

Social and emotional learning (SEL): resources

Social and emotional skills (SES)

Social and emotional skills (SES) determine how well people adjust to their environment and how much they achieve in their lives. But the development of these skills is important not only for the well-being of individuals, but also for wider communities and societies as a whole.

Detailed research into how children and young people learn SES in the education and youth sectors is available in Alice Yeo and Jenny Graham's report 'A deep dive into social and emotional learning. What do the views of those involved tell us about the challenges for policy-makers?' (available on the GOV.UK page [Social and emotional skills: helping young people in their work and life](#)).

Social and emotional learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is concerned with fostering children's social and emotional skills within educational settings, alongside their academic skills. This can include developing young people's relationships, communication, decision-making, self-esteem and behaviour.

SEL can play a central role in helping children to develop the skills for educational success and lifelong wellbeing.

As well as supporting pupil re-engagement after school closures, SEL can contribute to reducing the longstanding attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers.

Despite this, there is no targeting of social, emotional or mental health in the government's education recovery plans or as part of the levelling up agenda.

What the government should do

Given the evidence, the government should pursue the following policies:

1. Integrate SEL into the curriculum rather than delivering it in fragmented, one-off sessions.
2. Provide high-quality teacher training and ongoing support to ensure staff feel confident teaching the SEL curriculum, and adapt that curriculum for diverse groups of pupils. Schools should take into account the wellbeing of staff as they are more likely to be able to support pupils if their own needs and competencies are addressed.
3. Encourage the adoption of a whole-school approach to SEL, in which students have opportunities to apply skills in different situations and observe them being practised by adults and peers.
4. As part of a whole-school approach, encourage the involvement of students and parents in planning, implementing, and evaluating approaches to SEL. This would also ensure that the needs of diverse groups are considered.
5. Ensure that targeted interventions to support children at particular risk of poor outcomes are accessible.

The government must also consider that:

- current pressures on schools to achieve higher attainment standards are likely to stand in the way of evidence-based approaches to SEL
- Ofsted's new 'personal development' inspection category may help to change this, but, without adequate support for schools in place, could lead to the introduction of superficial and fragmented interventions

Additional resources

- [Social and emotional learning: An evidence review and synthesis of key issues](#) (Education Policy Institute)

- [In Harmony Newcastle Gateshead](#)
- [My Story, My Place, My Future](#) (Newcastle University)
- [Monday's Child](#) (Damn Cheek)
- [STAR - South Tees Arts Project](#) (Tin Arts)
- [The Facts of Life for primary and secondary school average educational scores in North East and North Cumbria](#) (North East and North Cumbria's Child Health and Wellbeing Network)
- [New HEPI paper warns of crisis in UK creative arts education](#) (Higher Education Policy Institute)
- [Rishi Sunak's 'maths until 18' plan questioned by experts](#) (BBC News)
- [West End Schools' Trust](#)