the time of the research, the nurture group was made up of 17 students, nine girls and eight boys.

The main focus and purpose for the nurture group was to build the students' confidence. Children in the group typically started the year 'afraid of her own shadow,' and 'responding physically to challenge'. One parent described her daughter as 'an elective mute' when she joined the school. Many of the members of the group had been bullied in primary school and/or had poor attendance records.

Beginning slowly, the teacher worked with sub-groups of the nurture group students on extracts from West Side Story. The groups chose their dialogue from the script and choreographed their own movements. As a former head of drama, the teacher understood the opportunities that rehearsal offered for these children. In rehearsal, a disciplined and orderly process, the students were able safely to experiment and take risks with different

approaches and respond to and build on each other's ideas in practical ways. Mistakes happened often, without penalty, and were a celebrated part of the creative and learning processes. However, there was an outcome to work towards, which involved all of the children, although not all of them performed.

Over time, the extracts were assembled and crafted into a single performance piece. The teacher recognised the potential gains for students' confidence of a successful performance and offered to take them on a trip together to the theatre if they successfully performed to an audience outside of the group. They performed the piece for their year group and at the time of the research were rehearsing for a performance to parents of children joining the school in September 2009.

During rehearsal, the teacher's approach was encouraging and patient, but firm, allowing them to feel their way back into their roles but refusing to tolerate inattention. He reminded them of the importance of being still in dramatic performance and related this back to their previous success: 'What you got a lot of recognition for (last time) was your focus. People noticed it'. Throughout, the teacher continued to maintain order, praising students when appropriate: 'I know you can do it' and referring them back to their previous, successful performance when they lost concentration.

Their reward for completing the performance was to see a professional performance of West Side Story in Birmingham but the students identified increased confidence as the most important outcome for them. Sixteen of the 17 students in the nurture group said they felt more confident about returning to school in September and 11 said they felt more confident generally as a result of taking part in the group. The effect seems to have been greater for the boys than the girls.

### **2.2.2 PE: leadership and motivation**

Physical education offers many opportunities for promoting wellbeing but presents some challenges too. In Bottisham Village College, competition was used to promote collaboration and learning as well as respect for individual performance and achievement. We heard about older students organising inter-form competitions for younger students and, in a year 7 athletics class, we saw how every student could be assigned and supported in a role and, regardless of their own ability in a discipline, could be an effective coach offering observation and feedback to others to help improve their performance.

Students kept their own records in PE, charting progress in their achievement in each lesson. The head of department believed that it was important to remember that teachers

were 'teaching children and not teaching PE'. He highlighted the role of his staff as facilitators of learning as much as teachers and the importance of creating opportunities for students to relate to one another.

### **2.2.3 English: participation and recognition**

Dialogic learning is used in English teaching to extend students' oral contributions, leading to deeper and more detailed reflections and understanding. In Bottisham Village College, we saw how one teacher uses probe and uptake questions, and planned interactions with each student to explore themes in text. She held extended conversations with individual students asking each student a series of three or four increasingly probing questions to promote deep thinking about the theme: 'What else do we know about...? What else have they tried..? What might they think about...?'

In each case the teacher accepted the student's ideas without comment and always concluded the interaction with a positive comment – and a hanging question for the student to continue thinking about: 'Fantastic – do you think they'll be good at that?'. During the course of an hour-long lesson the teacher interacted like this with every student, stopping only to answer supplementary questions initiated by students. She asked hardly any questions of the whole class nor did she ask for hands up.

In this way the teacher was able to work on a one-to-one basis with every student at the same time as involving all the students in the class. Each student's contribution was recognised and valued by the teacher and by their peers, and students learned from one another's contributions too.

### **2.2.4 Mathematics: cooperation and resilience**

Mathematics is taught in prior attainment sets in Bottisham Village College, creating a 'bottom set' of 'low attaining students'. Their teacher believed that students in this group needed to 'feel secure and not threatened as they have low self esteem'. She helped students to value themselves as learners through a differentiated and personalised approach, for example 'some like targets to prove to themselves that they are worthwhile'.

The teacher combined group work and peer support, with an incremental increase throughout the lesson in the level of challenge in the mathematics. Tasks were easy to begin with and gradually became more difficult as the lesson progressed and the students' confidence increased. She used peer support to keep the whole class moving forward:

*'If someone has got the hang of something, I'll suggest they teach someone else how to do it. But I remind them, "don't just tell them the answer!"'*

The teacher believed that peer teaching strengthened the understanding of all the students. It also improved their relationships, because it demanded a much higher level of trust than a traditional teacher-student approach. She recognised that teachers who maintain a higher level of control over tasks and classroom interactions can make students feel secure – but they can also build dependency.

By creating an environment in which students build their skills gradually and have opportunities to support others and benefit from such support, the teacher used early success in learning basic mathematical skills and enabled students to support each other not to give up, while she steadily raised the level of challenge. The students were engaged and enjoyed it too: 'It can't be the end of the lesson already!'

What all of these examples share is that the teachers used their expert knowledge of their subject and related pedagogy to adapt curriculum experiences so that wellbeing was promoted as well as, and at the same time as, learning. This was more than just efficiency – it was synergy. Successful engagement with the curriculum; mathematics, English, drama and PE contributed to students' wellbeing – and their wellbeing made it more likely that their engagement with the curriculum would be successful.

## **2.3 Using specific teaching and learning approaches to promote wellbeing**

In each of these examples and across all the teaching we saw in the four schools, particular approaches to teaching and learning emerged which, when well executed, seemed to lend themselves to promoting effective relationships and students' wellbeing. It certainly is the case that teachers, self consciously focusing on wellbeing, selected classes for us to observe that universally used these particular approaches. They were: collaborative group work and peer support.

### **2.3.1 Collaborative group work**

Group work appeared to be planned and managed within curriculum experiences with the explicit intention of enhancing student wellbeing as well as learning.

Planning often included specific reference to wellbeing, relationships or learning skills foci as well as content outcomes for the lesson, for example identifying PLTS or SEAL criteria.

Planning also often incorporated a small amount of choice and flexibility in how tasks were tackled, for example offering alternative ways of presenting work or a choice between two activities.

Group configuration was constructed to suit the task, occasionally in friendship groups, but more often based on a mix of skills and or dispositions that were often made explicit: 'Hayley, we need your perfect circle making skills'. A characteristic in all the schools we visited was that roles in groups were often assigned, sometimes formally and specified, for example project manager or designer, and at others simply in the form of a reminder to make sure that 'everyone has a job to do'. Evaluation of group work skills was a routine part of debriefing lessons: 'We've worked like this today, how do you feel it's gone?'

Teachers used whole-class teaching to set up and/or debrief group work. In leading discussions, teachers were able to introduce range and content and support students to analyse and reflect on these through probing questions. During debriefing, they were also able to spot and capitalise on opportunities to highlight and enhance learning in relation to either range and content or skills: 'Sometimes I need to back things up with explanatory teaching'.

More interesting in this context was the way that teachers used whole-class teaching to model how students should interact with one another in their groups and some of the vocabulary they could use: 'I won't let them tease or mistreat each other, even in fun'. In a history lesson we saw the teacher create a calm and non-judgemental environment to encourage students to speak and to pay attention to each other: 'Let's be quiet now because Leanne's going to say something'.

Elsewhere we heard students reflect in lessons on how 'persistent' or 'resourceful' they had been or how well they had 'managed distractions' or 'talked about their learning'. Students told us they felt motivated by 'wanting to play their part'. By modelling language and behaviours consistently and publicly throughout the curriculum experience, teachers provided students with a method and a vocabulary for their learning relationships that they could all learn to enact and sustain. There were structures and processes, rules really, that the students could trust enough to take the risks they needed to share their ideas and questions constructively.

### **2.3.2 Peer support**

Structured interactions between students to support each other's learning were a consistent feature of the curriculum experiences in all four case study schools, and an explicit link between peer support and student wellbeing was made. This report has already featured peer mentoring programmes, student leadership and peer coaching in PE and peer teaching in mathematics.



We also encountered examples of peer assessment, both of range and content and of skills. In a history lesson, we saw groups sharing questions and answers and negotiating between them what made a good answer and why. In another history lesson, three students were assigned the task of providing 'roving peer support' during a group work session, charged with asking open questions to probe how groups were tackling key points and to encourage groups to expand on their explanations.

In one lesson, students started as a whole class reminding themselves of the skills of group work before they tackled the main task in the lesson. Three students were briefed to support the groups to practise their skills during the lesson. Their particular focus was the use of open questions to draw out ideas and build on them.

In another lesson students were coaching each other, using open questions, on their presentation skills, which they had captured on video.

All of these examples demonstrate recognition of the importance of creating opportunities for students to engage in positive learning relationships during curriculum experiences, manifest principally through structured, learning focused talk. The consistent use of open questions was especially interesting. Formulating a good open question is challenging, and learning to use open questions in coaching or mentoring a peer represents a significant learning opportunity for the coach or mentor. In one school, the evaluation of their peer-mentoring programme focused on the effects of participation for the mentors. They were found to have improved their willingness and ability to discuss emotions, to have improved self esteem, increased self awareness and to be enjoying learning more.

Students taking part in learning activities like these in the case study schools claimed to be variously more assertive, more confident, more focused and more motivated. They believed that successful interactions with their peers and teachers were key to getting to know themselves, understand what education meant for them and developing an awareness of what they might do in the future. One student mentioned the value of gaining other perspectives during learning.

Teachers recognised students' increased confidence, independence and an enhanced ability to make good decisions about their learning. Some teachers identified emerging leadership skills among older students.

## **Section 3: Conclusions in the context of other evidence about benefits to young people**

In the four case study schools we found that interventions that focused on and appeared to be successful in promoting student wellbeing, at the same time as improving student learning and achievement, shared six important features:

1. Planning positive relationships
2. Making beliefs and values explicit
3. Using tools and protocols to support interactions
4. Providing opportunities for students to develop personal and interpersonal skills
5. Professional development for staff
6. Recognising and harnessing the special features of different subjects and disciplines

### **Planning positive relationships**

Staff and students recognised that relationships between them needed to be positive in order that students could do well and feel well in school, and there were explicit and well-articulated approaches to planning and enacting the curriculum in ways that promoted positive relationships.

### **Making beliefs and values explicit**

Beliefs and values, which were modelled and expressed through teachers' practice and symbolised in physical resources and cultural protocols, emphasised:

- respect
- care for, and interest in, the individual
- sensitivity to feelings and understanding of the role of emotions in learning
- commitment to the community of the school.

### **Using tools and protocols to support interactions**

Staff and students learned to use tools and protocols to structure their interactions and to develop a vocabulary to secure shared meaning within learning relationships. Such tools and protocols helped staff and students to work and learn together effectively.

### **Providing opportunities for students to develop personal and interpersonal skills**

Staff and students recognised that there were personal skills that students could learn and continue to improve, which would help them to do well and feel well in school. Such skills related to students' ability to:

- understand and articulate their own and their peers' roles in value for, and contribution to, groups
- understand and articulate how they learn and use this understanding to adapt their learning behaviours to different contexts and purposes.

Opportunities for students to develop their relationship and learning skills were offered at three interdependent levels, through a combination of:

- whole school extra-curricular programmes such as peer mentoring
- explicit 'skills lessons'
- more integrated approaches designed to embed skills development in subject teaching.

### **Professional development for staff**

Staff and school leaders recognised that there were professional skills that teachers could learn and continue to improve, which would promote student wellbeing and achievement in school, and the development and consistent deployment of these skills were school improvement priorities. Such skills related to teachers' ability to:

- relate effectively to students as individuals
- use discussions and dialogue to build students' confidence and model good learning relationships by striking a balance between challenge and support
- plan and lead group work.

Opportunities for staff to develop their skills collaboratively were provided at three interdependent levels, through a combination of:

- whole school professional learning programmes
- specialist and co-coaching<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Along with mentoring, specialist and co-coaching are forms of collaborative professional learning often used by teachers developing their practice that are specified in the National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching,

- collaborative curriculum development and planning groups.

### **Recognising and harnessing the features of different subjects and disciplines**

Staff learned to harness the special features of different disciplines, subjects and pedagogic approaches to student wellbeing so that both wellbeing and learning were enhanced. This was achieved through a dual focus on wellbeing and achievement in planning and in assessing learning.

These six features fell into two distinct but related categories. In one category:

1. Planning positive relationships
2. Making beliefs and values explicit
3. Using tools and protocols to support interactions

, staff were focused on the quality of relationships: teacher–student and student—student. In the other category

4. Providing opportunities for students to develop personal and interpersonal skills
5. Professional development for staff
6. Recognising and harnessing the special features of different subjects and disciplines

, staff were working to develop the skills and confidence of the individual, sometimes as the explicit focus of learning, for example a curriculum experience where the content was communication skills, and sometimes by using the curriculum to explicitly model effective communication skills, for example the development of communication skills in a geography lesson. What really characterised the success of the examples in the case study schools was the sophistication with which they simultaneously pursued the development of the individual, and the development of learning relationships in balanced ways and in ways that seemed to add value to one another.

This seemed to be achieved through a ‘foreground/background’ approach where the teacher could deftly shift the emphasis of skills to the foreground while content receded temporarily into the background and vice versa. For example in Caludon Castle there were timetabled lessons in which students self-consciously focused on developing their learning skills, but we also saw examples of how those skills were explicitly called upon in history, English and science. Similarly in Marlowe Academy, students in the nurture group were on some occasions taught exercises to build their confidence and on others taught drama or design and technology in ways that were intended to build their confidence.

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which is endorsed by all the national agencies in England, including QCDA.

[www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/m/mc\\_framework.pdf](http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/m/mc_framework.pdf).

The success of this simultaneous focus on relationships and on skills can be illuminated by evidence from research. Positive relationships and individual skills were identified as related and significant factors affecting students' wellbeing and learning as long ago as 1969 by Rogers in *Freedom to learn*.<sup>14</sup>

Rogers explored two related dimensions of learning environments that he believed were critical to student wellbeing and achievement: one was the extent to which teacher–student relationships were warm and supportive and another was the extent to which teachers facilitated learning, rather than teaching by transmission. Rogers identified effective learning environments as ones in which teachers were genuine, accepting and caring, and empathic. He noticed that the learning environments created by teachers like this were also characterised by:

- more student talk
- more student problem solving
- more asking of questions
- more involvement in learning
- more physical movement
- higher levels of cognition
- more student creativity.

Rogers concluded that an effective learning environment was one that was student-focused, both in terms of the teacher's investment in building a warm and understanding emotional climate and that incorporated enquiry-based learning, peer teaching, cooperative learning and self assessment.

More recently (2003), in a major research project commissioned by Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (then DfES), Weare and Gray<sup>15</sup> summarised the general

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<sup>14</sup> Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become*. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill. See also: Carl Rogers and classroom climate: *GTC Research of the month*. Available at: [www.gtce.org.uk/teachers/rft/rogers1008/](http://www.gtce.org.uk/teachers/rft/rogers1008/).

<sup>15</sup> Weare, K., Gray, G. (2003) *What works in developing children's emotional and social wellbeing?* Research report RR456. London: Department for Education and Skills. Available at: [www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR456.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR456.pdf).

features of programmes that were successful in promoting wellbeing and achievement. They included:

- teaching behaviours and skills explicitly
- using a positive approach – focusing on positive behaviour, rather than punishing negative behaviour
- using active and participatory methods, for example group work, role plays, games, simulations and structured discussion for clarifying beliefs and values, reflecting on learners' emotions, practising assertiveness skills, and developing critical abilities
- using whole-class settings to model listening, being assertive, empathising, and resolving conflicts
- using cooperative group work
- using peer education, such as peer support work and buddying
- ensuring consistency across the school.

Peer collaboration seemed to make a particular contribution to student wellbeing and achievement in the case study schools. This is supported by the wealth of research about collaborative group work.<sup>16</sup> For example, effective collaborative group work requires teachers to design a curriculum experience that requires students to cooperate, where they are an interdependent group who need all the individuals to be successful in order that the group can succeed. Teachers in the case study schools planned collaborative tasks in detail, for example breaking them up into different roles that could then be assigned around the group. They also attended to the quality of the interactions between students, for example by establishing ground rules for speaking and listening or by providing talking frames or protocols to structure their exchanges. Earlier in this study we saw how this kind of structure and formality modelled for students ideal ways of working together and supported the development of effective learning relationships, which were key to the success of the approaches in the case study schools.

Finally, it is in many ways unsurprising that collaborative curriculum planning and development in groups or in pairs, should emerge as an important factor in developing

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<sup>16</sup> Behaviour for learning. *Engaging with research: An anthology of research based on the GTC's research for teachers (formerly Research of the month)*, pp. 17–19. Available at: [www.gtce.org.uk/networks/bfl/](http://www.gtce.org.uk/networks/bfl/).

teachers' ability to demonstrate high levels of skill in simultaneously managing multiple learning and wellbeing foci in effective curriculum experiences. Evidence synthesised in four systematic reviews<sup>17</sup> of international literature about the impact of professional development on teachers' practice and student learning have consistently found that CPD that is collaborative; sustained; involves experimentation, observation and feedback; and calls on both specialist and peer support is likely to be effective, that is, to have an impact for students as well as for participating teachers. In an earlier research probe<sup>18</sup> in this series the research team found that teachers benefiting from professional development which effectively supported curriculum innovation were most often working in groups, collaboratively planning, testing and refining curriculum experiences and resources. Such groups were often led by curriculum specialists, often advanced skills teachers or heads of department.

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<sup>17</sup> TDA summaries of EPPI reviews research into continuing professional development (CPD). Available at: [www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/e/eppi\\_research.pdf](http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/e/eppi_research.pdf), [www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/e/eppi\\_leader.pdf](http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/e/eppi_leader.pdf), [www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/e/eppi\\_policy.pdf](http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/e/eppi_policy.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> CUREE & University of Wolverhampton (2008) What are the characteristics of effective continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers undertaking curriculum development? What are teachers involved in? Who supports them, how and with what results? Coventry: CUREE. Available at: [www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/FINAL\\_Building\\_the\\_Evidence\\_Base\\_Probe\\_3\\_summary.pdf](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/FINAL_Building_the_Evidence_Base_Probe_3_summary.pdf)

## **Section 4: Implications for policy and practice**

The outcomes of this research suggest three key implications for practice:

- incorporating the development of relationships skills into curriculum design
- exploiting group work approaches that (i) effectively engage learners with the curriculum; (ii) promote their wellbeing; and (iii) are structured and sustained via the explicit teaching of group-work skills and by the disciplined use of genuinely interdependent tasks
- promoting peer support between students as a key curriculum development tool in order to harness the potential of peer support to create a positive learning environment and improve learner wellbeing and achievement.



## Section 5: Method, references and technical appendices

### Purpose and aims of the research

Within the 'building the evidence base' project<sup>19</sup> probes are designed to provide detailed analysis and understanding of the processes involved in curriculum change. Probes set out to:

- locate effective curriculum innovations with specific foci
- describe in detail their component activities and processes and their outcomes
- identify what might be significant about the context within which they take place.

By triangulating the evidence gathered across the different sites of practice and referring to the wider research evidence base, probes then explore what might make the practice effective and offer tentative suggestions about ways that QCDA could support schools and practitioners to develop effective practice of their own.

There are significant implications with this approach for how probe research projects are set up and managed. For example, the project team needs to make sure that not only does effective practice in the specified area exist, but that it will stand up to detailed scrutiny and that in-depth questioning and feedback will be welcomed by and supportive of the practitioners involved. Scoping is therefore detailed and in depth and involves, for example, documentary analysis of recent Ofsted reports and advice from specialists in the field to complement school leaders' perceptions of the security of relevant practice.

Because of the rigors of this selection process and because probes involve working in depth and detail and within a defined resource, a small number of schools, usually three or four, are involved. Obviously there is no opportunity to cast such a small group as a sample that is in any way representative of schools generally. However, we have tried to ensure a sufficiently diverse range of contexts and practices so that themes and issues emerging from the research have the potential for application elsewhere.

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<sup>19</sup> [www.qcda.gov.uk/17558.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/17558.aspx).

## **Designing a probe methodology – and some limitations to the approach**

Methods for each probe are individually tailored to suit the focus and the context of the specific research project. However, there are some underlying principles and characteristics that remain stable within an overall approach. Our methods have had to address two key challenges.

The first is that the curriculum, as conceived by the secondary curriculum reform programme, is a complex entity. The research methods therefore needed to target evidence about a wide ranging and dynamically interacting set of variables.

Secondly, secondary schools in England are currently intensely involved in policy-led curriculum and organisational reform. Researching practice in this context makes serious demands on schools' confidence in navigating their way through these reforms and exposing for scrutiny their development work. It also makes extensive practical demands on already scarce time and resources. Recruitment to the research and participation therefore had to be managed in ways that paid close attention to the impact of the research on the development of the schools, their staff and their learners.

In year 2, probes were conducted as explorations of evidence within and across several sites using a wide range of research methods. They were also 'co-constructed' in that, as well as gathering data through traditional approaches, the research team worked alongside key practitioners to support them to investigate their own and/or their colleagues' practice and learner perceptions about the effects of their interventions. Practitioner contributions to the enquiry have involved them in leading focus groups of staff and students and in gathering and analysing documentary evidence, for example school policy documents and student work. As well as helping to secure better access than an 'outside' researcher might otherwise expect, participation in the research process is helpful for managing a quite demanding (of the school) relationship and has been organised to offer a professional learning opportunity for the practitioner(s) taking part. Encouraging and modelling student participation in research was also designed into the process to build capacity in the schools and is one way of 'paying in kind' for the time and access that schools contribute to the research process.

The range of methods and resulting diverse data sets create an opportunity to understand in a short period of time the complexity of effective practice and how it plays out in context. By triangulating school leader, practitioner and student perspectives with evidence collected from policy documents and attainment data and observations gathered using video, probe

research can start to do justice to the interaction between behaviours and beliefs and espoused and actual practice.

There is a clear need to stabilise the diversity in the evidence to enable the research team to read across from one site to another to identify common themes and approaches. This has been achieved by using common methods, especially tools and protocols that have provided enough structure to enquiry processes to secure comparative data from the range of contexts. Core questions for interviews, protocols for collecting and analysing video evidence and the use of a shared set of enquiry questions, core definitions and analytic framework have been important here.

There are, of course, limitations to this approach. Evidence gathered by practitioners needed to be analysed and interpreted separately from the more traditionally collected data set. There were also opportunity costs in terms of the time. The resources invested in training and development in methods for practitioners could alternatively have been spent in observation and interviews. And with only four schools, research probes make no claims to generalisability.

Nevertheless, the probe team has managed, in this project, to assemble a wide range of interesting evidence and to infer through disciplined analysis and close working with the public knowledge base, some clues and suggestions about how effective practice works.

### **Setting up the project**

Our starting point was an exploration of the research evidence concerning wellbeing. We were guided in this by Dr Colleen McLaughlin, an expert in student wellbeing in education, who acted as a specialist adviser to our research team. Referring to the research evidence and supported by Dr McLaughlin, we identified core aspects of practice that it would be possible to explore in a multi-site, multi-methods case study. From this process we produced:

- a concept map setting out the core aspects of practice that the literature and our scoping activities indicated we should investigate
- a set of enquiry questions to guide our evidence collection and analysis processes.

Both documents are included as Appendices 1 and 2 to this report. The colour coding indicates the connections between the core aspects of practice and the enquiry questions.

Using the enquiry questions we developed a straightforward database, set up as a spreadsheet, which we used to summarise and map the evidence collected in each of the schools. Copies of all items referred to in the database were also collected and coded for inclusion on knowledge tree, the 'building the evidence base' project archive, in order to enable text-based searching and to feed into cumulative analysis between probes and between research strands during the final year of the project.

### **Selecting case study schools**

In choosing schools we looked for sites where there was both visible curriculum development and consistent attention to promoting young people's wellbeing alongside their achievement. With only four schools involved, we needed to be confident of diversity and security of practice in both aspects of the research.

We selected the long list of possible case study schools based on our knowledge about development work in relation to wellbeing and curriculum design. This included, for example, exploring papers from relevant conferences, (for example British Educational Research Association (BERA) and anti-bullying); contacting school, university and research networks or following up involvement of schools with the project specialist adviser and a number of other wellbeing-related networks and organisations. Apart from being rich and diverse in their curriculum development and wellbeing approaches, the criteria we considered for short listing our four case study schools included:

- established or developing practice of impact monitoring, data collection and attention to evidence within a school
- an interest in teacher research and enquiry
- involvement of young people in developing their learning and curriculum through a range of learner voice structures
- broad range and scope of the curriculum developments promoting students' wellbeing within a school
- potential value of the project for the school's own development.

We wanted to select a range of schools to illustrate different sizes of development in designing the curriculum for promoting wellbeing. Therefore, schools were also scoped for diversity of context, socio-economic background, Ofsted rating and attainment. Each of the short listed schools was sent a project brief, describing the project aims and scope,

explaining how it would work and what the benefits for any participating school might be. We discussed the project aims and processes with the selected schools to explore ethical issues and to ensure there was clarity with our expectations of each other. A final selection of four schools was made on the basis of these discussions.

### **Developing research instruments**

We used the outcomes of the analysis of the research studies and reports about young people's wellbeing mentioned above, to create a concept map and a framework for developing tools and instruments to support research in the four case study schools. The concept map and the enquiry questions that form the basis for the analytic framework and research instruments are attached as Appendices 1 and 2 to this report.

The framework was then used to create a simple database for accumulating and coding evidence from a range of sources, enabling us to read across to find patterns and gaps in the data. The sources of evidence we included were:

- interviews with participating teachers
- interviews with school senior and middle leaders
- student voice and perceptions data
- observation (including video) data
- school documentation relating to wellbeing and curriculum development policy and practice.

Evidence from each of the sources mentioned above was collected in all participating schools.

To ensure that evidence generated through this probe is compatible with the overall project data set, the research team has used the glossary of terms developed by the 'Building the evidence base' team at CUREE and the University of Wolverhampton during year 1 of the project. The glossary has been updated with a number of new terms relevant for this research probe, which are attached as Appendix 3.

### **Case study visits**

During the initial visit to the case study schools our researchers had a preliminary conversation with the staff about the project (its aims, methodology, how it would fit with what the schools were doing already) and established the areas of practice they would

explore further in each of the schools. Following the first visit to the schools, the researchers completed a short report for each of the case study sites which was used for the initial analysis and mapping of the data.

In each of the schools the research project was run as a co-constructed case study in which both practitioners and students were active participants in the overall enquiry. Following the initial visit, the researchers worked with the school colleagues to develop a plan for collecting the evidence which had the practitioners tackling one or two questions which were most interesting from both their personal and their school's perspective. Similarly, school practitioners and researchers discussed how to involve students in the project and which of the enquiry questions would be best answered by them. The researchers and their school colleagues had an opportunity to select from a range of possible methods, supported by relevant tools and protocols. Methods used most frequently during the enquiry included:

- semi-structured interviews with the members of school SLT and individual practitioners
- group interviews with teachers, including those to identify and discuss beliefs and values in relevant areas or to reconstruct the timeline of how a specific approach has been developed in the school
- stimulated recall using video evidence of classroom practice with audio commentary
- observations of practice
- student shadowing
- group interviews with students using 'game show' activities based on evidence gathered from teachers
- student questionnaires
- documentary analysis, for example policy and supporting documents, guidance materials, student work, lesson plans and schemes of work.

Researchers also made between three and four visits to the case study schools over the period of March–July 2009 to collect data directly. The outcomes of the visits were written up in the form of four standardised case studies, which were validated by the schools and are attached as Appendix 4 to this report.

## **Analysis**

Evidence collected through the researcher, teacher enquiry and student voice strands of the research project in each of the case study schools was coded using the glossary, the concept map and the analytic framework developed during the conceptual and definitional stages of the project.

Once the data had been entered into a spreadsheet database, common practices, issues and themes were then read across the data set. These results were then tested against the full research evidence to explore key patterns and possible explanations for how and why things worked. The results of these processes form the basis of the conclusions of this report.

A series of tentative possible implications for policy and practice were inferred from the conclusions. These have yet to be tested with policy or practitioner groups.

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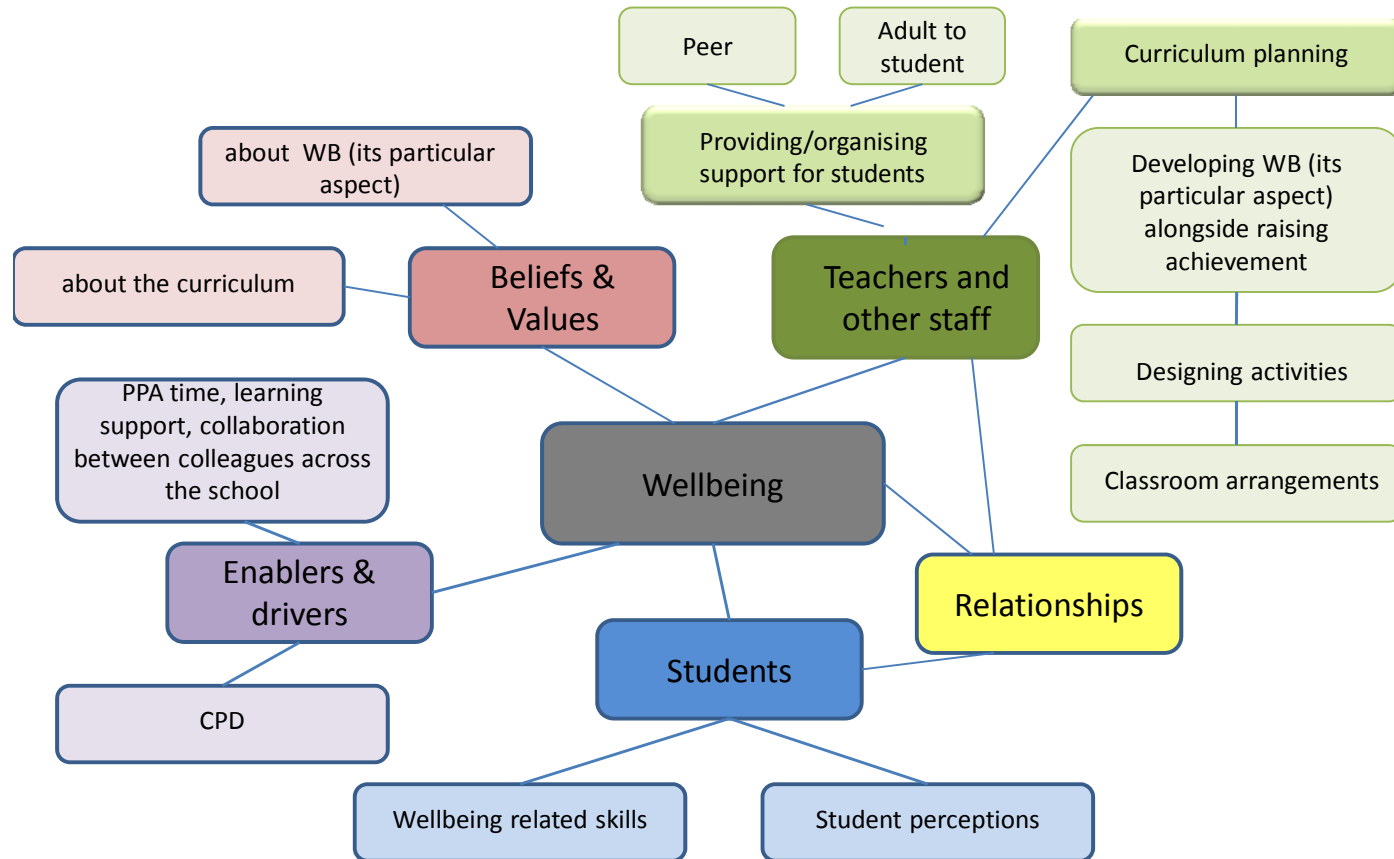
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# Appendix 1

## Concept map



## Appendix 2

### Enquiry questions

Teachers and other staff				Relationships	Students	
Curriculum planning		Providing/organising support				
Developing WB (its particular aspect) alongside raising achievement	Designing activities	Classroom arrangements	Student peer to peer	Adult to student	Peer and student to teacher	Wellbeing related skills
1 At what stage of curriculum planning do teachers consider students' wellbeing development?	5 Describe the lesson/scheme activities.	8 What did the teacher take into account when planning how the class would interact e.g. how groups were put together, how the class would be arranged etc?	12 What formal peer support exists within the school? How many students are involved?	18 What support mechanisms/structures are available to students?	23 Describe peer to peer and student to teacher relationships in the sample group of students	29 What wellbeing-related skills are the teachers trying to develop in their students?
2 How do the teachers plan for developing their students' wellbeing?	6 Describe the pedagogic approach(es) that the teacher used.	9 Describe the classroom arrangements	13 What is the training for the students providing formal peer support? What guidance do they receive and how frequently?	19 How do students access support (do they ask for it or are they offered it)?	24 How did the learning activities impact on relationships between the teacher and the students?	30 What skills did the students have before the described pedagogic approach was used? What skills do they have now? How is skill development monitored?
3 How is teaching and learning in different subject areas used to contribute different aspects of students' wellbeing?	7 How did the need to contribute to the students' WB influence the pedagogic approach(es) that the teacher decided upon for the lesson/scheme?	10 What training or preparation did the students need to be able to participate in the learning activities?	14 What are the arrangements around formal peer support?	20 What do the school staff do to identify when and what kind of support students need?	25 How did the learning activities contribute to developing positive student-to-student relationships?	31 What changes, if any, were made to the lesson/scheme plan as a result of formative assessment?
4 What correlation do the teachers see between students' wellbeing and their achievement?		11 What guidance did the teacher provide about wellbeing throughout the lesson?	15 What practice/culture is there of students helping and supporting each other informally?	21 Who are the 'safe' adults? What is their role and training/qualifications/experience?	26 What strategies did the teacher use to manage relationships with and between students during the lesson/scheme?	32 How (if at all) is students' wellbeing and related skills assessed? Any other impact of their approach they are noticing.
			16 How do teachers encourage and develop informal peer support?	22 How supported do the students feel?	27 What explicit attention to relationships is there in lesson planning and delivering? How is it	33 Include any evidence of assessment, eg examples of student work.

Wellbeing and achievement: innovations for practical curriculum connections

		manifested?	
	17 How proactive are the students in helping and supporting each other?		28 How important do teachers/students consider relationships for young people's wellbeing?

Students	Beliefs and values		Enablers and drivers		
Student perceptions	About wellbeing (its particular aspect)	About the curriculum	CPD	PPA time, learning support, collaboration between colleagues across the school	Other
34 How do the teachers collect and consider student feedback on the development of various aspects of their WB?	40 What is the school policy on and approach to wellbeing? What explicit policy documents exist and what do they say?	44 What, if any, models or theories about curriculum exist in the school?	46 What development opportunities exist for teachers to discuss, design and plan curriculum and students' WB development collaboratively?	50 How do teachers share information about students and work collaboratively (eg different departments and Year groups) to support their students' WB?	53 Describe any significant features of the school environment that supported or inhibited the development of the lesson/scheme.
35 What are the students' views on their WB and related skills?	41 To what extent did the school policy on or approaches to wellbeing influence the design and implementation of the lesson/scheme?	45 Describe any other explicit curriculum development work that is ongoing in the school.	47 How do teachers evaluate the success of curriculum development and their approach to wellbeing? What evidence do they collect and analyse about how the changes impact on student learning?	51 What is the role of learning support assistants in designing planning, supporting and/or evaluating the lesson/scheme?	
36 What do the students think about the learning relationships and environment in each class?	42 How is the term 'wellbeing' (and its related aspects, eg 'resilience', 'emotional intelligence', etc) understood by: school leaders, teachers, students? What is the range of working definitions 'live' in the school?		48 What training and support do teachers get regarding various aspects of wellbeing (relationships, resilience, etc)? Does it relate to teachers' own wellbeing?	52 What time is made available to teachers for planning and refining lessons/schemes and resources?	
37 What do the students think about how teachers monitor and manage their learning relationships?	43 To what extent is wellbeing understood in the school as a holistic concept which includes positive relationships and resilience, as opposed to a 'fragmented' view of wellbeing as a potpourri of topics (eg obesity, teenage pregnancy, etc)?		49 How does teacher learning about curriculum fit within the overall professional development programme and/or priorities of the school?		
38 What do students understand their learning and development goals to be? Are they the same goals as those identified by the					

teacher?  
39 How successful do students think the lesson/scheme/approach is in helping them be well and develop wellbeing-related skills?

## Appendix 3

### Glossary (new terms)

**Curriculum:** a series of planned learning outcomes and associated learning experiences, including lessons and non-classroom based activities.

**Curriculum development:** learning experiences and outcomes specified, planned and realised in order to take account of evidence and information about effective learning processes and opportunities from elsewhere.

**Curriculum development and innovation:** learning experiences and outcomes specified, planned and realised in order to take account of evidence and information about effective learning processes and opportunities from elsewhere. Examples include thematic approach to the curriculum, flexible use of curriculum times, alternative curriculum pathways, developing pupils' learning skills.

**Resilience:** act of 'springing back'. Three fundamental components of resilience have been identified as: a sense of self-esteem and self-confidence; a belief in one's own self-efficacy and ability to deal with change and adaptation; and a repertoire of social problem-solving approaches.

**Self-efficacy:** person's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations.

**Wellbeing:** condition of existence, or state of awareness, in which physical and/or psychological needs are met.

## Appendix 4

### Individual school reports

### Wellbeing case study: Bottisham Village College

#### Methods

Three visits were made to the school between April and June 2009. During these visits interviews were held with the deputy principal (curriculum), assistant principal (pastoral), head of learning (also responsible for implementing SEAL in year 7), a number of middle leaders from different curriculum areas (head of humanities, head of PE, head of performing arts) and classroom practitioners. Various aspects of the relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning, dialogic learning and attention to students' wellbeing were observed in eight lessons (English, mathematics, science, citizenship, PE and art) and the teachers' approach to these lessons were subsequently discussed with them. The researchers had an opportunity to attend a meeting of the teaching and learning group and a meeting of the student council. A focus group interview took place with six students from years 10 and 11 to discuss their opinions about the importance of relationships and classroom climate for their motivation and success in learning and their personal development. During the length of the project the researchers were extensively supported by the school teacher research coordinator, the driving force behind the development of the relationship-driven approach to learning in Bottisham Village College, who welcomed, facilitated and coordinated the enquiry<sup>20</sup> in the school.

#### Background

Bottisham Village College is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive school and specialist humanities college with around 1,050 students in a relatively affluent rural area to the north of Cambridge. In its last Ofsted report in September 2007, Bottisham was described as a 'good school with many outstanding features'. Its approach to curriculum was regarded as outstanding, with 'improved attendance and positive views expressed by students with wide ranging ability and interests' supporting this judgement. The report highlighted exemplary procedures for helping students to transfer from primary to secondary school as well as noting that Bottisham provides outstanding care, guidance and support to its students and that the relationships between students are exemplary.

The achievement in Bottisham is good and the standards are well above national average.

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<sup>20</sup> For more information please refer to:

Ceranic, H. (2008) *SUPER pupil engagement research: A school's perspective*. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Heriot-Watt University, 3–6 September 2008.

The school has been a member of SUPER (The Schools–University Partnership for Educational Research' based at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education) since 2006.

### **The school's approach to the curriculum**

Changes to the curriculum introduced in the last few years provide students with the opportunities to both enjoy their learning and achieve high results, showing that '*Every Child Matters* is both policy and practice' (Ofsted report, 2007). The college maintains a dialogue with the students, their parents and the members of the community in order to enrich and develop young people's curriculum experiences.

Bottisham Village College prides itself in excellent extended school provision, which allows a large proportion of students to take the most of the opportunities (particularly those related to art and sport) provided by the school, otherwise unavailable in a rural area. This area of provision in Bottisham has been long recognised as exceptional (for example in 2002/03 the college was a demonstration school for the extended schools project) and the college has shared their experience with a large number of other schools.

The school aims to design the curriculum from the point of view of students' experience of it and to seek young people's feedback in order to guide its development (college curriculum statement policy). The senior leaders see the purpose of curriculum development in increasing the level of choice and flexibility as Bottisham students progress from core curriculum to more specialisation. New courses and forms of accreditation, including vocational, have become available to the students in recent years.

The staff take an evolutionary approach to curriculum development: building on existing strengths and at the same time introducing, for example, combined courses and cross-curricular approaches as an alternative way of delivering selected aspects of the curriculum. Personalisation is another important principle of curriculum development in Bottisham.

### **The school's approach to wellbeing**

Developing wellbeing approaches (for both staff and students) is part of the college improvement plan and is one of three priorities chosen by staff, governors and students. Positive learning environment and relationships are seen as crucial factors of students' wellbeing as well as their learning.

In developing the relationship-driven approach to learning in Bottisham, the staff are guided by Vitto's vision that 'a "relationship-driven" approach to teaching will enable curriculum demands to be met without sacrificing relationships if teachers view relationship building as



a complement to academic performance rather than as a competitor with academic goals' (Vitto, 2003). A survey completed by year 8 and year 10 students in Bottisham in December 2006 revealed that students placed a great emphasis on teacher–student relationships and yet many of them (around 25%) did not think that their teachers were interested in them as individuals. This prompted further enquiry around creating positive learning relationships in Bottisham to increase students' motivation and the sense of belonging. The enquiry project was led by the teacher research coordinator with support from the teaching and learning group and the school senior leadership team. Through student interviews the teacher research coordinator identified teacher behaviours that from the students' perspective help to develop positive teacher–student relationships: friendly and flexible approach, enthusiastic and engaging lesson delivery, noticing talent and achievement, personal interactions and effective classroom management. In practice this is reflected via, for example, tone of voice demonstrating care and interest in individuals; enthusiastic and attentive body language; students' responses are valued and developed; plentiful interactions and one-to-one support; good knowledge of students; constructive, assertive, good-humoured and positive comments; and praising students to help them feel successful.

In addition to the relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning, the college works on embedding a culture of students helping each other through programmes and structures such as students as leaders in PE, buddying and mentoring. Some departments have made peer relations an explicit learning objective and implemented strategies designed to improve them, for example teachers talk about positive interactions, model them and praise students for working well with their peers.

### **What does the school hope to achieve?**

The data from the initial phases of the enquiry project had made the school recognise the importance of students' feelings and emotions as well as sound teaching strategies and approaches in achieving positive outcomes for young people. The school aims at creating 'an enjoyable and productive learning environment in which learning can flourish in order to fulfil ... maximum potential'. The code of conduct emphasises a need for mutual respect and the main purpose – that of teaching and learning. The staff believe that to be motivated and engaged in learning, students need to have positive relationships with their teachers and the sense of belonging.

Some teachers, particularly those working with lower ability students, approach building up their students' confidence and self-esteem as a priority. For example, a mathematics teacher of a bottom set felt that she was 'good at making the students feel secure and not threatened as they have low self-esteem'. She helped the students value themselves as learners: 'Some

like targets to prove to themselves that they are worthwhile. I won't let them mistreat or tease each other, not even in fun. It can take a long time to gain the students' trust'.

Aiming to equip its students with 'the skills and attitude to make a valued contribution to the life of the wider community' (code of conduct), the teachers place a lot of emphasis on students having responsibility, taking decisions, showing respect for each other's performance.

Special attention is paid to building a rapport with year 7 students who are used to a different type of relationship when they come to secondary school. For year 7, SEAL is used as a vehicle of promoting students' personal development and wellbeing.

## **How does it work?**

### **Relationship-driven approach to learning**

Having collected the student voice data during the first phase of the enquiry about introducing the relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning, the teacher research coordinator embarked on engaging her colleagues in the project. She ran a whole-staff meeting that resulted in a number of colleagues joining the enquiry group alongside the teaching and learning group. Together these core colleagues reflected on and discussed the theoretical ideas around the approach and conducted peer observations to identify effective teacher–student interactions in different subjects and with students of different age and ability. The teacher research coordinator then analysed the observation data and developed a summary of the key characteristics of the relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning. These are exemplified here with the observation notes the researchers made during their three visits to the school.

Pace and organisation allows for plentiful interactions including lots of one-to-one support, for example:

The teachers' questioning was conversational in style. They frequently asked probe and uptake questions to develop individual students' ideas and were non-judgemental. Students typically gave extended responses. Teachers used attentive body language such as good eye contact that demonstrated care and interest in the students as individuals. The following interaction was recorded in a citizenship lesson when the class was asked to consider a scenario in which a young man called Callum was dismissed from his job.

Teacher: What do we think about Callum?

Student: He's not a very nice person.

Teacher: Why not?

Student: He's stupid. He asks stupid questions and makes assumptions.

Teacher: What is Michelle trying to get over to him?

Student: That you can't be late.

Teacher: Anyone disagree that Callum is not getting it right? Has the manager reacted sensibly?

Interactions show good knowledge of the students – they are tailored accordingly and are directed at potentially disengaged students as a pre-emptive means of keeping the whole class positive and on-task, for example:

Teacher: Who was asking if we could overlap two times tables? It would be nice if you can tell me why you've chosen to put the particular times tables together.

Most time is spent praising and giving specific instructions to help students to feel successful, for example:

Mathematics teacher: OK – this brown tray is to collect all your **lovely** designs in.

Mathematics teacher (holding up a test paper booklet to a bottom set group): I thought it looked cute and neat and a nice colour – nice and friendly!

Comments are constructive, assertive, good-humoured and positive in tone, for example:

Mathematics teacher: That was brave to do such a big circle Oscar. How did you use your protractor on such a big circle?' Science teacher: Have a seat please Sam! (said really nicely/not sarcastically to the student who was wandering around when he was meant to be sitting down).

Language is professional and enthusiastic which raises expectations of behaviour and achievement, for example:

Teacher of bottom set mathematics group: There are some really hard questions if you want to be stretched. If you don't get to the end it doesn't matter. If you get to the staples in the middle, I'll be really pleased. If you get further than that, that will be fantastic!

Science teacher: Alice, do you mind if I put your bags on the floor?

The time given to support students, and attentive body language and tone used, demonstrates care and interest in them as individuals, for example:

Teacher: Year 7, I know it feels like I keep stopping you, but I need your attention one more time

Teacher: Anyone like to carry on with this work next Thursday? Anyone definitely not want to carry on because I can easily organise something different.

Student: This compass isn't working.

Teacher: What seems to be the problem? Would you like to try these? (passes a box of compasses).

Students' responses are valued and developed, for example:

The teachers used a student-centred approach that encouraged the students' active participation throughout the lesson. They encouraged peer discussion, peer teaching and collaborative learning in classrooms. True dialogic learning was in evidence, with teachers asking many probe and uptake questions that encouraged extended and thoughtful answers from the students. For example, in an English lesson, students worked in informal groups of two and three to share their ideas on a given theme such as 'survival' related to the book they were studying. The teacher went round the room holding extended conversations with individual students, asking them three to four open and probing questions to promote deep thinking. For example, 'What do we know so far about survival? ... Have they tried anything? ... Have they thought about how they might survive?' .She always accepted their ideas without comment, often concluding an interaction with a positive comment, such as 'Fantastic – do you think they'll be good at it?'. The teacher clearly aimed to encourage a sustained conversation with every member of the class during the hour-long lesson. She casually chose different students to answer a question and rarely posed a question to the whole class, requiring them to put their hand up to answer. Frequently, students initiated conversations with the teacher, by asking her a question. Tasks ensured active participation by students, such as highlighting metaphors and similes on a photocopied sheet as the teacher read out the text.

### **Student mentoring**

Peer mentoring is a popular activity among students and attracts in excess of 150 year 9 students going into year 10. Peer mentoring takes place on a one-to-one basis each day during registration. A specific growth area has been peer mentoring in PE to help those

students who struggle with sports. The impact of peer mentoring on the mentors is perceived to be: increased ability to discuss emotions, raised self-esteem, enjoyment, particularly when they support year 7 students on the annual end-of-year camp, and increased self-awareness.

Students view student mentoring as having high kudos; there is a lot of competition to become a peer mentor. All peer mentors receive a day of training from the local authority secondary support service with a specific emphasis on listening skills, empathising and confidentiality. Learning mentors have additional training from the mathematics and English departments. At the end of year 10, peer mentors can decide whether to continue as buddies or go on to become prefects and support students particularly in art, music, PE and ICT. Students who do a particularly good job are entered for the Princess of Wales Mentoring Award.

### **How does the school support the development of the approach?**

As has already been indicated, the relationship-driven approach in Bottisham has been developed through collaborative research (a number of individual and department led enquiries summarised and synthesised by the teacher research coordinator and the teaching and learning group) and extensive consulting with and listening to students. The teaching and learning group meets once a term and discusses ways of sharing good practice and encouraging small-scale practitioner enquiries in Bottisham.

The regular and consistent support from the CLT made it possible to address and often overcome issues such as time, changing mindsets of sceptical colleagues regarding relationships, listening to students and shifting from authoritative to more 'partner-like' style of teaching.

### **How are the initiatives monitored?**

The school uses a range of tools, including those provided by the local authority, to monitor students' health and wellbeing, such as whether they feel safe or bullied. To monitor the impact of the relationship-driven approach to learning, the large-scale survey (similar to the one that kick-started the attention to learning relationships in Bottisham) has recently been repeated.

Student perspectives are increasingly used by the school as an assessment tool. For example, the assistant principal (curriculum) worked with four year 11 students to prepare a self-evaluation tool for students to use 'shooting stars'. It was trialled with various classes and was well received by students. The tool covers four aspects related to students and one

that is about their relationships with teachers. The tool led to enhanced student–teacher dialogue as the students sounded out their ideas with staff.

On a practical level, one of the outcomes of the enquiry into the relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning in Bottisham led by the teacher research coordinator was a simple check list-like tool that both students and teachers can use for formative assessment. For **students** it includes statements like:

- I know a teacher is interested in me when they... (some of the students' answers included: 'listen to what I have to say, and seem interested and enthusiastic'; 'make it look like they are happy to teach me'; and 'praise something I have said and show that they can relate to me').
- I know I have a good relationship with a teacher when they ...(some of the students' answers included: 'show interest me as person rather than just as a student in that lesson'; and 'create a comfortable, relaxed and stress free atmosphere – like you both want to be there to learn/teach').

A list of statements that **teachers** complete when working with the tool includes:

- I show my interest in a student by...
- I can tell a child is interested when they...
- I foster good relationships with my students by...
- I know I have a good relationship with a student when...
- I know I have a good relationship with a class when...
- Students know that I am interested in them because I...

Some monitoring occurs through teachers' performance management: teachers are asked to identify what interventions would work for individual students to help them achieve their potential, which can include improving the learning relationships with such students.

### **What is the impact?**

The SLT believes that even though it is difficult to see a direct correlation between wellbeing and achievement, students' motivation and engagement have improved as a result of the initiatives developed in the school, including student support programmes and the

relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning. The school is very happy with the improvement in attendance they have been noticing in recent years.

Interviews with year 10 students reveal very positive opinion that students hold of the approach that their teachers are developing (see later). The focus group interview which a researcher ran with the students in May 2009 highlighted that the students believed successful interactions with their peers and teachers were key to getting to know themselves, understanding what education meant for them and developing an awareness of what they might do in the future. One student emphasised the value of gaining other perspectives during learning.

### **Where next?**

The school continues to develop and promote the relationship-driven approach to teaching and learning by embedding this into the school's policy and practice. This approach is highlighted in the school's development plan and has been integrated into the monitoring systems such as faculty reviews. The teaching and learning group is focusing on personalised learning as a theme for teacher-led enquiry this year; building and sustaining productive relationships with individual students is at the heart of the school's personalised learning agenda.

### **Students' views on their teachers' relationship-driven approach**

#### ***Friendly and flexible approach***

Talking to us with respect, like we are more mature. Smiling at us in the corridor and saying 'Hello'. Involving more choice and freedom in lesson tasks. Incorporating humour and having a laugh with us every now and again; friendly banter makes the learning atmosphere more relaxed. Feeling confident enough to do silly and memorable things to help us to understand something – not taking themselves too seriously. Being happy and cheery, instead of always saying: 'This coursework is really important, it's going to affect the rest of your life'.

#### ***Enthusiastic and engaging delivery***

An enthusiastic approach helps to rejuvenate interest in the subject that I don't like or am not interested in. When teachers are confident and focused it gives us faith in them to get us good results. They provide us with a range of activities e.g. an active starter, discussion, notes, something fun at the end; when a teacher has put effort into the lesson, you want to put the effort in for them. They find out how we like to learn.

#### ***Noticing talent***

They recognise good work with personal comments and merit stickers and this makes me put more effort in with full answers. They help me to feel more certain – telling me that I am good at the subject gives me confidence. They listen to what we have to say; by asking us our opinions they seem to value ours as much as they value their own.

### ***Personal interactions***

They make it feel like you can talk to them. There's time for personal questions and one-to-one conversations. They come round to check that I understand the work and explain it to me. They say things that show that they know and understand me. Their comments show their own personal preference and interests and show that they have a life outside of teaching. They notice when I finish my work or have been absent and give me extra work to do. They ask how I am and ask about my personal interests, outside of their lesson.

### ***Effective classroom management***

They have clear control and direction but their discipline is not forced, it's more natural. They don't have lots of ridiculous rules; they let you go when you are ready at the end of the lesson. They talk to you quietly and calmly if you've done something wrong. They create a relaxed atmosphere and get all students involved. They treat students equally and fairly.

## **Wellbeing case study: Caludon Castle School, a Business and Enterprise School and Leadership Specialist**

Following the preliminary meetings and correspondence with the school leadership team, a number of visits were made to the school during the summer term 2009. During these visits interviews were held with the assistant head (SEAL), the cross-curricular leader of learning (BLP), the associate leader for SEAL, the non-teaching head of year responsible for peer mentoring and leading anti-bullying campaign in school, and classroom practitioners. Various aspects of the school's approach to curriculum development and attention to students' wellbeing were observed in 12 lessons in year 7, 8, 9 and 10 (BLP, English, history, mathematics, ICT and art), three of which were video recorded, and the teachers' approach to these lessons was subsequently discussed with them. Three BLP teachers took part in a focus group run by the researcher to make explicit their beliefs and experiences of teaching BLP and other subjects. Another focus group interview took place with nine year 7 students to discuss how they experience their curriculum and to explore their understanding of the BLP approach, their perceptions of support at school and their self-efficacy and self-esteem. An enquiry project, run by the cross-curricular leader of learning (BLP and English teacher), which aimed at evaluating the impact of teaching BLP as part of the curriculum in Caludon, provided an important source of data and enriched our findings. During the length



of the project the researchers were extensively supported by the assistant head, cross-curricular leader of learning, associate leader for SEAL and the BLP teachers, who welcomed, facilitated and coordinated the enquiry in the school.

## **Background**

Caludon Castle is a large 11–18 mixed comprehensive school in Coventry with over 1,500 students on the roll. Students come to Caludon Castle from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds, although the number of students entitled to free school meals (nine per cent) is slightly lower than the national average. A recent (2008) Ofsted report described Caludon Castle as an outstanding school, noting that ‘Achievement is good and frequently exceptionally good, and improving because the school makes a point of providing a very high level of care, support and academic guidance for all pupils and students’. The report highlighted excellent relationships between the staff and the students, exemplified by a quote from one of the parents: ‘Staff have taken the time and effort to get to know my child as an individual’.

The school’s examination results at GCSE level have improved steadily over the past four years with the 2008 figure for 5+ A\*–C passes standing at over 75 per cent, and in 2009 at 92 per cent, which is above the local authority and national results. The school’s contextual value added score is high, placing it within the 14th percentile of schools in the country.

In its vision statement Caludon Castle School declares it aims to ‘create an innovative learning environment which promotes high standards, celebrates excellence and personal achievement and encourages mutual respect’.

## **The school’s approach to the curriculum**

The school believes strongly in personalised learning based on encouraging students to develop key enterprise skills and attitudes such as decision making, promoting innovative thinking, team work and social responsibility, and wherever possible, giving students curriculum choices. For example, compacting English and mathematics into two years at key stage 3 allows for personalised learning in key stage 4: it offers students time for a second language, certificate of personal effectiveness and a short course GCSE PE at key stage 3 and for work place based, vocational and academic courses at key stage 4.

Since 2007 the school has been developing a cross-curricular programme ‘Building learning power’ (BLP), based on the work of Guy Claxton, aimed at helping Caludon students become independent learners. In years 7 and 8 all students receive two BLP lessons each week.

Schemes for learning, developed by BLP team are mainly project based and cross-curricular. For example, the 'power of image' scheme of learning links such areas of the curriculum as English, art, history, drama and ICT. By specifying the learning objectives in a 'split screen' way, the BLP lessons allow students to work across the curriculum and at the same time get familiar with the concept of 'learning power', get immersed in the 'language of learning' and develop their skills around the four Rs: reciprocity, reflectivity, resourcefulness and resilience. The BLP skills are further developed in traditional subject settings (mathematics, English, drama, art, and ICT), for example most BLP teachers use the split screen objectives technique and consistently encourage students to transfer and apply their skills and understanding. The benefits of this approach are valued by the students: 'I love BLP because it really helps me in other lessons. I've learnt how to work in a group effectively so I can learn better in every single lesson!' (a year 7 pupil, quote from the BLP booklet for parents).

### **The school's approach to wellbeing**

The school senior leadership explained how the school has developed a whole school, strategic approach to wellbeing. Alongside comprehensive student support systems existing in the school (successful anti-bullying and transition policies and practice, tutor groups and mentoring), the staff are trying to blend already the established BLP programme (many aspects of which, for example resilience and reciprocity, directly relate to students' wellbeing and develop their well-being related skills) with ideas and activities based on SEAL to promote and strengthen the wellbeing agenda. Staff are implementing strategies aimed at enhancing students' wellbeing in a number of ways including:

- highlighting resilience, reciprocity and emotional intelligence **in the school improvement plan**
- creating a **wellbeing<sup>21</sup> focus for lessons** in addition to the learning objectives ('split-screen' approach)
- promoting **learning strategies** based on group work
- establishing peer mentors, mediators, student voice groups and other forms of **peer-to-peer support**

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<sup>21</sup> For the purpose of this project students' emotional wellbeing was defined through the notions of positive relationships with peers and teachers, resilience and self-efficacy, feeling supported at school, etc.

- creating a **physical climate** that supports wellbeing around the school, such as poster displays
- **building on primary school** experiences of SEAL.

Practice aimed at building emotional literacy began in 2007/8 with an initial focus on Philosophy for Children as a means of developing students' ability to work in groups and explore a line of enquiry. This continued in 2008/9 for years 9 and 10 through small group activities in an academic mentoring system which replaced traditional tutor time. Students in year 9 follow a specific programme of study based on life choices and managing feelings around those decisions.

There is a formal peer mentoring scheme which includes a contract between the peer mentor and client pupil. Twelve year 10 and five year 9 students are volunteer peer mentors. Year 9 students mentor year 7 students, year 10 students mentor those from years 7 and 8. As part of the school's anti-bullying programme, all students have a 'credit card' which contains information about where to access the special mobile phone to report the incident or fear, the email address to use to send details and a named person to see. All the peer mentors were trained by the local authority youth service through a programme called 'peace partners'. They received 8 hours of training, which included role play. The teacher responsible for the programme, who is head of year 10, meets mentors once a week. Mentees are referred to by managers of years 7 and 8 and contracts are set up between the mentors and their clients. Peer mentoring can be short- or long-term. Peer mentoring takes place at lunchtime, and members of staff are always in the vicinity. Mentors work in pairs.

### **What does the school hope to achieve?**

The school has proposed well-being objectives for staff and students. A key aim is to develop an emotionally literate staff who have an understanding of the key areas of focus within the social and emotional aspects of learning (school improvement plan).

For students, the key objective is to develop emotionally literate students who are able to:

- understand themselves, their strengths and how to overcome limitations
- manage their feelings and be empathetic towards their peers
- build and maintain strong relationships, so fostering a team ethos, and take risks in their learning within an enterprising environment of persistence, resilience and optimism (school improvement plan)

### **How does it work?**

Year 7 students' primary school experiences of wellbeing activities have been continued and developed in Caludon in a number of ways, including:

- circle time and SEAL activities, conducted in year 7 and 8 tutorial programmes
- using 'buddies' from year 8 for vulnerable year 7 students and providing a nurture room at breaks and lunches for these students
- working with year 7 students on managing feelings and emotional literacy on a one-to-one basis.

Year 7 students are given an induction booklet. They can use it to record their experiences, for example keeping a record of how their friendships develop. The booklet also informs them about themed personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education weeks based on the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. A third element in the induction booklet is SEAL.

In year 8 students also follow a tutor group programme that aims to build up BLP and SEAL skills. The programme includes a programme called 'Active 8' which includes eight challenges such as involvement with the community, personal targets – students are presented with bronze, silver and gold awards depending on what they achieve. In year 9 there is also significant input around SEAL through small group mentoring and one-to-ones – work schemes include self-awareness, motivation and planning for the future.

The school staff try to make wellbeing related skills visible to Caludon students, whether they are delivered explicitly through programmes like SEAL and BLP, or in a more subtle way – in traditional lessons. All observed teachers used every opportunity of developing wellbeing related skills such as resilience and empathy in their students. More importantly, teachers valued their students as individuals, modelled respect and positive learning relationships and established rules to encourage young people to develop good relationships with each other. These aspects of the approach to promoting students' wellbeing developed in Caludon Castle School are illustrated in the little vignettes below, based on the researchers' observation notes.

### ***Resilience***

Caludon teachers noticed the students who got 'stuck' and experienced difficulties or frustration and in all cases discussed a way out or coping strategies either with the individual students or involved the whole class.

Year 7 English

P1 hadn't brought his book and was struggling to complete the task that involved highlighting the achievements he had made during the year.

T: You haven't got your book. How are you going to do without it? Look at me. Think! You don't really need it.

P2: I can help you.

Year 7 English

T(addressing the whole class): If you are stuck, what do you do?

P3: Ask someone else to help you!

P4: Ask each other for opinion.

(It's obvious that children are used to these questions as different subject teachers ask them on a regular basis)

Year 8 BLP

A student (very hard working and high achieving) was trying to complete a questionnaire and got frustrated because other students around him were working on other tasks and talking in groups.

P 5 (looking stressed): I can't do it! I can't even read it – it's too loud.

T: Right, you mean you can't concentrate on what you are doing? (P1 nodded). What would you like to do about it?

P5: I want it to be quiet!

T: Ok, let's try that.

T (to everybody): Listen up, we are all doing different things and need to respect each other. Could I ask everybody to be really quiet for one minute to allow people get on with what they are doing? Just one minute. Thank you.

T (still standing by the P5; waited for 30 seconds for him to relax and enjoy the silence):  
Better? Obviously, we can't prevent people from talking for long – they need to get on with their work. Now let's think, if you can't stop people from talking what can you do?

P1: Block it out.

T: Would you like to try that?

P1: Ok.

### ***Emotional literacy/intelligence/empathy***

The teachers in the observed lessons helped pupils become aware of and each other's feelings and consider these. They explicitly paid attention to how students' actions made them feel, for example:

Drama teacher (BLP lesson) to a yawning student: That made me feel very upset: I understand that you are tired but that's just rude; I'd never yawn in your face!

In a year 9 English lesson the teacher chose to encourage the students to use and develop their empathy skills as a way of understanding and analysing a poem. The students had an opportunity to articulate their own feelings and speculate how their peers felt, as well as identifying in groups of two or three how the main character felt and why in every stanza.

P1: I think he is angry here.

P2: I agree. We also need to say why he is angry.

P1: Don't know. Because District 6 got ruined?

P3: Or perhaps because it's still the same – nothing has really changed and he is angry and frustrated about it.

P3: Is he feeling... discrimination?

P4: Mm, discrimination is not really a feeling, is it? Could it be 'disappointment'?

P3: I think it's stronger than that. I would feel stronger.

### ***Teacher to pupil relationships***

Teachers show that they respect their pupils and treat them as individuals and partners. They bring humour into their lessons and are not afraid to admit their weaknesses and

mistakes. For example an English teacher, replying to a pupil who reminded that she was going to do something: 'I did say that, but I haven't done it since then. Did you notice? Thanks a lot for reminding me – I'll work on it.' In a different lesson:

P1: Miss, who is your favourite student? Just don't say 'everybody'.

T: Oh no, I love myself too much to care for anybody!

P1 (still not quite satisfied with the answer but smiling): *Miss, don't you think that's bigheaded?*

(All smiled and got back to their work)

Teachers make the point of noticing and praising not just their students' academic successes but also hard work and sustaining concentration; being good, considerate and respectful to each other; working together as a team, etc. For example, an English teacher working with year 9 students on annotating a poem emphasised: 'I know you are finding it hard, don't lose focus, I'm very impressed with how you are doing'.

When dealing with challenging behaviour, the teachers offered a pupil an opportunity to 'cool down' outside the classroom, then briefly discussed the incident with them in private, trying to encourage the pupil to take the responsibility and come up with a solution that would help them behave and 'manage their distractions' (BLP phrase frequently used by both teachers and students). In one lesson, a year 7 boy, who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), was struggling to focus on his work and was constantly disturbing and distracting others next to him. After being sent out of the classroom for 30–60 seconds, he suggested to the teacher that he would find it easier to cope if he were to sit with another (very well behaved and high achieving) boy. The teacher agreed to this solution and asked that boy to 'be in charge' of the struggling student and help him by asking questions that would guide the student in completing his work.

One of the aspects the teachers were paying special attention to was students being respectful to each other: the teachers prevented students making negative comments about each other (for example a student noticing other student's mistake and laughing at it:) or blaming their peers. These were always noticed by teachers and dealt with in a way similar to that of challenging behaviour described above. Occasionally, if a teacher thought the incident was not serious, they tried to turn it into a joke, showing to the student the funny side of their own behaviour, for example:

P1: It's not my fault! *She* confused me!

T (with irony): Oh right, let's blame everybody, shall we?

P1 smiled and visibly relaxed.

### ***Pupil to pupil relationships***

In all observed lessons the students were very good (and year 7 students were exceptionally good) at working together: they were respectful, tried to avoid controlling others, distributed roles and were trying to make sure that everybody contributed and their contribution was valued. The students asked for and offered help to each other and saw it as a major part of their learning experience. For example, during a year 7 art lesson the researcher observed a number of different interactions illustrating various aspects of peer relationships and students' group work skills. Most students were working in groups/pairs; some chose to work independently. All the students knew what they were doing. The teacher moved from one group to another, praising students, commenting and making suggestions, making connections to the previous learning and challenging students to experiment and explore further, for example 'What happens when you mix blue and green? Have a look' (they work on mixing different colours together, teacher making suggestions and the students doing the actual mixing). From time to time students exchanged comments with peers (from their or other groups), mainly either saying positive things about each others' work or offering to help. Those working together were extremely polite and constantly checked their partners' opinion about how things should be done, and occasionally dealing with 'issues'. For example:

P1 (asking for confirmation from his partner before starting the painting): So, brown legs and orange body?

P2: Yes.

Pupils sitting next to each other, but working on different projects

P3 (admiring the other group's work): I like it!

P4: Can you help me please?

A pair of boys working together on a papier mache sculpture):

P5: You just got paint on my tie!

P6: Sorry! (sounds genuinely apologetic, offers a tissue; both continue working together as if nothing had happened).



Two boys working on a computer to find and print out a picture to use for their 'hero competition': The boys agreed that they would look for U. Bolt picture for one of them first, and then a celebrity that the other boy needed for his project. While searching they briefly exchanged a few comments about U. Bolt as well as asking for each other's opinion: 'Shall we pick this one?' The boy who was waiting for his turn to search was very patient about it and eagerly helped his friend to find the most suitable pictures.

## **How does the school support the development of the approach?**

### ***Practitioners group***

A practitioners group for SEAL was set up prior to the start of the 2007/8 year with representatives from each faculty. It meets together once or twice a term to discuss school priorities and subject specific ideas for embedding SEAL. Currently a key activity is auditing the five areas of learning in SEAL across subjects. Each faculty has nominated two areas to audit and will develop lessons to address these learning areas. The practitioners group have received specific CPD in SEAL and BLP related areas and share good practice and model emotionally literate teaching within subject areas – trained teachers were paired up with untrained ones for peer working, observation and feedback. Some departments such as humanities undertook additional training.

### ***Whole-school***

SEAL and BLP began in 2007. A learning review was carried out by external consultants to identify the habits of learners in the school. The feedback from this review contributed to whole-school INSET in June 2007, in which BLP was launched with all staff. This training was followed by a refresher session and a workshop on BLP in October 2008. Further professional development on emotional literacy, effective group work and feedback from the development and research project into bullying in the classroom took place in spring 2009.

## **How are the initiatives monitored?**

The senior leaders monitor BLP and SEAL initiatives in a number of ways, including:

- audit of staff's understanding of emotional literacy
- audit of physical climate in relation to wellbeing
- interviews with staff and pupils, surveys of students' views
- feedback from peer mentors

- lesson observation
- audit of subject contributions to wellbeing
- review of SEAL's impact via the SEAL focus group.

The school's approach to wellbeing began with a thorough look at what the school curriculum already contributed. This was combined with the findings of the BLP learning review.

Knowing what departments and teachers were doing already in relation to supporting students' wellbeing enabled senior leaders and leaders of BLP and SEAL to identify gaps and to make these priorities for development. Consequently, the whole-school agreed foci for 2008/9 were: working effectively together, and getting unstuck.

For 2009/10 the proposed foci to be added are: listening to understand, and empathising with others.

The school's interest in monitoring the impact of BLP and SEAL on Caludon students is reflected in the support of recent practitioner enquiries. One of these aimed at evaluating the effects of teaching BLP (June–July 2009); another project looking at the impact of SEAL is due to start in September 2009.

## **What is the impact?**

### ***On teachers***

Observational and focus group evidence suggests that most staff understand SEAL and are following school and faculty action plans to implement the programme. Staff are increasingly aware of the impact of their own behaviour upon students and have changed their approach to disciplining students, for example no shouting, a quiet reprimand and discussion instead. Subject areas have embraced BLP/SEAL; they have completed an audit and are developing areas of challenge. Split screen teaching, in conjunction with BLP, is embedded in years 7, 8 and 10.

### ***On students***

There are a number of areas of impact on students, including:

- being able to articulate their strengths and set meaningful targets related to both learning and Personal Development and Well Being (PDWB) (reported by tutors and mentors, student focus group)

- showing increasing ability to manage their feelings and overcome challenges within an atmosphere of mutual respect (shown in student voice activities, through practitioner enquiry project and the SEAL review)
- supporting each other and are increasingly effective in group work (practitioner enquiry project, teacher feedback)
- changes in students' learning habits (shown in SEAL and BLP reviews)
- increased number of behaviour incidents being resolved before escalating into serious concerns (teacher interviews and focus group)

In lessons, observed students were polite and cooperative to each other as evidenced by their willingness to critique the work of others and in turn have their own work critiqued. In all cases there were good relationships between students and their teacher; students clearly felt very comfortable with their teachers and seemed completely at home with group-working, carrying out constructive dialogue and sharing ideas. Older students seemed to find peer-assessment helpful and enjoyable.

The school's GCSE results have increased steadily and even though the school leaders are cautious about linking the results and wellbeing strategies as there are so many variables, they believe that care, guidance and support have had a role to play in improving standards as well as other ECM outcomes.

Focus group responses (see later) by nine students suggest that there is a widespread feeling of positive self-esteem, self-efficacy and feeling supported among students at the school. For example all but one student agreed or strongly agreed with the view 'I feel that I have a number of good qualities' and all but one agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported in school'.

### **Where next?**

The teacher focus group highlighted that the school looks to develop its approach two-fold: to ensure that the best practice around BLP and SEAL is embedded at a whole school level and to continue conceptual development of the approach, particularly by mapping various complementing aspects and practices (for example BLP, SEAL, emotional intelligence), to provide rich curriculum experiences to Caludon students. The school also looks to establish consistent and effective monitoring of the development of students' personal, learning and thinking skills and their wellbeing.

**Questionnaire responses (year 7 focus group)**

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8	Student 9
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
2. At times I think I am no good at all	Disagree	Not sure	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree
6. I feel useless at times	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
7. I think that I'm a worthwhile person – at least as good as others	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Not sure
8. I wish I thought more highly of myself	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

9. I enjoy learning at my school, it makes me feel good	Not sure	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
10. I don't think I am going to do well in my exams	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
11. If I wasn't feeling well or if something was wrong I am sure my friends in school would notice	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
12. Most of my teachers always pay attention to how I feel	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Strongly agree
13. I think people in school are only interested in learning and not in me	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Not sure
14. I feel supported in school	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Strongly agree

Strongly agree
Agree
Not sure
Disagree
Strongly disagree

## **Wellbeing case study: Chantry High School, Ipswich**

### **Methods**

Three visits were made to the school between April and June 2009. During these visits interviews were held with the head teacher; deputy head teacher; learning innovation leader; assistant head (assessment); and assistant head (key stage 4). The researcher also observed a year 7 science lesson and a year 7 German lesson. The following German lesson was recorded on video by the school and the teacher's approach to these lessons was discussed with her subsequently, using the video as a stimulus for recall. In addition, a focus group interview was held with ten year 7 students (five boys and five girls), two of whom had participated in the German lessons observed.

### **Background**

Chantry High School is 11–18 mixed comprehensive school and specialist humanities college with around 1,200 students. It is a national challenge school, located in an area of social disadvantage in Ipswich, Suffolk. In its last Ofsted report in February 2008, Chantry was described as a 'good school with some outstanding features'. Its approach to both curriculum and personal development and wellbeing were regarded as outstanding, highlighting 'the school's exceptionally supportive, caring and welcoming atmosphere.' The school is in wave 6 of the Building Schools for the Future programme with a new building planned for 2012–13. It is also part of the South West Ipswich and South Suffolk (SWISS) Partnership, which plans to combine member schools' sixth forms into a new 16–19 centre for over 2,000 students from September 2010.

Chantry describes its aims are to:

- listen to each other more
- achieve more
- look after each other more.

These values are displayed symbolically throughout the school, and staff interviewed were clear that they are the foundation on which their approach to learning, curriculum and wellbeing is based.

## **The school's approach to the curriculum**

In terms of curriculum development, the school is in the process of planning what the deputy head described as a 'big shake-up of the curriculum' in 2010, prompted in part by the school's involvement in the SWISS partnership and its development of the 14–19 skills curriculum. Chantry is playing a central role in this shift. At the same time, it is moving towards a four-phase curriculum model divided as follows:

- focus on transition and developing basic learning skills
- developing skills in context
- accreditation
- specialised learning

This curriculum review is still in process but is underpinned by the school's emphasis on relational schooling and building effective learning relationships among students and staff (see below). Reference was made to releasing staff and students from the 'shackles' of the curriculum to focus on the development of a range of skills that could be applied to a number of curriculum areas. Central to this is the school's new approach to the year 7 curriculum, begun in September 2008, where PLTS have been embedded into the planning and delivery of all aspects (and schemes of work) of the year 7 curriculum. It was felt that students were benefitting in a number of ways, such as improved teamworking and empathy, and that PLTS was one of the areas where curriculum and wellbeing overlapped as the school attempted to develop a common language about learning in which 'PLTS are the bricks and SEAL is the glue' (deputy head). Large-scale professional development, in partnership with other SWISS schools, were run on PLTS for staff and year 7 students were given a number of discrete, introductory PLTS sessions through the year (see later). The sample of year 7 students interviewed in a focus group offered a range of opinions of, and attitudes towards, the school's emphasis on PLTS. One student had found them 'really boring', while another thought 'they will help later on in life.' In summary, the school was using the developments in which it was involved, notably BSF and the SWISS partnership, as opportunities to cultivate change, using students as agents of change (deputy head and learning innovation leader).

## **The school's approach to wellbeing**

Chantry High School does not have an explicit policy on wellbeing. However, as has already been indicated, the school's emphasis on developing skills such as PLTS was closely associated with its developing emphasis on relational schooling. The assistant head teacher responsible for key stage 4 has led the development of the relational schooling policy, which

is being developed in collaboration with 25 staff across the school and is explicitly integrated with the school's broad-ranging approach to SEAL and PLTS. The relational emphasis emerged in part out of a perceived need to improve relationships between students and the recognition that a traditional behaviour policy based on stricture and exclusion was neither appropriate nor effective. This emerging emphasis has already led to a large-scale reduction in the number of students being excluded and also in the kinds of incidents that previously might have led to exclusion. The assistant head underlined that the relational approach was, however, part of a much broader approach driven by the values highlighted at the beginning of this report, notably listening to and looking after each other, both of which she associated with promoting wellbeing and compensating for the lack of support in what remains a deprived community. The emphasis on relationships was also associated with engaging as many stakeholders as possible and establishing a dialogue, particularly with students, which extends the consultative and student voice mechanisms already in place in school.

One of the other visible ways in which the relational schooling approach is manifested is in the number of pastoral support staff that were created through workforce reform. All year group managers have non-teaching roles, something which students both recognised and valued: 'They don't teach lessons so if something did happen during a lesson, they'd be quite easy to contact'. In addition, the school has held a 'wellbeing day', which offered staff training on emotional literacy and runs many activities for students which are designed to promote wellbeing, including the year 7 camp and the year 10 skills day where students work alongside staff.

Asked how the relational approach worked and overlapped with the wellbeing agenda from a classroom practitioner's perspective, one teacher spoke of 'trying to create an atmosphere in school where children [...] feel safe and comfortable' and focusing on social interaction: 'building up good relationships with the children. Knowing where they're coming from is very important'.

From the student's perspective, wellbeing was about 'looking after yourself and looking after other people'. They were also positive in relating it to the school's caring environment: 'The school gives you lots of support [...] If you're having problems in your lessons, you get support. The teacher's always there to help'.

### **What does the school hope to achieve?**

The PLTS and relational schooling initiatives, along with the large-scale curriculum review, have been designed to develop a range of skills in Chantry's students, as has already been indicated. The numbers of students in school with special educational needs means that



there is a perceived need to build learning relationships and promote wellbeing through encouraging students to support and 'look after each other'. The emphasis on skills, in the form of PLTS for year 7 children and 14–19 diplomas higher in the school, is seen as a way of giving students access to the ideas, tools and techniques that they will need in the future.

For staff, the embedded use of PLTS was regarded positively. The German teacher interviewed felt that 'PLTS work allows me to be a bit more creative', allowing her to integrate cross-curricular themes with subject schemes in work, for example in getting students to discuss and design a new school uniform. the assistant head responsible for relational schooling felt that the school's promotion of learning relationships and wellbeing had as its objective: 'To improve the life chances of the community' and 'To try to get people to just think'. The conscious symbolic shift in emphasis from rules to relationships, which was felt already to have drastically reduced exclusions and improved behaviour in school, is evidence of the change in expectations and aspirations in the community that Chantry is attempting to encourage.

### **How does it work?**

Chantry is at a position where it is beginning to bring together a number of allied but distinct initiatives. The focus on both PLTS delivery and strengthening learning relationships was exemplified in the two German lessons observed and recorded. In the lessons the class worked in groups on designing a house of the future. Planning for the lessons was highly structured as the subject schemes of work also incorporated the PLTS dimension for the period – self-managers – and the cross-curricula theme – technology and media (see later). In fact, the students were able to develop and use both teamworking and self-management skills.

The lessons' learning objective was 'to use research skills and make decisions'. The students were allowed to choose their own groups of five or six because the teacher thought working with friends would facilitate the balance between self-management and teamwork necessary to complete the task. Within the groups, students negotiated the allocation of the following PLTS roles:

- quality checker
- time keeper
- facilitator
- recorder

- reporter
- resources manager.

They were given an attribute matrix to help with vocabulary and encouraged to use their research and dictionary skills to develop the description of the house, consulting with their groups but writing individual descriptions. They were encouraged to seek help and support within the group first, before approaching the teacher or (in the second lesson) language assistant. While attempting to promote independent learning and a more facilitative approach, she emphasised that 'I still have to back up my work with traditional explanatory teaching'. However, evidence from the recorded lesson showed, she felt, students 'becoming more reliant on exchanging ideas with each other [and...] supporting each other'. This had also prompted her to use the language assistant in a variety of ways to encourage the use of PLTS. In the lesson recorded, each group was asked to nominate a liaison person to consult with the language assistant on how best to improve the structure of their German sentences and develop their vocabulary, to reinforce and extend the work they had done, before feeding back to the group.

The teacher saw the lesson seen as part of continuum. Student assessments were collected using a simple grid (see later), which had multiple functions. On one level, they gave the teacher instant feedback on the lesson and prompts for adapting the follow-up lessons. After the lesson recorded, students were encouraged to explore ways of selling future homes in different ways to reflect the technology and media focus. They were allowed to select the medium they used themselves and elected to use tools such as PowerPoint and Movie Maker. However, the assessment also reflected the relational school approach in its reference to how both student and teacher were feeling at different stages of the lesson. Listening to the students in this way referred back to one of the school's foundational values and allowed teacher and students explicitly to foreground the emotional aspects of learning and wellbeing: 'You've got to be aware of what your own feelings are' (teacher).

### **How does the school support the development of the approach?**

As has already been indicated, the school has held a number of introductory PLTS sessions for both teachers and students. In fact in the lessons observed, the teacher had adapted an approach showcased in one of the SWISS partnership's collaborative training days: 'I think what I'm doing is things I'm comfortable with. And I'd seen this done on the CPD day where it was something like designing a new album'. Both the PLTS and relational schooling initiatives were being developed in the school, with support from the partnership and external experts where appropriate, through a combination of training and collaborative research.

### **How are the initiatives monitored?**

A number of parallel evaluation systems are used at Chantry, which reflect the school's sophisticated approach to planning. As already discussed, the German teacher used impressionistic, immediate feedback about the lesson alongside formal monitoring systems. Although she did not have time to collate this feedback formally, she did look through such feedback to 'try to get a bigger picture of a series of lessons' and students' responses to them and plan follow-up lessons. At a strategic level, the assistant headteacher (assessment) is working on connecting achievement data with a range of other forms of evidence collected in school to monitor its emphasis on learning relationships and, by extension, wellbeing.

In the last couple of years Chantry has undertaken surveys of students' perceptions through an annual Every Child Matters (ECM) survey, School Emotional Environment for Learning (SEEL) surveys through Antidote and the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI). The ECM survey gives student level data on a range of issues including healthy living, bullying and stress and thus can be linked to student achievement data to offer a fuller picture of a student's engagement in learning. The 2008 ECM survey was used to bring forward a range of measures including identifying disaffected students who could be supported through mentoring; identifying areas of SEAL to be addressed through the curriculum; and informing the development of the key stage 3 curriculum review.

### **What is the impact?**

In many ways, it is rather early to discuss the impact of Chantry's initiatives at a whole-school level as it is still in a period of transition. However, evidence from the surveys already referred to suggest that the improvement in behaviour indicated by the reduction in the number of exclusions is also reflected by improvements in other areas.

Comparing the 2009 ECM survey outcomes to the 2008 survey reveals that in key areas related to wellbeing the direction of travel is positive. The survey which was undertaken by the whole school and completed by 590 students found that 89 per cent of students felt they had a healthy lifestyle, representing an increase of five per cent over 2008, and 84 per cent of students usually felt happy or content (a four per cent increase). In contrast, only 65 per cent of students did not usually feel stressed or worried (also four per cent increase). Finally, reflecting the improvements in behaviour, eight per cent of students were being bullied and 32 per cent knew other students who were being bullied, both of which represented small decreases from the 2008 figures.

In terms of student feedback to the embedded introduction of PLTs, as has already been stated there was a mixed response from students, which is not surprising given the fact that they are still in their first year at the school and have had limited opportunities to put the skills into practice. The German teacher observed felt that the kinds of strategies and skills they had learned had had a positive impact: 'I think being able to discuss with a peer or in a small group gives them more confidence' and she was able to point to a recorded conversations between two students in one of the groups in which one student who was generally reticent in a whole class situation was participating and contributing effectively.

### Where next?

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that Chantry High School is still at a relatively early stage with the initiatives it has introduced to engage students and promote wellbeing. The embedded delivery of PLTS has only been in place for one year and the relational schooling approach is still being developed, both at the same time as the school is planning large-scale changes in terms of curriculum, environment and partnership to deliver the 16–19 curriculum. However, the emphasis on learning relationships and the presence of listening and looking after each other in the school's core principles suggests that wellbeing is likely to be central to its approach to curriculum review and development.

### PLTS timetable for year 7 teachers 2008/09

When	PLTS Dimension	Cross-curricula theme	Introductory day
1st half autumn	Team workers	Identity and diversity	15 September
2nd half autumn	Independent enquirers	Global awareness	5 November
1st half spring	Creative thinkers	Enterprise	6 January
2nd half spring	Reflective learners	Healthy lifestyles	26 February
1st half summer	Self-managers	Technology and media	24 April
2nd half summer	Effective participators	Community participation	2 June

### Student feedback sheets

Reproductions of two student feedback sheets from the German lessons observed.

Student A

<p>Student – OK Teacher – not OK</p>	<p>√ I'm fine. Miss is having to tell us off a bit [<i>second comment – later in lesson</i>]</p>	<p>Student – not OK Teacher – OK</p>
<p>Student – OK Teacher – OK</p>	<p>√ Work is going well and no one is shouting... yet [<i>first comment – earlier in lesson</i>]</p>	<p>Student – not OK Teacher – not OK</p>

Student B

<p>Student – OK Teacher – OK</p>	<p>√ Because the atmosphere is calm, and people are getting on with work and each other. Also, this work is enjoyable. Everyone's trying hard and were not too loud</p>	<p>Student – not OK Teacher – OK</p>
<p>Student – not OK Teacher – not OK</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>Student – not OK Teacher – OK</p>

## **Wellbeing case study: Marlowe Academy, Kent**

### **Methods**

Three visits were made to Marlowe Academy between March and June 2009. The focus of the research was the year 7 nurture group and the researcher observed two nurture group lessons: an ICT lesson during which students' views on the group were sought, and a drama lesson. During these visits, interviews were held with the EQ (emotional literacy) coordinator; the head teacher; four teachers who teach other subjects (mathematics, English, science, humanities) to students in the nurture group; staff from the unit for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties; the basic skills team leader; and the student welfare team leader. Drama rehearsals and the subsequent performance were recorded on video, along with a commentary by the EQ coordinator, and assessment data was collected. In addition, 16 nurture group students completed an online questionnaire exploring their experiences of being involved in the group and two parents of nurture group students were interviewed.

### **Background**

Marlowe Academy opened in 2005 in Ramsgate, Kent and transferred to its current site in 2006. It has around 800 students and a dual specialism in performing arts and business enterprise. According to the Ofsted inspection undertaken in March 2008, over half the students have a learning difficulty and the proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is well above the national average. In connection with personal development and wellbeing, the Ofsted report noted that 'warm and supportive relationships underpin the significant improvement in attitudes to learning since the academy opened.'

### **The school's approach to curriculum**

The academy's prospectus emphasises its difference from other schools in the area, notably through its foundation on a '21st century working day' which is designed to encourage flexibility and enable students to take more responsibility for their own learning. The academy day runs from 8.30am to 5pm, divided into four two-hour learning periods, and students are encouraged to do homework in school. The extended lessons and school day were introduced to encourage students to engage with curriculum subjects for longer and thus have opportunities to learn more deeply. This emphasis on flexibility is also apparent in the school's approach to the curriculum as a whole, which according to the school's EQ coordinator, is used as a 'vehicle' with which to build students' resilience and self-esteem. For example, in the nurture group he runs, he teaches the group a number of the more vocational subjects, including performing arts, food technology, and PE, in ways which are

designed to build the group's confidence. In teaching subjects such as art & design he actively sought opportunities to promote a positive self-image in students.

### **The school's approach to wellbeing**

Both Marlowe's headteacher and its EQ coordinator emphasised that the school's approach to wellbeing centred on building strong relationships between students and school staff and among students: 'Relationships is our watchword'. They also emphasised that 'Emotional literacy is at the heart of the ethos of the academy'. Several staff members, including the headteacher, spoke passionately of the need to raise aspirations and compensate for the deprived and unsettled backgrounds of many students. This meant 'supplementing what they're not getting and countering what they're getting' (EQ coordinator) through promoting emotional literacy and providing consistent support and clear boundaries for behaviour.

It was clear that an implicit concern with student wellbeing is central to Marlowe's philosophy, fully supported by the senior leadership team and driven by the EQ coordinator: 'Wellbeing doesn't need to be a lesson. It needs to be an approach, a mindset [...] I do believe what I do can happen anywhere. It's just willingness and awareness'. A range of resources and approaches are used. For example, although Marlowe is a pilot school for SEAL in Kent, the EQ coordinator regarded SEAL mainly as a 'useful resource' that the school could draw on when necessary. He felt that the needs of its students meant that the school had to go further: 'If you're talking about the social and emotional aspects of learning, we do that all day long [...] We're beyond [EQ] even but it's about letting parents know that it's a fundamental focus of what we do'.

He also spoke of 'developing children who are more comfortable dealing with adults in an appropriate way'. Marlowe did this through building trust and mutual respect among students and staff, represented by a number of symbolic changes such as abolishing lining up for assembly and school bells: 'It's a mutual respect thing. We do not promote here, "You must respect the teacher". It's a given that you can't get respect if you don't give respect' (EQ coordinator). The school has also used the design of the new building to promote and symbolise its approach to wellbeing and building strong relationships. For example, the open seating areas encourage students to sit with adults and staff to appear approachable and accessible. During the researcher's visits to the school, children repeatedly sat on the same table as teachers and other staff being interviewed and engaged with them politely and without interrupting as if to underscore a mathematics teacher's (approving) observation that 'Children won't let you sit on your own'.

### **What does the school hope to achieve?**

As has already been stated, Marlowe's objective is to raise aspirations and extend horizons among students and the wider locality. It was said of the headteacher that 'he wanted to raise the aspirations of the local community by giving them a school to be proud of.' The basic skills team leader felt that the relative isolation of the community played a role in restricting students' ambitions: 'It doesn't dawn on them that they can aspire to be [professionals such as teachers or doctors]. It just doesn't dawn on them because their world is so closed in'. To counter this, the school has put into place a range of support mechanisms and changes, for example increasing the numbers of non-teaching pastoral staff in every year group. These mechanisms have a common foundation on providing spaces and 'safe havens' for vulnerable children. The nurture group itself grew out of a 'happiness group' developed by the EQ coordinator for vulnerable children as a means of focusing on positive ways of engaging in school. The nurture group was selected as a means of exemplifying Marlowe's extended approach to wellbeing in this case study because it is an intensive, early intervention, designed to address an obvious need among vulnerable year 7 students and integrate and engage them in the school.

### **How does it work?**

The nurture group only operates in year 7 and 2008/09 was the second year in which it had been run, although former members of the group in year 8 were still able to approach the EQ coordinator informally for support. Year 7 children were identified by senior year 7 staff at the beginning of the school year and placed into the nurture group in order to integrate them into the school and build their confidence: 'It's all those vulnerable, needy, low self-esteem youngsters who select themselves'. The EQ coordinator who runs the group is not involved in the selection and he did not ask why they were chosen: 'I didn't read any notes, I didn't read any files. It's all free association with me. I'm picking up what's going on and making sense of it. And it's over time'. As stated above, the EQ coordinator teaches the group a number of more vocational subjects as a discrete group, but they are split into other classes for other subjects, notably mathematics, English and science. Some students in the group received additional support, for example from the emotional and behavioural difficulties unit. At the time of the research, the nurture group was made up of 17 students, nine girls and eight boys. One student had left the group after two terms as she felt she no longer needed the support and a second student who had joined the school part of the way through the year was about to leave the group in June with the approval of the EQ coordinator. Although the group was mainly made up of children who were 'very timid' at the beginning of the year, he also felt that the inclusion in the group of a couple of boisterous children with behavioural issues had had benefits in getting the quieter students used to 'risk-taking, devil may care



behaviour' and in turn showing the louder students how to engage with more fragile individuals.

In his approach to teaching the nurture group, the EQ coordinator drew on his experience as a teacher (he was appointed as head of drama), counsellor and youth worker. He felt that the fact that he was a qualified teacher was important in legitimising his presence to (some) other staff members. At the beginning of the year, his emphasis was on listening to and, in particular, acknowledging the students' feelings and integrating them into school, particularly as many of the members of the group had been bullied in primary school or had had poor attendance records. As the year progressed and especially at the time of the research in May and June 2009, he had shifted from support towards challenge, building in the students the independence necessary for them to leave the group and move into year 8. The fact that his approach was personalised for each member of the group and was adapted to reflect their responses to previous work makes it difficult to capture how the EQ coordinator promoted wellbeing in a single lesson. He felt that the students' wellbeing were constantly in his mind and the fact that he knew the group so well, and had earned their trust (see 'Impact' section below), meant formal planning for wellbeing was not necessary, but informal planning was constant.

The lesson observed in full was a rehearsal of extracts from *West Side Story*, prior to the group's performance of it to parents of children joining the school in September 2009. They had already performed the piece to their year group. The performance was not planned at the beginning of the year but was a characteristic example of emergent practice, designed to develop skills in the students and meet the needs of the school. Having worked on the extracts with separate sub-groups of students, where the groups created the movements and chose their dialogue from the script, the EQ coordinator was impressed when they put them together into a single performance. Aware of the need to assess them in drama and the potential gains for the students in terms of building their confidence through performance, he offered them a reward trip if they performed the piece in public. The whole group was involved, although not all performed, after which the group was rewarded with a trip to see *West Side Story* in Birmingham. This had had a number of benefits. The performance gelled them together as a group as everyone had taken part in some way. Some of the students who went to Birmingham had never been on a school trip before (see 'Impact' below) and at least one student diagnosed with ADHD surprised his parents by sitting still through the performance. Finally, the trip cemented the group's trust in the EQ coordinator: 'They believe in me now. They believe if I say it's so, it's so'.

As the lesson observed was a rehearsal of a piece the group had already performed successfully, it began with the group distracted and lacking concentration. This would not be of note if it were not for the group's composition of timid students who had initially been reluctant, and in some cases unwilling, to participate in lessons of any kind. Their low-level misbehaviour was in itself suggestive of the nurture group's success. The EQ coordinator's approach was encouraging and patient, but firm, allowing them to feel their way back into their roles but refusing to tolerate inattention. He reminded them of the importance of being still in dramatic performance and related this back to their previous success: 'What you got a lot of recognition for [last time] was your focus. People noticed it'. As the student who began the piece with an individual mime was not in school that day, the EQ coordinator took on his role, which allowed him to signal the beginning of serious rehearsal. A volunteer support assistant, a sixth former at the school, who had been involved in the performance from the beginning and who had also gained the group's trust, watched the run-throughs and kept them on task whenever they began to drift. Her support had been 'quite invaluable' to the process.

As the performance only lasted about 11 minutes, the lesson largely consisted of the group revising their sections, for example attempting to go more slowly and speak more clearly. Throughout, the EQ coordinator continued to cajole them and maintain order, praising them when appropriate: 'I know you can do it' and referring them back to their previous, successful performance when they lost concentration. It is difficult to pinpoint ways in which wellbeing was addressed in the lesson. However, two small incidents were striking and emblematic of the EQ coordinator's approach. In the first incident he refused to accept one student's reluctance to participate: 'Don't give me no pouting lips. I'm not into that'. This brief admonition indicated how far their relationship had developed during the year. The student at whom it was directed would likely have run off upset if he had been spoken to in that way at the beginning of the year. Using this familiar but strict tone was a conscious reminder, and recognition, of the distance they had travelled. The second incident revolved around conflict averted. Asked to choose which of two missing students to cover for, one student, Annie<sup>22</sup>, replied, 'I'd rather do it with Jake because I don't get on with Laura'. What was striking was that Laura accepted this without comment and that the EQ coordinator was careful to acknowledge Annie's remark in passing, to validate it quickly and signal that they were moving on. As Laura had a history of responding physically to challenge and Annie began the year 'afraid of her own shadow' (see below), this sophisticated resolution of potential

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<sup>22</sup> All student names have been changed.

conflict was a further indication of both the distance the group had travelled and the EQ coordinator's low-key but constant attention to their wellbeing.

### **How does the school support the development of the approach?**

Essentially, Marlowe supported the development of the nurture group approach by showing the EQ coordinator the trust and encouragement that he showed the students in the group. The school's culture appeared to promote CPD as a priority for all staff to 'raise your professionalism', allowing people to follow their interests where possible and providing good support mechanisms. Staff repeatedly referred to the school's willingness to allow people to take risks and try new things: 'The good thing is if I have an idea and I go and speak to [the headteacher], he'll say "Yes, go ahead. Do it"' (mathematics teacher). Other members of staff, particularly in the mentoring and pastoral support teams, had begun in other positions such as cleaner and been supported to move to their current roles. Staff pointed to the headteacher's function as an 'enabler' in school and the senior leadership team's ability to match people with key nurturing roles through identifying 'those intangible qualities that kids know, can pick up, sense'. This seemed to be one of the ways in which staff retention, which had been problematic in Marlowe's predecessor school, had been improved. Thus, the EQ coordinator was able to develop new initiatives, such as the nurture group or 'brothers' group and train staff in empathic and reflective approaches. Posters promoting 'Top ten EQ strategies', such as sharing feelings with students and listening to them, were displayed throughout the school as a reminder of the value the school placed on emotional literacy. Asked whether students had 'safe adults' to approach if they had problems, the EQ coordinator responded: 'It's like a school of safe teachers. I think every child must have at least one person they feel they could go to'. Another teacher emphasised the accessibility of adults in the school and one of the parents interviewed felt this caring approach had been transferred to students: 'They all tend to look after one another. It doesn't matter which year group they are. It's really surprising'.

### **How are the initiatives monitored?**

The EQ coordinator undertakes a baseline EQ evaluation of each member of the nurture group at the beginning of the year using a recognised emotional quotient inventory designed for young people. This uses five scales: intrapersonal; interpersonal; stress management; adaptability; and general mood to derive an overall EQ score. A summative evaluation is also made at the end of the year. Comparison of the September 2008 and June 2009 data showed a mixed picture with some of the 12 students tested twice showing considerable improvement and others appearing to decline. Evidence is also collected throughout the year using video and photographs. In the past, Marlowe has worked with Antidote to surveys staff

and students on emotional literacy. The school has formal student voice mechanisms but its emphasis on building open, trusting relationships between students and adults in school appears increasingly to offer informal ways to gather student opinion.

### **What is the impact?**

An online survey of students in the nurture group was completed by 16 of the 17 students in the group in July 2009. Nine of the respondents were female and seven male. Responses have been grouped according to whether they related to students' increasing confidence or changes to their relationships with adults in school. It is important again to emphasise at this point the fact that most of the students in the nurture group lacked the confidence to participate in or attend lessons at the beginning of year 7.

### ***Confidence***

Initial conversations with nurture group students suggested that increased confidence was one of the most common outcomes. The survey backed this up: 50 per cent of students (and 67 per cent of female students) surveyed did not feel confident about starting at school in September 2008. In contrast, 96 per cent felt confident about returning in September 2009 (71 per cent of boys felt very confident). Furthermore, asked about the biggest benefit of being in the nurture group, 69 per cent said they were more confident generally and 23 per cent said they were more confident in other lessons. In the words of one girl talking about the EQ coordinator: 'He's really boosted my confidence. My Mum used to say I was scared of my own shadow'. There was still room to improve, however, as 40 per cent of students wanted to be more confident in lessons. Asked about the two most important factors that had contributed to this increase in confidence, 60 per cent of respondents identified support from the nurture group and 60 per cent support from family. This supported the EQ coordinator's identification of the school's strength in encouraging informal peer support.

### ***Relationships with adults in school***

The survey also explored whether adults' assertions about the school's emphasis on building effective relationships was felt by students. Asked about approaching staff with a problem, only two female respondents felt they would not be able to approach anyone. A total of 37.5 per cent of students (57 per cent of boys) would only approach nurture group staff but 25 per cent felt able to approach lots of members of staff. Asked to describe the nurture group teacher, 47 per cent (71 per cent of boys) thought he 'listens more' and 47 per cent said they were more likely to go to him with problems: 'He's really calm [and] can sort out problems with other teachers', as one student said. This underlines the extent to which the nurture group students felt both supported and challenged by the group and their teacher, as the

drama rehearsal demonstrated: 'He encourages you and pushes you a little bit'. Several students interviewed felt that their confidence and resilience had increased as a result.

In interviews, teachers were also asked about the impact that being in the nurture group had had on student's behaviour and engagement in other lessons. It should be noted that most teachers were not aware which students were in the nurture group, which suggests the school's sensitivity in supporting vulnerable students. All the teachers interviewed echoed the students' perceptions that their confidence had increased considerably and in some cases this appeared to have coincided with improved achievement:

'There was so much lack of confidence when [the three students in the nurture group] started and I have seen Sandra developing into a different person. Even her levels went up. Ruth is still hovering in the same place I feel. But Sandra has started to put her hand up which she didn't use to do'. (mathematics teacher)

Another nurture group student had become more at ease in other lessons: 'She's far more assertive, far less passive. She doesn't look like the victim any more – you'll get attitude' (English teacher). One girl, who had been a member of the group during the previous year, had been sustained her increased engagement throughout the whole of year 8, as her mother attested:

My daughter originally walked into school as an elective mute and she had no confidence whatsoever. And [the EQ coordinator] had her in the nurture group and, gradually over time, he built her confidence up and she enjoyed lessons and she enjoyed joining in with things. Now she's managed to go into year 8 with a lot more confidence. She can cope with lessons and day-to-day life where she found it extremely difficult before.

A second mother was able to point to improvements in both achievement and social engagement in her son, who had previously been hampered by his speech difficulties, which had also improved:

'In the nurture group they're all like friends aren't they and it's really good. First school trip he went to Birmingham with you and we thought he's not going to want to do this because he never wanted to go on school trips because no one would sit with him'.

The changes had also had an impact beyond school: 'It's helped them outside school as well because Karl does archery and beforehand it'd be "Oh no, I don't think I want to go. They might think I'm a bit strange". [... Now] we can actually leave him to go and do something'.

Finally, an observation regarding one student indicates how the nurture group effectively coordinated its activity with other support structures in the school to enable him to feel more integrated into the school:

'Between what [the EQ coordinator] has been doing with him building up his self-worth and what he's been doing in our classes [...] he's a different boy because he's got acceptance. He's in a group that accepts him for not being an excellent reader and he's in a group that accepts him for the emotional side. And I would like to think it worked hand in hand. (basic skills team leader).

### **Where next?**

Marlowe will put together another year 7 nurture group of vulnerable students in September 2009. They hope to explore ways both to extend the approach beyond the limited number that can access nurture group support and use nurture group 'graduates' as an additional means of support. In addition, the school is looking to introduce more curriculum innovation, capitalising on the advances that have been made in promoting students' emotional resilience and reshaping the school day.

### **Survey of nurture group students**

This questionnaire is designed to help you to tell us what you think about the nurture group you have been involved in at Marlowe Academy. All your responses will be treated anonymously.

Thank you for taking part.

Are you...?

Female

Male

1. How did you feel when you started at Marlowe Academy last September?

Very confident

Confident

Not very confident

2. How do you feel about returning to school next September after the summer holidays?

Very confident

Confident

Not very confident

3. If you feel more confident now, what do you think are the two most important factors that have helped you?

Support from nurture group	Support from teachers
Support from friends outside of nurture group	Support from other staff in school
Support from family	
Other (please write here)	

4. Do other students in your year want to be involved in the nurture group?

Yes                      No                      Not sure

4a. [If yes] Why do you think that is?

Supportive environment in the group

Activities we do in the group

They don't like other lessons

Supportive people in the group

Sense of group identity

5. Would you approach a member of staff if you had a problem in school?

Yes – but only in the nurture group

Yes – there are 1 or 2 staff members I would approach

Yes – there are lots of staff members I would approach

Yes – I would approach any staff member in the school

No

6. What do you think has been the biggest benefit of being in the nurture group?

I am more confident generally

I am more confident in lessons outside of the nurture group

I am better at curriculum subjects we do in the nurture group e.g. drama, art

I am better at curriculum subjects we do with other teachers e.g. English, mathematics

I attend school more in general

Other (please write here)

7. How would you describe the nurture group teacher? (Choose as many answers as you want)

He listens more

I am more likely to go to him with problems than to other members of staff

He is more responsive to my needs

He mediates for me with other teachers and members of staff

He doesn't let me get away with anything

8. What changes would you make to the support you have received in school?  
(Choose as many answers as you want)

Make the nurture group bigger

Allow students to spend more time in the nurture group during year 7

Extend the nurture group beyond year 7

Extend student mentoring

Provide more opportunities for me to discuss problems with teachers

Provide a more flexible approach to the curriculum Introduce more challenge into lessons

Other (please write here)

9. Where do you think you have improved the most this year?

I have attended more lessons

I have been more confident in lessons



I have achieved better results in specific subjects

I have got on better with teachers

I have got on better with other students

9a. What subjects do you think you have improved in?

English

Mathematics

Art

Modern foreign languages

Design technology

PE

Drama

Science

ICT

Other (please write here)

10. What or where or how would you like to improve the most next year?

Attend more lessons

Be more confident in lessons

Get better results in specific subjects

Get on better with teachers

Get on better with other students

10a. What subjects do you want to improve in?

English

Mathematics

Art

Modern foreign languages

Design technology

PE

Drama

Science

ICT

Other (please write  
here)

Thank you for completing this survey.