

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Implementation of SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) Small
Group Work in Primary Schools**

October 2011

Rachel Frances Leonie Friend

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Institute of Education, University of London, for the Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology.

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

R. Freund

Word count (exclusive of appendices and references): 37,087

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
LIST OF TABLES	8
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 OVERVIEW	9
1.2 THE CURRENT STUDY	9
1.2.1 <i>Context of the Study</i>	9
1.2.2 <i>Study Rationale</i>	10
1.2.3 <i>Research Questions and Methodology</i>	11
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE CURRENT STUDY	12
CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 OVERVIEW	13
2.2 INTRODUCTION TO SEAL	13
2.2.1 <i>What is SEAL?</i>	13
2.2.2 <i>Background to SEAL</i>	14
2.2.3 <i>Summary</i>	17
2.3 SEAL: DEFINING AND MEASURING THE CONCEPTS	17
2.3.1 <i>Defining S&ES</i>	17
2.3.2 <i>Integrating a range of terminology</i>	19
2.3.3 <i>Measuring S&ES</i>	21
2.3.4 <i>Summary</i>	22
2.4 RESEARCH INTO S&ES INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOLS	22
2.4.1 <i>Systematic reviews of S&ES interventions in schools</i>	22
2.4.2 <i>Research into the implementation of S&ES interventions in the UK</i>	28
2.4.4 <i>Summary</i>	34
2.5 RESEARCH INTO SEAL	35
2.5.1 <i>The legislative guidance</i>	35
2.5.2 <i>Research into the universal (Wave 1) SEAL programme</i>	37
2.5.3 <i>Research into the small group (Wave 2) SEAL programme</i>	37
2.5.4 <i>Summary</i>	40
2.6 PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK	40
2.6.1 <i>The Pedagogy behind SEAL</i>	40
2.6.2 <i>Other Aspects of Implementing SEAL Small Group Work</i>	44
2.6.3 <i>Summary</i>	46
2.7 THE CURRENT STUDY	46
2.7.1 <i>Context of the study</i>	46
2.7.2 <i>Research rationale</i>	47
2.7.3 <i>Research Questions</i>	48
CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY	50
3.1 OVERVIEW	50
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND ASSUMPTIONS	50

3.3 PARTICIPANTS	52
3.4 DATA COLLECTION.....	57
3.4.1 <i>Pilot Work.....</i>	57
3.4.2 <i>Semi-Structured Interviewing.....</i>	58
3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	60
3.6 PROCEDURE.....	60
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS.....	61
3.7.1 <i>Thematic Analysis</i>	61
3.7.2 <i>Analytical Strategy.....</i>	63
CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS	66
4.1 OVERVIEW OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES.....	66
4.2 THEME ONE - INTEGRATION OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK INTO THE WHOLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM.....	67
4.2.1 <i>Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos.....</i>	68
4.2.2 <i>Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of Social and Emotional Skills in the Mainstream Classroom.....</i>	72
4.3 THEME TWO – PROCESSES AND ISSUES REGARDING PUPIL SELECTION.....	75
4.3.1 <i>Procedures for Selecting Pupils for SEAL Small Group Work.....</i>	75
4.3.2 <i>Profiles of Children in the SEAL Small Groups</i>	77
4.4 THEME THREE – METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING USED DURING THE SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK PROGRAMME	80
4.4.1 <i>Child-Centred Models of Pedagogy.....</i>	81
4.4.2 <i>Skills and Qualities Required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator</i>	83
4.4.3 <i>Value Added of the SEAL Programme in a Small Group Context</i>	85
4.5 THEME FOUR – TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR THE SEAL SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR	87
4.5.1 <i>Training and Support from the Local Authority</i>	87
4.5.2 <i>Support for SEAL Small Group Facilitator within School</i>	89
4.5.3 <i>Resources and Materials Available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator</i>	90
4.6 THEME FIVE – PROCESSES AND ISSUES AROUND EVALUATING OUTCOMES OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK .	90
4.6.1 <i>Methods of Evaluating Outcomes.....</i>	90
4.6.2 <i>Difficulties with Evaluating Outcomes</i>	92
4.7 THEME SIX – LINKS BETWEEN SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK AND NON-SCHOOL BASED SETTINGS	92
4.7.1 <i>Links with the Home Environment</i>	92
4.7.2 <i>Links with Adult Life</i>	93
4.8 SUMMARY	93
CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION.....	94
5.1 OVERVIEW	94
5.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK	94
5.2.1 <i>Integration of SEAL Small Group Work into the Whole School Curriculum.....</i>	94
5.2.2 <i>Processes and Issues Regarding Pupil Selection.....</i>	98
5.2.3 <i>Teaching and Learning of S&ES in SEAL Small Group Work.....</i>	101
5.2.4 <i>Training and Support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator</i>	104
5.2.5 <i>Processes and Issues around Evaluating the Outcomes</i>	106
5.2.6 <i>Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Non-School Based Settings.....</i>	107

5.3	IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE.....	108
5.3.1	<i>Recommendations for Schools.....</i>	109
5.3.2	<i>Recommendations for Local Authority Staff.....</i>	110
5.3.3	<i>Recommendations for Policy Makers.....</i>	111
5.3.4	<i>Recommendations for Educational Psychology Services</i>	111
5.4	LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	112
5.5.	CONCLUSIONS	113
REFERENCES		115
APPENDICES:		123
APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS OF ABBREVIATED TERMS.....		123
APPENDIX 2: SUPPLEMENT TO SECTION 2.3.1		124
APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION ON DATA GATHERING		128
APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES		131
APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL APPROVAL		138
APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW WITH FACILITATOR AT SCHOOL C		143
APPENDIX 7: THEME CODES		162
APPENDIX 8: ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW MATERIAL		168

Abstract

Recent years have seen an increase in school-based interventions designed to promote pupils' social and emotional skills (S&ES), the most widely-used of which in the UK is the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme. Previous research has focused on the impact of similar interventions in schools prior to SEAL. However the majority of investigations in this area are based in the US and in addition, the stringent criteria of systematic reviews limit up-to-date insight into recently developed school-based S&ES interventions implemented in the UK.

This study investigates the implementation of the SEAL small group work (SGW) in a sample of primary schools in an inner-city borough of London. Research questions centred on different aspects of the implementation of SEAL SGW, addressing (i) links with the whole-school ethos, (ii) links with the mainstream classroom, (iii) pupil selection, (iv) methods of teaching and learning S&ES, (v) training and support for the facilitator of SEAL SGW work and, (vi) evaluation of outcomes. This research builds on a DCSF-commissioned study by Humphrey et al. (2008).

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with fifteen members of staff across four schools. Data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Five themes emerged which broadly mapped onto the research questions above. A sixth additional theme regarding links with non-school based settings was also identified. Broadly, SEAL was found to be well integrated into the whole school system for those schools where the senior leadership team openly endorsed the intervention and where communication between staff was strong. It was also found that successful delivery of the SEAL SGW was characterised by facilitative and empowering models of pedagogy that encouraged pupils to reflect on and take ownership of their learning. Recommendations are made for policy makers and practitioners in Children's Services.

Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to express my thanks to all the school staff who generously gave their time to participate in the study and without whom this research would not have been possible.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ed Baines, my academic supervisor at the Institute of Education, whose ongoing encouragement and advice were invaluable particularly at the later stages of this project. I thank also Greta Sykes, my EP supervisor at IOE, for her advice and input. I thank Michael Annan, my EP supervisor, and the rest of the team in my local authority for their positive and ever-present support.

I thank my fantastic cohort of fellow trainee EPs who have provided me with friendship, support and encouragement throughout.

Finally, I would like to thank my family who have always been at hand to give me support at the tougher moments over the past three years.

List of Tables

Table 1 Denham's (2005a) framework of social and emotional competence	20
Table 2 Themes and Sub-Themes	67
Table 3 Theme One - Integration of SEAL Small Group Work into the Whole School Curriculum	68
Table 4 Theme Two- Processes and Issues Regarding Pupil Selection	75
Table 5 Theme Three - Teaching and Learning during SEAL Small Group Work ...	81

Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the current study, including the national and local context in which it was undertaken, its rationale, and details of the research questions and study methodology. Finally, an outline of the structure of the thesis will be provided.

1.2 The Current Study

1.2.1 Context of the Study

Promoting the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people is an integral part of governmental policy in England. In recent years, there has been growing emphasis on the role of all those who work in Children's Services to support the social and emotional development of 0-19 year olds. This national priority can be evidenced through key strategy documents including Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004), the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity (DOH, 2004) and the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), all of which refer to the importance of promoting children's' mental health and psychological well-being in schools and other community-based settings. Both the primary and secondary phases of education have seen the introduction of a major national strategy focusing on this area: the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme (DfES, 2005; 2007).

In terms of its local context, the current study was conducted in an inner city London borough ranked as the second most deprived local authority in England according to the Indices of Deprivation 2007. Within this local authority, a team of professionals from Education, Health and Social Care worked in partnership to establish the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) project which ran for three years from 2008 to 2011. The primary aim of the project was to support schools in developing their ability to promote the emotional well being of the whole school community such that mental health outcomes for children and young people would be improved. As

part of this aim, it was intended that the project would build on the drive to develop SEAL in schools. SEAL was rolled out as a whole-school approach in primary schools across the borough in the academic year of 2005/2006; shortly after it was launched as part of the government's Primary Strategy in 2005. The small group work element of SEAL was developed two years later and involved a group of pilot schools trialling the resources and materials in liaison with the local authority's Primary Behaviour Team.

1.2.2 Study Rationale

The recent national focus on promoting children's' emotional health and wellbeing in schools and other non-clinical settings requires a strong evidence base to inform policy and practice. A small number of systematic reviews exist which focus on studies aiming to promote students' emotional wellbeing and mental health (e.g. Adi et al., 2007; Shucksmith et al., 2007; Durlak & Wells, 1997; Wells et al., 2003); however few studies included in these reviews were conducted in England, the vast majority having been undertaken in the US. Maxwell et al. (2008) point out that 'The demographic, policy and service context of the USA ... is different enough to make transferability of findings problematic' (p. 273, 2008). As Weare and Markham (2005) state:

"...we need to develop a rigorous evidence-based approach on this issue... [and] to facilitate the dissemination of such research findings while encouraging new and innovative approaches." (p.14, 2005)

The rationale for the current research, therefore, is that more information is needed about how to successfully implement interventions to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in schools in educational settings in this country. It is important to continue building the evidence base for such interventions in schools, both in terms of their outcomes and factors that contribute to positive impact. Reflecting the policy emphasis, and in view of SEAL being the most recent and widely-recognised programme in English schools, the current study seeks to uncover factors contributing to the successful implementation of the SEAL programme.

A small body of research into the SEAL programme per se, both at the whole-school (universal) and the small group (targeted) level, has been conducted (Hallam et al. 2006; Humphrey et al. 2008); however this research has yet to provide more detail for practitioners in schools regarding the practical aspects of implementing SEAL at a small group level. The current study aims to address this gap by providing an in-depth picture of the ways in which staff across a small sample of primary schools in the aforementioned local authority have interpreted the SEAL small group intervention and made it practicable within their settings.

1.2.3 Research Questions and Methodology

The current study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. How does SEAL small group work fit in with / complement the whole-school ethos?
2. How are the messages in SEAL small groups reinforced in the classroom and other contexts within school?
3. How are pupils selected for the SEAL small group sessions?
4. What methods of teaching and learning characterise the delivery of the SEAL small group sessions?
5. What training and support do facilitators receive for implementing SEAL small group work?
6. How are the outcomes of SEAL small group work evaluated?

The current study adopted a qualitative design to address all the above questions. The design involved collecting data on the views and experiences of different members of staff across a small number of primary schools via semi-structured interview.

1.3 Structure of the Current Study

Chapter Two provides an overview of the relevant literature relating to the definition of the term 'social and emotional skills' (S&ES), a review of the evidence base so far into school-based interventions for promoting S&ES including SEAL and a consideration of the pedagogy underlying such interventions before finishing with a detailed rationale for the current study. Chapter Three outlines the study methodology, including details of the design, participant recruitment, and procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter Four reports on the results of the thematic analysis with supporting quotes drawn from the interviews. Finally, Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings of the study in relation to existing literature and implications for current practice. Limitations and possible directions for future research are also considered. Definitions of all the abbreviated terms used throughout this thesis are provided in Appendix 1.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This literature review will present an evaluation of some of the key research relevant to the current study and develop a justification for its aims. It begins by outlining what SEAL is and why it was introduced. This is followed by a discussion of the difficulties with defining and measuring 'social and emotional skills' (or S&ES). The review will provide an outline of the most recent body of systematic research into S&ES interventions in schools, followed by more broadly based reviews that are relevant to UK contexts. Consideration is then given to research into the government's most recent national strategy focusing on the area of S&ES, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme, and the available guidance that informs its implementation in primary schools. Finally, the review focuses on the teaching and learning of S&ES and other practical aspects of implementing the small group element of SEAL, before rationalising the current study's aims and research questions.

2.2 Introduction to SEAL

2.2.1 What is SEAL?

SEAL, or the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme, is a national initiative that was introduced to UK primary schools in 2005, and later to secondary schools in 2007, as a means of fostering children and young people's social and emotional skills (herein referred to as S&ES). In the DfES document *'Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning' (2005), or Primary SEAL*, it is acknowledged that many affective factors can inhibit learning in the school environment including pupils' difficulties in understanding and managing their feelings, working co-operatively in groups, motivating themselves and demonstrating resilience in the face of setbacks. The aim of Primary SEAL is to provide opportunities for pupils to learn S&ES in the following three ways: through discrete

lessons that focus on S&ES; by encouraging a review of the social and emotional climate and conditions for learning to ensure pupils can learn, practise and consolidate these skills across the school; and by encouraging teachers to review their approaches to learning and teaching to ensure that their approaches implicitly promote S&ES.

Provision in Primary SEAL is described in terms of three waves: Wave 1 – quality teaching of SEAL to all pupils; Wave 2 – focus group interventions for pupils who need additional help in developing SEAL and for their families; and Wave 3 – individual attention with this latter wave of support being likely to involve outside professionals. This Wave model of provision management was designed to encourage schools to identify at an early stage students who found it difficult to respond to opportunities to learn S&ES within mainstream provision at Wave 1 and to therefore intervene to assist such pupils using a range of strategies as part of Wave 2 provision, or as part of a more intensive approach at Wave 3. Wave 2 SEAL refers to small group sessions run by school staff at allotted times during the mainstream curriculum programme. The small group SEAL programme consists of seven themes or units (New Beginnings, Getting On and Falling Out, Say No to Bullying, Going for Goals, Good to Be Me, Relationships, and Changes) which can be used flexibly. That is to say that they can be taught throughout the school year within the whole school themed approach or they can be delivered as a stand-alone intervention at any given point. Each theme consists of six sessions; each session designed to be delivered as a weekly slot for between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

2.2.2 Background to SEAL

2.2.2.1 How did SEAL come about?

The need for schools to promote children's S&ES has perhaps always been a fundamental and yet it is only over the past decade that this need has been increasingly documented in UK governmental guidance. Since the publication of Primary SEAL in 2005, there has been even more onus on the British government to help teachers and other children's service professionals promote pupils' S&ES in

schools and other community-based settings. The SEAL programme is now a widely recognised and implemented one in schools across the country, with guidance and information readily available from The National Strategies website.

It would appear that much of the press leading to the advent of SEAL stemmed from the UNICEF report *Child Poverty in Perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* (UNICEF, 2007). This report was an attempt to measure and compare child well-being in 21 nations of the industrialised world under six different dimensions: Material Well-Being, Health and Safety, Educational Well-Being, Family and Peer Relationships, Behaviours and Risks, and Subjective Well-Being. The implied definition of child well-being in this report was intended to be at least partly guided by the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), for example in its emphasis on the importance of growing up in a happy and loving family environment, on the child's right to an adequate standard of living, to social security, to protection from violence and exploitation, to the highest attainable standard of health care, to social services, and to equitable access to educational opportunity. The average ranking position of the United Kingdom on all but one of the six dimensions (Health and Safety) was in the bottom third, with the UK in 21st (the lowest) position on Family and Peer Relationships and Behaviours and Risks and 20th (the second lowest) position on Subjective Well-Being.

The publication of the UNICEF report in 2007 led to growing concern around the well-being and quality of life of children in the UK. Government policy therefore placed increasing emphasis not just on educational achievement, but also on the wider wellbeing of the child, both in and out of school. Later that same year, the UK government created the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and released *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (DCSF 2007) with the aim being to make the UK 'the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up' and in so doing 'to put the needs of families, children and young people at the centre of everything we do.' (2007, p. 3). Shortly afterwards in 2008, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) – at the request of the DOH - issued the document *Promoting Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Primary Education* (NICE, 2008). This publication was designed to complement existing national initiatives to promote social and emotional wellbeing including the

SEAL programme (DfES, 2005a), the Healthy Schools programme introduced in 2005 and related community-based initiatives.

It is important to note that the uproar created by the UNICEF report did not go unchecked. Morrow and Mayall (2009) expressed their concerns about the obscurity of the term 'well-being'; its lack of a clear definition rendering it an open-ended, catch-all category. The researchers argued that the report exemplified a deficit model approach to the study of children's lives in so far as the indicators used to measure the term 'well-being' were focused on what children do not have, that is to say negatives rather than positives, particularly in relation to 'risky health behaviours'. In their critique, the authors speculate that the use of the term 'well-being' may evoke within-child conceptualisations of children's welfare that evade the issue of wider social responsibility for protecting the interests of children: 'In the specific case of the UK, adults tend to construct children and childhood as a social problem ... It is entirely possible that media, teachers and even parental concern about childhood affects children's self-image and may partially account for low scores' (2009, p.225). Morrow and Mayall (2009) stated that the sensationalism created by the UNICEF report in fact did little to honour the framework for action stipulated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and concluded their paper by highlighting the need for a more positive and holistic approach to researching children's health, well-being and everyday lives.

2.2.2.2 The rationale for implementing SEAL

Irrespective of one's views about publications that contributed to the rising profile of the SEAL programme in English schools, it is necessary to provide a rationale for why S&ES interventions are deemed appropriate and indeed valuable to implement in the context of education. Firstly, there is neurological evidence to suggest that learning in the emotional domain is reflected by newer structures and pathways in the human brain. For example, Hariri, Bookheimer, & Mazziotta, (2000) obtained evidence to suggest that there is a neural basis for modulating emotional experience through intellectual processes such as labelling our experiences. The implication of these findings is that S&ES *can* be acquired.

Secondly, there is research to support the claim of Weare and Gray (2003) that, "...work on emotional and social competence and wellbeing has a wide range of educational and social benefits, including greater educational and work success, improved behaviour, increased inclusion, improved learning, greater social cohesion, increased social capital, and improvements to mental health" (2003, p.6). Aptitude in the emotional domain has been shown to be linked to a variety of important outcomes in education, including higher academic achievement (e.g. Zins, Weissberg, Wang, Walberg & Goleman, 2004), increased attendance (e.g. Petrides, Frederickson, and Furnham 2004) and career success (e.g. Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts 2004). The apparent predictive validity of S&ES on a range of constructs such as those above for children and young people both within and beyond school suggests that S&ES *should* be taught or fostered as far as possible in educational settings.

2.2.3 Summary

SEAL is the most recent government initiative in England for the promotion of S&ES in schools. It was introduced to the primary and secondary phases of education in 2005 and 2007 respectively. SEAL consists of both a whole-school programme for all pupils and a small group programme for targeted individuals. Publicity regarding concerns about the welfare of children in the UK, most notable the 2007 UNICEF report, has contributed to the rise of SEAL and other school-based S&ES interventions. There are various caveats to the UNICEF report noted by Morrow and Mayall (2009). Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that the teaching and learning of S&ES in schools can and should take place.

2.3 SEAL: Defining and Measuring the Concepts

2.3.1 Defining S&ES

It is of note that although the governmental guidance for the SEAL programme (DfES, 2005; DCSF 2007a) makes continual reference to 'social and emotional

skills', no clear, operational definition of this terminology is provided. In *Primary SEAL* (DfES, 2005) little indication is given of how S&ES are conceptualised, other than the work of Goleman (1996), who in his popular book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* outlined the following five components of what he termed 'emotional intelligence':

- knowing one's own emotions (self-awareness)
- managing emotions (self-regulation)
- motivating oneself (motivation)
- recognising emotions in others (empathy)
- handling relationships (social skills)

No acknowledgement is made by the authors of *Primary SEAL* that the above components on which they base the content of the SEAL programme are based on a definition of 'emotional intelligence' rather than 'social and emotional skills', nor is there any discussion regarding whether it is appropriate to treat the two terms as synonymous.

To make matters more complex, and as Wigelsworth et al. (2010) point out, the academic and professional literature is overflowing with other terms in the field including 'social and emotional intelligence' (e.g. Salovey & Mayer, 1990), 'emotional literacy' (e.g. Park, Haddon & Goodman, 2003), and 'social and emotional competence' (e.g. Elias et al. 1997). This begs the question as to whether such a range of terminology can be thought of as sharing the same semantic content as the term 'social and emotional skills', or whether each individual term should be treated as describing a distinct concept. Before this debate is explored in more detail, a summary is given below of the definitions that Weare and Gray (2003) provide for each of the main terms that are used alongside and perhaps interchangeably with the term S&ES. More detail on these definitions can be found in Appendix 2.

Firstly, Weare and Gray (2003) discuss the term 'emotional and social intelligence'. 'Emotional intelligence' (EI) is perhaps the most widely used and understood term of reference. Weare and Gray next go on to consider the term 'emotional literacy',

which was popularised in the 1990s and is now widely used in educational spheres. They then unpack the meaning of 'emotional and social competence', a term that is also familiar to practitioners in education and arguably one that has fewer specialist connotations. The researchers examine the term 'mental health', which was traditionally used in medical contexts and often with negative implications. Finally, Weare and Gray look at what is meant by 'emotional and social wellbeing', a term that is now widely used in both educational and health settings.

2.3.2 Integrating a range of terminology

In light of the several terms that Weare and Gray (2003) discuss above, it is now important to consider the extent to which they overlap in meaning. Weare and Gray propose that 'Links should be made with these terms, and the most appropriate term should be used in relation to the given context' (2003, p.14), a recommendation which suggests that each of these terms describes a qualitatively different concept. Wigelsworth et al. (2010) however argue that on inspection of the relevant literature, differences between these terms are not necessarily significant when compared to the similarity of their features, and that these terms are, therefore, in fact largely interchangeable. In order to illustrate this point, Wigelsworth et al. refer to the two definitions below, the former of which is of emotional "intelligence" and the latter emotional "literacy":

[Emotion intelligence refers to] ... the processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding, and management of one's own and others' emotional states to solve emotion-laden problems and to regulate behaviour. (Salovey, Brackett, & Mayer, 2004, phi)

[Emotional literacy refers to] ... the practice of interacting in ways that build understanding of our own and others' emotions, then using this understanding to shape our actions.

(Antidote, 2009)

Humphrey, Curran, Morris, Farrell and Woods (2007) also advocate for a common conceptual definition of such terms as 'emotional intelligence', 'emotional literacy' and 'emotional competence' '...if only because there is not enough clear evidence that they describe qualitatively different ideas (2007, p.239). Furthermore, if progress is to be made in this area, there is a distinct need to adopt a common language that researchers and practitioners alike can adhere to.'

Wigelsworth et al. (2010) point out that the lack of a clear consensus as regards a working definition of S&ES is a major difficulty for practitioners working in this area, since without sufficiently limited parameters of the facets involved in S&ES it is not possible to accurately measure or assess the appropriate skills or domains that are relevant. They offer a potential solution to this problem by way of the 'framework of social and emotional competence' proposed by Denham (2005a). Drawing upon the work of Rose-Krasnor (1997) and Payton et al. (2000), Denham proposes a delineation of relational/pro-social skills and emotional competence skills as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Denham's (2005a) framework of social and emotional competence

Emotional competence skills	Self-awareness Self-management Social awareness	Understanding of self emotions Emotional and behavioural regulation Understanding emotions Empathy/sympathy
Relational/pro-social skills	Social problem solving Relationship skills	Cooperation Listening skills Turn-taking Seeking help

Wigelsworth et al. feel that this model has the advantage of reflecting major theoretical models in the area of S&ES (e.g. Salovey & Mayer, 1990) '... without suffering from the nebulous, imprecise nature of the more wide-ranging definitions'

(p.177, 2010). However, whilst the framework perhaps provides a unifying construct for a variety of competing models, a major caveat accompanies its practical application: the availability of tools that accurately cover all areas of this framework is extremely limited. Wigelsworth et al. acknowledge the likelihood that more than one tool may be required in order to accurately assess the range of domains identified in Denham's (2005a) model. Issues around the measurement of S&ES are discussed below.

2.3.3 Measuring S&ES

According to Wigelsworth et al. (2010), the range of available measures in the field of S&ES varies in scope and specificity. This means that developing a tool which can precisely measure the scope of the term 'S&ES' is as much of a challenge as defining the terminology itself. The authors state that at the broadest level, measures such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) (Petrides, Sangareau, Frederickson & Furnham, 2006) and the Emotional Literacy Assessment and Intervention (ELAI) (child version) (Southampton Psychology Service, 2003) provide a single, uni-dimensional indicator of S&ES. While these types of measures tend to be short, and easy to administer and to score, they lack specificity and tend to be less sensitive to change than the more detailed, multi-dimensional measures that are available. An example they give of a multi-dimensional measure is the Social Skills Rating System (also known as the Social Skills Improvement System) (SSRS/SSIS) (Gresham & Elliott, 1990), which provides indicators of children's cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy and self-control. These types of measures provide a more detailed profile of S&ES for the user; however they can be lengthier as a result. Wigelsworth et al. (2010) explain that in making decisions about which measure to select, practitioners need to actively consider the context within which it is used: if the context is the evaluation of the impact of an intervention, broad, uni-dimensional measures may be inappropriate because of their lack of sensitivity to change; whereas if the context is a generic screening tool or "barometer" for a population or group, such measures may be more useful.

2.3.4 Summary

The term 'social and emotional skills' is a nebulous one. It lacks a clear definition and it tends to be used alongside a multitude of other, similar terms. Researchers have argued for the need to adopt a common language which both they and practitioners in the area of S&ES can refer to. Denham's (2005) framework of emotional and social competence has perhaps offered the most comprehensive definition to date to cover the range of terminology used, including the term 'S&ES'. Allied to definition is the method of assessment of a construct, and for S&ES this has also proven difficult. The lack of research into how the term S&ES can be conceptualised, measured, and therefore evaluated as part of intervention programmes 'has created a situation whereby the definition, measurement and utility of S&ES is fraught with controversy and inconsistency.' (Wigelsworth et al. 2010, p.173).

2.4 Research into S&ES interventions in schools

In spite of the barriers to defining and measuring S&ES, there is nonetheless a body of research that claims to have systematically investigated the impact of S&ES interventions in school-based settings using the available tools of assessment. As a precursor to the discussion of this empirical research, I have assumed that the term 'S&ES' is sufficiently synonymous with all the other terms used by researchers in this field to describe the constructs that they evaluated e.g. 'emotional wellbeing and mental health', 'emotional intelligence' and 'social and emotional learning'. I have therefore deemed it appropriate to classify all of the school-based interventions referred to in the following studies as 'S&ES interventions' in spite of variation in the terminology used by the respective researchers.

2.4.1 Systematic reviews of S&ES interventions in schools

It is notable that the vast majority of research studies into S&ES interventions in educational settings are US-based. Two recent independent systematic reviews, one undertaken by Adi, Killoran, Janmohamed and Stewart-Brown (2007) and the other by Shucksmith, Summerbell, Jones and Whittaker (2007), investigated the

effectiveness of whole-school approaches and targeted approaches respectively to promote the mental wellbeing of children in primary education. These two strands of systematic review reflect the distinction made in the publication *Promoting Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Primary Education* (NICE) (2008) and in the SEAL programme (DfES 2005; 2007) between whole-school and targeted approaches. Whole-school approaches as the name suggests are implemented across a whole school and involve "thinking holistically, looking at the whole context including organisation, structures, procedures and ethos, not just at individual pupils or at one part of the picture only" (DCSF, 2007, p.22). Targeted approaches are used to help children thought to be 'at risk' of developing social and emotional problems and share similarities with the small group work element at Wave 2 of the SEAL programme.

Studies in both reviews were included on the premises that they were: written in English after 1990 and undertaken in developed countries; randomised and/or controlled; and focused on outcomes related to improvements in mental wellbeing as defined in the aforementioned NICE public health guidance: emotional wellbeing (happiness and confidence, and the opposite of depression/anxiety), psychological wellbeing (resilience, mastery, confidence, autonomy, attentiveness/involvement and the capacity to manage conflict and to problem solve) and social wellbeing (good relationships with others, the opposite of conduct disorder, delinquency, interpersonal violence and bullying).

Adi et al. (2007) reviewed 15 randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and 16 controlled trials (CCTs) which included the following elements alone and in various combinations: Changes in school ethos, policies and environment; Classroom-based intervention; Parent component; and Wider community component. Adi et al. concluded that there was reasonable evidence that long term programmes that covered social problem solving, social awareness and emotional literacy, in which teachers reinforce such principles in all their interactions with children, could be effective in the long term. Those studies where effect sizes were calculated indicated small-medium effects on outcome measures. Most significantly there was strong evidence to support programmes such as Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS). Adi et al. state that 'Although (programmes like PATHS) are likely to need

adapting for UK use, there is no reason to suppose that they should not be widely applicable in the UK. Interventions with similar characteristics are available in the UK but have not been the subject of robust trials and the PATHS programme has been trialled in some schools in the UK. Further research is needed to establish the appropriate level of teacher training and support.' (2007, p.11)

Shucksmith et al.'s (2007) review indicated that pupils involved in targeted interventions displayed a range of profiles, with some chosen because of externalising problems (e.g. conduct problems), and others experiencing more internalised difficulties (e.g. anxiety, emotional problems). The outcome measures of these targeted interventions varied greatly, with some studies using standardised rating scales of problem behaviours and symptoms (e.g. the Child-Behaviour Checklist by Achenbach, 1991), others using more detached measures such as academic achievement and yet other studies a combination of these. The main conclusions drawn by Shucksmith et al. were as follows:

- There was considerable consensus that multi-component interventions, which offer a mix of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), social skills training, attribution training, and training of teachers and parents in reinforcement and discipline, are the most effective content of interventions;
- Most interventions offered weekly (or twice weekly) sessions to pupils. A few studies examined brief interventions (defined as 8-10 weeks) but these were only shown to work for certain groups of children – the vast majority of interventions lasted longer than 1 year;
- Interventions were typically delivered by psychologists. School staff were rarely utilised other than when they were asked to rate children's behaviour and wellbeing;
- There was some evidence that, under certain conditions (e.g. delivered late in primary school career, taking place in communities already under stress), interventions treating troubled pupils using small group work may produce adverse effects.

The above conclusions have been drawn from the highest quality evidence available to reveal the current evidence base for both whole-school and targeted S&ES interventions in school settings. However it is important to bear in mind that much of the literature reports 'efficacy' trials, that is, interventions delivered under 'ideal' well controlled circumstances with levels of resources that may not be sustainable under normal circumstances. S&ES interventions are often found to be less successful in effectiveness trials i.e. when first implemented by practitioners in real-life settings (Greenberg, Domitrovic, Graczyk & Zins, 2005). Furthermore, as noted by Humphrey, Kalamouka, Bolton, Lendrum, Wigelsworth, Lennie & Farrell (2008), systematic reviews lack crucial information about the context and conditions of implementation. It appears that the predominant focus of the most rigorous research to date in this field is on outcomes, with little attention given to factors which are critical to success and models of good practice.

Maxwell, Aggleton, Warwick, Yankah, Hill and Mehmedbegovic (2008) express further reservations about systematic reviews which examine the effectiveness of interventions promoting emotional wellbeing and mental health in schools and non-clinical settings. Firstly, they point out that the inclusion criteria used for studies to be included in these reviews is narrowly focused in order to align with the requirements of a systematic review. This limits the extent to which potentially relevant findings from newer or less well evaluated interventions are integrated into the available evidence base informing policy and practice (Ryecroft-Malone, Seers, Titchen, Harvey, Kitson & McCormack, 2004). Secondly, Maxwell et al. (2008) note that very few of the studies included in these systematic reviews have been conducted in England. They contend that the demography, policy and service context of the US (where the majority of studies which are included in systematic reviews in this field have been undertaken) is different enough to make transferability of research findings problematic.

In view of the aforementioned gaps in the knowledge, it was the aim of Maxwell et al.'s (2008) research to build on the evidence base offered by systematic reviews in the field but also to prioritise the evaluation findings from recent UK programmes in schools (and other community-based settings) so as to provide English policy-makers and practitioners with information about programmes which might work in

promoting children's and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health in demographic, policy and service contexts with which they were familiar. In a review of the literature, Maxwell and colleagues categorised studies into three groups: demonstrably effective approaches; promising approaches; and approaches which offered variable or no evidence of success in leading to improved outcomes. Only studies falling into the first two categories were included in their paper.

'Demonstrably effective approaches' were those identified from the findings of systematic reviews. Programmes categorised as 'promising approaches' were drawn both from systematic review studies and from individual evaluation studies. If systematic reviews concluded, but only tentatively, that the programmes they assessed could lead to positive outcomes, these programmes were categorised as 'promising approaches'. Individual evaluation studies were only included in this category of evidence if more than one study of the same or a similar programme had been undertaken, if those studies had found a positive impact on emotional wellbeing and mental health, and if the evaluation research design was methodologically rigorous. For the purposes of their review, Maxwell et al. considered studies to be methodologically rigorous if at least two of the following three criteria were met: a *comparison/control/waiting list group* was used; children and young people were followed *over a period of time after completion of the programmes* (at least three months); and *recognised measures* of emotional wellbeing and mental health were used.

In accordance with the above criteria, Maxwell and colleagues identified across four systematic reviews (Durlak & Wells, 1997; Green, Howes, Waters, Maher & Oberklaid, 2005; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Wells, Barlow & Stewart-Brown, 2003) a number of key properties of programmes that were successful in the achievement of enhanced emotional well-being and mental health in schools:

- Promotion of emotional wellbeing and mental health rather than prevention of 'mental illness'
- School wide
- Environment modifying
- Multi-component

- Sustained implementation for 1 year plus
- Targeted cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) work for children and young people with identified needs

They also identified evidence of a 'promising approach' for a specific initiative; a ten-session CBT programme called FRIENDS (developed in Australia) for children and young people with anxiety, delivered in schools either by teachers, nurses or psychologists.

Maxwell et al. explain that the above findings derive from a more broadly based review than the relatively narrow evidence base offered by previous systematic reviews and provide policy-makers and practitioners in England an up-to-date, context-relevant guide for programme development in the field of promoting emotional wellbeing and mental health in schools. Furthermore, and by way of addressing the aforementioned criticism that systematic reviews (based on relatively stringent criteria for inclusion) overlook factors that contribute to the successful implementation of S&ES interventions in schools (Humphrey et al. 2008), Maxwell et al. provide some clarity regarding the attributes that frameworks aimed at enhancing children's emotional well-being and mental health might have. Their findings provide a useful foundation for developing 'a rigorous evidence-based approach on the issue of what schools need to do to promote mental health effectively' and also for 'the dissemination of such research findings while encouraging new and innovative approaches.' (Weare and Markham, 2005, p. 14).

In spite of Maxwell et al.'s stated intention to focus on research in the UK, the vast majority of studies included in their review were conducted in the US. Furthermore, the team claim that there is a transferability problem for research based on different demographics, policy and service context between the United States and Britain (a point which seems largely to be based on the work of Edwards, 2003). The following section of the current review will discuss UK-based research into the context and implementation of S&ES interventions in schools. The aim in doing so is to establish whether the findings of UK researchers regarding features of good practice concur

with, add to, and/or expand on those of Maxwell et al.'s, the latter of which are largely representative of the most rigorously S&ES programmes in US schools.

2.4.2 Research into the implementation of S&ES interventions in the UK

The number of UK-based research studies on S&ES programmes that have considered contextual factors is limited, reflecting the relatively tiny evidence base overall compared to the US. Kelly, Longbottom, Potts and Williamson (2004), who explored the application of PATHS in a Scottish primary school, highlighted the importance of developing a positive school ethos. Curtis and Norgate (2007) carried out the first systematic evaluation of the PATHS curriculum in the UK and they too noted the importance of the whole school ethos in making the intervention effective:

'...staff were committed to PATHS becoming a whole-school initiative by putting time and energy into creating displays in the classrooms and corridors, being flexible in the use of sessions, and involving every member of staff. This emphasis enabled the key messages of PATHS to disseminate successfully through the school, allowing them to generalise beyond the classroom and into areas such as playtimes. The success in creating a whole-school ethos suggests that the senior management team within each school provided effective support for the initiative. Staff were also motivated to employ various skills to teach the curriculum including role play and story telling. As has been shown in previous research (Kam *et al.*, 2003) it is likely that this high quality of implementation and support from senior management contributed to the positive findings within this research.' (2007, p. 42)

This information usefully adds to the 'school wide' feature that Maxwell et al. (2008) identified above as contributing to positive outcomes of S&ES interventions. Curtis and Norgate (2007) also note two attributes - in addition to those identified above by Maxwell et al. - that promoted the effectiveness of this particular S&ES intervention: support from the school's senior management team and high quality of teacher-led implementation in the classroom.

Perry, Lennie and Humphrey (2008) explored teacher's perceptions of implementing emotional literacy (EL) initiatives in UK primary schools. A key issue emerging from their data related to how the development of an emotionally literate school is hindered by staff members who were not, in the words of one participant, 'on board'. The researchers pointed out that lack of staff engagement creates something of a dilemma, as EL cannot be imposed on people; it needs to be created through a whole-school approach. Perry et al. (2008) also found that teachers need to feel that their own emotional needs are being met otherwise such interventions can promote cynicism and make situations worse. There was also evidence to suggest that the communications and relationship between staff members in school could be improved; for example, one teacher stated, 'I'm unsure what other staff do', whilst another talked of 'unresolved conflicts' and 'ineffective communication'. Perry et al. concluded that communication may be a starting point to engage more dissident members of staff, as it is important that there is open communication at all levels when developing an emotionally literate school.

Weare and Gray (2003) conducted a UK-based investigation into the development of emotional and social competence in children. Their research consisted of a review of the literature, interviews with experts in the field and case studies with five good practice LEAs. They identified the following actions for the then DfES (Department for Education and Skills) as being necessary to the implementation of an effective strategy at national and local level:

1. Develop a common language;
2. Find an appropriate strategic location for work in this area;
3. Develop the evidence base;
4. Promote the benefits of work in this area;
5. Prioritise work on emotional and social competence and wellbeing;
6. Take a holistic approach;
7. Ensure coherence, teamwork and the involvement of parents and community;
8. Start early and take a developmental approach;
9. Create appropriate environments;
10. Introduce explicit teaching and learning programmes;
11. Promote teachers' competence and wellbeing.

It can be seen that all of the above four studies concur with Maxwell et al. (2008) in emphasising the importance of adopting a universal, whole-school approach to implementing S&ES interventions in school. Weare and Gray (2003) also re-iterate Maxwell et al.'s point that S&ES programmes in schools need to be 'environment modifying' by stating that it is necessary for schools to foster warm, encouraging and positive environments which promote social and emotional competence.

2.4.3 Research into small group S&ES interventions in the UK

Before discussing the existing body of research into the SEAL programme per se, it is important to emphasise that the focus of the current study is on the targeted or small group work element of the SEAL programme. While the whole-school (Wave 1) SEAL programme can incorporate lessons that involve explicit teaching and learning of S&ES as well as more indirect approaches to promoting these skills (see section 2.2.1), the implementation of SEAL at Wave 2 represents systematic efforts on behalf of school staff to target pupils' S&ES above and beyond opportunities afforded through the universal curriculum. The assumption, therefore, of small group work is that it offers some value added to the teaching and learning that takes place in the mainstream classroom. In this section, consideration will be given to research findings in relation to the implementation of other small group approaches to social and emotional learning in UK schools which have been trialled prior to and/or alongside the Wave 2 SEAL programme. Mention was made in the previous two sections of the PATHS programme; however, this intervention is a whole-school emotional literacy programme. Attention will now be turned to targeted interventions.

Aside from SEAL, a vast number of small group school-based interventions have been developed for enhancing pupils' social and learning, the vast majority of which have originated in the US e.g. the Anger Coping Programme (Lochman, 1992), Fast Track (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999) and the Dinosaur Curriculum administered as part of the Incredible Years Programme (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001). Two widely-used programmes that have been transferred to educational settings in the UK include Circle of Friends and FRIENDS;

the latter of which was referred to in Maxwell et al.'s (2008) review. Each of these approaches will be discussed below.

2.4.3.1 Circle of Friends

Circle of Friends (CoF) originated in the US as an intervention to promote the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable pupils in the mainstream. Newton, Taylor, & Wilson (1996) point out: 'It is a systemic approach that recognises the power of the peer group - and thereby of pupil culture - to be a positive as well as constraining or exacerbating influence on individual behaviour.' A circle usually consists of 6-8 volunteers (most often from the same class or tutor group) who meet regularly (usually weekly) with the 'focus child' and an adult. The circle has three main tasks: to offer encouragement and recognition for successes and progress; to identify difficulties, set targets and devise strategies for achieving targets; and to help put these ideas into practice. Setting up a circle includes the following steps:

- gaining the support and agreement of the focus child and his or her parents
- a meeting with the whole class (which the focus child does not attend) aimed at recruiting volunteers, which takes roughly 30-40 minutes
- informing the parents of volunteers and gaining their agreement to their children's participation
- weekly meetings of the circle, the focus child, and an adult facilitator (taking 20-30 minutes).

Qualitative evaluation studies of CoF published to date have reported encouraging results: for example Newton et al.'s (1996) research in which the intervention was used to support pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools and an illuminative analysis of participants' perspectives and impressions by Whitaker, Barratt, Joy, Potter & Thomas (1998), who set up circles to support pupils diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in both mainstream and special provision. A two-phase small scale quasi-experimental study by Frederickson and Turner (2003) reported positive effects on social acceptance by classmates, although few changes according to other measures of perceptions or behaviour. Frederickson, Warren and Turner (2005) further assessed the impact of Circle of Friends in the medium-term: they found that the initial whole-class meeting was

effective in increasing the social inclusion of the focus children; however, with the exception of one child with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), the weekly CoF meetings produced no measurable further improvements.

Little research has been undertaken into the implementation of CoF; however, and as a follow-up to their aforementioned illuminative study, Barratt, Joy, Potter, Thomas and Whitaker (1998) reflected on the processes involved in setting up this intervention, including the logistics of getting the circles up and running and the complexities of managing and facilitating the group process. The authors make various recommendations, including the following:

- In terms of getting started, it is important for outside agencies (e.g. educational psychology or behaviour support service) to pick 'winners' at the outset. Schools which take issues of Personal and Social Education seriously and which actively promote an ethos of community and mutual support are obviously more likely to be sympathetic to both the purpose and practicalities of the approach. A personal approach to contacting the parents or carers of the focus child is also highlighted.
- Allowing a full hour for the whole-class meeting is necessary to get best value from this session in terms of creating a significant impact on peer attitudes to the focus child as well as subsequent establishment of a circle. Some suspension of the usual adult-pupil relationship is required in order to establish an atmosphere of shared responsibility for helping the focus child.
- Asking members of the class to write 'yes' or 'no' on their own slips of paper is a favoured technique for ensuring confidential selection of volunteers. The task of identifying 6-8 pupils from the affirmative responses is left with school staff, however the authors feel it is preferable that the group is balanced between those who are very able and those who have some difficulties.
- During the first meeting of the circle, the establishment of ground rules (e.g. confidentiality, listening to each other) and a collaborative relationship between the focus child and the rest of the circle is critical.
- Over the course of the circle meetings, the adult's role is to facilitate rather than control or lead the process. This involves holding back from the instinct to teach, direct and protect so as to maximise responsibility and co-operation

within the circle. Finer grained features of this style of delivery include a simple framework for conducting the meetings, allocating roles to the pupils (such as chairperson) and ensuring the children have some prior exposure to group-based discussion work such as circle time in class.

- In view of the above recommendation, the adult retains responsibility for determining the overall boundaries and direction of the circle and for the well-being of participants. There may well be instances where it is necessary for the adult to step in, for example if an individual seems to require support for managing their own reaction to hurtful remarks or if dynamics between the children develop in unexpected and unhelpful directions.
- The facilitating adult can adopt strategies for helping to sustain pupils' intrinsic motivation for helping the focus child including open acknowledgement of the circle members' efforts, assisting the group with setting realistic and attainable targets, and where appropriate ensuring that the personal needs of circle members other than the focus child are met.

2.4.3.2. *FRIENDS*

The FRIENDS Programme is a ten-session cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) programme for children and young people with anxiety delivered in schools either by teachers, nurses or psychologists, initially developed and evaluated in Australia (Barratt et al. 2003; Barratt et al. 2006). Although retaining the core components of CBT for childhood anxiety (exposure, relaxation, cognitive strategies, and contingency management), the FRIENDS programme has a number of distinctive features (Shortt, Barrett and Fox, 2001). For example, it incorporates a family-skills component, which includes cognitive restructuring for parents and partner-support training and encourages families to build supportive social networks. Parents and children are also encouraged to practice the skills learned in FRIENDS as a family, on a daily basis. Also, similar to Circle of Friends, the FRIENDS programme emphasizes peer support and peer learning. Children are encouraged to make friends, to build their social networks and to learn from each other's experiences. Parents are also encouraged to facilitate children's friendships. FRIENDS can be delivered to whole classes of children as a universal, preventative programme

(Farrell and Barrett, 2007) or to smaller groups of children exhibiting anxious behaviours (Dadds, Spence, Holland, Barrett and Laurens, 1997). Stallard and colleagues (2007) attempted to examine the effectiveness of delivering the FRIENDS programme in a UK-school-setting. The programme was delivered to a whole class of Year Fives (children aged 10-11 years old) in one urban and two more rural schools by two trained school nurses, who were supported by the class teacher and any classroom assistants. Significant improvements were noted in children's anxiety and self-esteem levels three months after completing the programmes. However, it is of note that Stallard et al. (2007) evaluated FRIENDS as a universal approach to supporting children's emotional wellbeing and mental health, and that to date there are no published studies in the UK of impact or implementation of FRIENDS when delivered as a small group intervention.

2.4.4 Summary

In spite of the barriers to defining and measuring S&ES, there is a body of research, mostly US-based, that claims to have systematically investigated the impact of S&ES programmes in school settings. Those studies where effect sizes were calculated for whole-school approaches to promoting S&ES indicated small-medium effects on outcome measures. Maxwell et al. (2008) conducted a more broadly based review and identified six high-level attributes that frameworks aiming at enhancing children's S&ES might adopt: promotion of emotional wellbeing and mental health rather than prevention of 'mental illness'; school wide; environment modifying; multi-component; sustained implementation for 1 year plus; targeted cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) work for children and young people with identified needs. The UK-based literature on the implementation of S&ES interventions in schools concurs with Maxwell et al. in highlighting the importance of adopting a whole-school approach and a programme which modifies the wider school environment, while identifying several additional features of successful implementation such as high quality implementation by class teachers and an early, developmental approach. There is little research to date into factors contributing to the successful implementation of small group S&ES interventions in schools; however, researchers of the Circle of Friends intervention have identified some features conducive to success such as

allowing sufficient time for establishing members of the small group and adopting facilitative models of pedagogy when delivering the programme.

2.5 Research into SEAL

2.5.1 The legislative guidance

The conclusions from the academic literature on S&ES interventions in schools, including both systematic and more broadly based reviews, highlight the need for these interventions to be consistent with strategic-level principles conducive to success. The current review now aims to identify the extent to which the available literature on SEAL addresses these points. This will be done by examining both governmental policy and academic research. As stated previously, SEAL is the most recent and widely-recognised S&ES programme to be adopted in British schools and therefore it merits the most investigation in relation to other UK-based interventions of this type.

The document *Excellence and enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning (guidance)*, otherwise known as Primary SEAL, was issued by the Department for Education and Skills in 2005 to be used as a curriculum resource by senior management teams, class teachers, and other members of staff in primary schools, middle schools, special schools and Foundation Stage settings. Its stated aim is to 'provide schools and settings with an explicit, structured whole-curriculum framework for developing all children's social, emotional and behavioural skills.' (2005, p. 5). Within this guidance is a section entitled *The importance of making the SEAL resource part of a whole-school or setting approach*, on the basis that 'for the resource to work well, it is important that the whole school community engage with the materials'. (2005, p.19) It also states that the resource needs to be embedded within a whole school/setting approach and within an environment that supports emotional health and well-being. The guidance appears to concur with most of the factors outlined by the research above as being important to the successful implementation of school-based S&ES interventions:

- senior management commitment to the principles and understanding of the implications;
- school or setting systems which make sure that all individuals feel valued and listened to;
- positive relationships in the school or setting: adult–child, child–child, adult–adult;
- teacher (or practitioner) insight and knowledge into the emotional factors that affect learning;
- clear and consistently implemented policies on behaviour, bullying, race equality and inclusion;
- high professional standards;
- skilful teaching which arouses pupil interest and motivates;
- proactive work with parents;
- the active involvement of children themselves

Appendix 2 of this document is entitled ‘Principles and Features of Effective SEAL Programmes’ and under the sub-section *General principles: ensuring the effectiveness of SEAL programmes* it outlines some of the principles that were identified in Weare and Gray’s (2003) research as stated above:

- Give work on emotional and social competence and well-being a high priority.
- Link work on behavioural and emotional problems with work on emotional and social competence and well-being.
- Take a holistic approach.
- Ensure coherence, teamwork and a multi-professional approach.
- Involve parents and communities.
- Start early, target early and take a long-term, developmental approach.
- Create and support environments that promote emotional and social competence and wellbeing.

It appears, therefore, that the SEAL programme as outlined in the policy document is consistent with and supports principles identified in the academic literature that

underlie the effective implementation of S&ES interventions at a school organisation level. The above document is what schools have available to refer to on a national level. This begs the question as to how schools in 'real life' circumstances are making sense of the recommendations in this document and putting them into practice. SEAL is somewhat unique in relation to the broader literature on approaches to social and emotional learning in that it is envisaged as a loose enabling framework for school improvement rather than a structured 'package' that is applied to schools (Humphrey et al. 2010). Schools are actively encouraged to explore different approaches to implementation that support identified school improvement priorities rather than following a single model, meaning that they can tailor it to their own circumstances and needs. This 'bottom up' style of guidance is in contrast to that which accompanies other, more rigid small group S&ES interventions such as those discussed in section 2.4.3.

2.5.2 Research into the universal (Wave 1) SEAL programme

Hallam, Rhamie and Shaw (2006) carried out an evaluation of the Wave 1 SEAL programme that was implemented as part of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot which took place from 2003-2005 and involved 25 Local Authorities. They found that the programme had a major impact on children's well-being, confidence, social and communication skills, relationships, including bullying, playtime behaviour, pro-social behaviour and attitudes towards schools. In keeping with the findings of the other UK-based research into S&ES interventions discussed above, they concluded that the programme was likely to be implemented successfully where the school leadership were committed to it, where time had been set aside for staff training, where staff valued its principles, and where there was sufficient preparation time.

2.5.3 Research into the small group (Wave 2) SEAL programme

The first systematic evaluation of small group (Wave 2) SEAL in primary schools was carried out by Humphrey et al. (2008) in a study commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The aims of the research were to assess the impact of small group work on children requiring more support in developing their

social and emotional skills and to gather information on successful implementation of small group interventions. The research was carried out in 3 distinct phases: interviews with SEAL leads in 12 Local Authorities across England; quantitative evaluation of impact involving 624 pupils in 37 schools; and detailed case studies of 6 nominated lead practice schools in the north-west of England. The following findings were obtained from each phase of the research:

Local Authority Interviews

- Support for schools typically takes the form of training events, support mechanisms and the provision or joint development of additional materials and resources
- LA staff suggested that successful implementation was influenced strongly by existing work within a given school e.g. Wave 1, other general approaches to social and emotional learning
- They also noted that skills, knowledge and experience of the small group facilitator were crucial
- More 'formal' evaluations of outcome measures are rare as yet
- Key barriers to success included attitudes of staff, misconceptions about the nature and purpose of primary SEAL small group work, and 'initiative overload'

Quantitative impact evaluation

- There was statistically significant evidence that primary SEAL small group work has a positive impact. Each of the 4 theme-based interventions (New Beginnings, Going For Goals, Getting On And Falling Out, Good To Be Me) showed improvements in at least one of the domains measured although the average effect size was small

Case studies

- Staff and pupils suggested that small group work had a positive impact upon pupils' social and emotional skills

- The success of SEAL small group work was influenced by a range of factors such as the skills and experience of the facilitator and the availability of appropriate physical space to conduct the sessions
- Key aspects of effective delivery of small group interventions included setting achievable targets for children, providing acknowledgement and constant reinforcement of desirable behaviour, providing opportunities for pupils to verbalise their emotional experiences, and engendering a sense of fun.

Based on their data from the six case studies, the researchers presented an extended vignette for implementing SEAL small group work (Humphrey et al, 2008; Lendrum et al. 2009), drawing together what they perceived to be the key processes observed across their lead practice case study schools:

- allocation of sufficient time and space for small group work
- a triangulated referral procedure for pupil selection
- ensuring that the small group facilitator has a strong rapport with group members and is able to model social and emotional skills in an effective manner
- securing an appropriate setting for the small group work
- providing additional support back in the classroom
- engendering a sense of fun and enjoyment in small group activities
- making explicit links with SEAL Wave 1 work
- delivering SEAL small group work with a high degree of fidelity to the national guidance
- ensuring that SEAL small group work has an appropriate profile within the school.

Some of the recommendations in this list reflect the overarching principles identified in previous literature for the successful implementation of SEAL and other S&ES interventions in schools. For example, making explicit links with SEAL Wave 1 work and ensuring that small group work has an appropriate profile within the school would seem to suggest the importance of implementing SEAL small group work as a whole-school approach. Additionally, the authors mention issues that are specific to

the implementation of targeted interventions including procedures for pupil selection and creating appropriate conditions for the teaching and learning of S&ES in a small group environment.

2.5.4 Summary

The policy document for the SEAL intervention in primary schools, *Excellence and enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning (guidance)* (DfES, 2005) bases its principles for ensuring the successful implementation of SEAL on the features that were highlighted in Weare and Gray's (2003) review of what schools needed to do to promote S&ES to best effect. Hallam et al.'s (2006) and Humphrey et al.'s (2008) studies provide a useful starting point for future research into the SEAL programme, and show some sensitivity to context and conditions of implementation as well as impact. The recommendations for good practice made by both pieces of research reflect the principles that are upheld in the policy documentation for SEAL and also other broad attributes identified in the academic literature at a whole-school and a targeted level.

2.6 Practical Implementation of SEAL Small Group Work

2.6.1 The Pedagogy behind SEAL

Humphrey et al.'s (2008) vignette provides a useful basis for considering factors that contribute to the successful implementation of SEAL small group work. However, there remains an absence in the research reviewed so far of recommendations at the more practical level of implementing small group SEAL work, particularly where principles underlying the effective teaching and learning of S&ES are concerned. There is also a lack of research into the experiences of and views on implementation of S&ES school-based initiatives 'at the coalface'; since although case studies have been carried out, these may be selective in only offering a limited view of the multiple perspectives that exist in implementing and bringing together SEAL across different levels of the school. Furthermore, any intervention must be interpreted and adopted by teachers and other professionals for use in their particular context, and this

involves a certain degree of translation and adaptation of ideas, practices and resources. Under the accompanying section of the SEAL policy documentation *Specific features of programmes for teaching and learning social, emotional and behavioural skills*, mention is made of different teaching approaches and ways of structuring activities:

- provide learning opportunities which make social, emotional and behavioural skills their explicit focus;
- ensure learning opportunities are participative, experiential and empowering;
- use a step-by-step approach with opportunities for revisiting and building upon skills in a developmentally appropriate way;
- help learners generalise to real life;
- use a positive approach;
- use active methods;
- use whole-class meetings and circle time;
- use cooperative group work and peer-education;
- ensure congruence with the rest of the school;
- develop themed programmes that link with the generic programme

In addition to these relatively broad principles, more detailed schemes of work in relation to each SEAL theme (including individual lesson plans) are provided on the National Strategies website. However, many of the learning outcomes of these 50-60 minute sessions are hugely encompassing in their scope such as 'I know how to be a friend' or 'I know some of the things that make me angry or fall out with my friends' and require a considerable degree of sophistication in the thinking of the children being targeted. It is clear from the above list of features that at least some degree of active learning should be encouraged among the pupils in small groups; however, it is fair to assume that the planning, delivery and assessment of an entirely S&ES-based curriculum – particularly within the context of such a novel and non-prescriptive programme – would initially induce confusion and uncertainty in many primary school practitioners.

Facilitating the learning of S&ES is a complex task, and arguably involves a very different type of teaching and learning to the more instructional modes of pedagogy which have traditionally characterised the delivery of the academic curriculum. Barratt et al. (1998), in their reflections on the delivery of the Circle of Friends intervention (see section 2.4.3.1), strongly suggest that a facilitative approach on behalf of the adult was a successful way of running the small groups, and also that suspension of the usual adult-child boundaries was required in order to help the children speak freely when establishing the circle. It is speculated here that the range and depth of skills being targeted through S&ES interventions, including pupils' awareness, knowledge and understanding of emotions and appropriate social interactions and ways of behaving as well as acquiring those required interactive and behavioural patterns, cannot be achieved through a transmission model of delivery alone. The teaching and learning of S&ES may require a range of approaches on the part of the educator including modelling, knowledge transfer, interactive experiential approaches and meta-cognitive approaches. Therefore, it is hypothesised here that effective pedagogy underlying SEAL SGW will be based on models of the pupil as a learner.

This review will now focus on research into child-centred models of teaching and learning, or pedagogy, with a view to considering how some of the frameworks and theories to be put forward by researchers in this field map onto the teaching and learning of S&ES specifically. Watkins and Mortimore (1999) provide the most comprehensive definition to date of the term 'pedagogy', one that does not only stress the teacher's role and activity but also takes the learner into account: "any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another" (p.3, 1999). Initial research into pedagogy focused on different types of teachers, but then the need to consider teaching in context was recognised. Researchers became interested not only in how teachers organised subject matter in their own minds but also in teachers' ability to understand and apply the subject matter in different ways according to the context of the classes, the sequence of their lessons, and their knowledge of the learning groups and individuals.

Watkins and Mortimore (1999) point out that whereas the above research focuses on instructional forms of pedagogy, later developments in this area have concentrated

on the learner and the process of learning. They cite two models of learners put forward by Bruner (1996): 1. Seeing children as *thinkers*, constructing a model of the world to help them construe their own experience; and 2. Seeing children as *knowledgeable*, testing whether hypotheses stand up in the face of evidence, interpretation and existing knowledge. The implications of both these models, the authors explain, are that they shift the focus from simply trying to transmit information to a group of individual learners to the process of building a community of learners engaged in the generation and evaluation of knowledge. The first model links to the principle that what is learned relates strongly to the situation in which it is learned, because its focus is on sharing knowledge through discussion and collaboration within the context of a particular community. The authors also refer to links with studies demonstrating that effective learners are proactive in their meta-cognitions i.e. their thinking about their thinking, and their own process of learning. These learners may have a more fluent understanding of their own learning than others and may possess the ability to 'talk themselves through' difficulties which arise.

Gipps and MacGilchrist (1999) sought to identify some significant factors that primary practitioners needed to understand in order to maximise their effectiveness in the classroom. They argue that, '...to become more effective, teachers need to develop a much more sophisticated understanding about learning and the impact that their beliefs and attitudes about learning and learners can have on what – and how – they teach in the classroom' (p.47, 1999). With reference to Bruner's (1996) aforementioned research into meta-cognition, they emphasise the importance of thinking and meaning-making in education and explain that the learner must be seen as active. This involves teachers encouraging children to think about what they are learning, to make sense of it and to link it with other concepts, constructs or pieces of information. By way of illustrating this point, they cite a couple of examples of effective pedagogy in action. In Askew et al.'s (1997) study of teachers of numeracy, three 'teaching orientations' were identified: connectionist, transmission and discovery. The most effective teachers were found to be connectionist and believed in the value of getting the children to think and talk about what they were learning, and to make connections among different areas of mathematics and different ideas in the same area of mathematics. Medwell et al.'s (1998) study of teaching of literacy also found that successful teachers placed a high priority on meaning and making

connections, in this case between reading and writing. Gipps and MacGilchrist maintain that for lifelong learning to become a reality for children, primary teachers need to continue to learn how to develop children as thinkers.

Mention is made in Humphrey et al.'s (2008) study of the elements that seemed to characterise successful delivery of the SEAL small group sessions, such as 'Securing an appropriate setting for the small group work' and 'Engendering a sense of fun and enjoyment in small group activities'. But understanding about how to successfully adopt and implement SEAL small group work so that it functions to develop S&ES among students requires more than this. The current study seeks to identify in more depth the models of pedagogy that facilitators of SEAL small group work adopt during their delivery of the small group sessions and to establish the extent to which children are active in learning S&ES. This research also aims to discover whether the approach to teaching and learning S&ES in small groups is similar to that used in the classroom and throughout the rest of the school. The assumption of targeted interventions like Wave 2 SEAL is that putting children in small groups is more likely to lead to a positive impact and the current research aims to find out why.

2.6.2 Other Aspects of Implementing SEAL Small Group Work

As stated above, in their investigation of factors contributing to the successful implementation of SEAL small group work Humphrey et al. (2008) referred to several different aspects of implementing the intervention. These aspects included the extent to which the SEAL small group intervention was integrated into the whole-school ethos and the methods of teaching and learning that characterised the delivery of the small group sessions, both of which have been discussed in previous sections of the current review. Other aspects of implementation alluded to by Humphrey et al. include the reinforcement of messages from SEAL small group work in the classroom (hence the more operational level of integrating SEAL into the whole-school system) and procedures around pupil selection. The current study seeks to explore these latter two aspects of implementing SEAL small group work in more detail. Humphrey et al. recommend 'a triangulate referral procedure for pupil

selection' thus it would be useful to explore what this procedure can look like in practice as well as identify more closely the profiles of pupils who are chosen to be part of the SEAL small groups.

This study also deems it relevant to look at the training and support that facilitators receive for implementing SEAL small group work and the measures that participating primary schools use to evaluate the outcomes of this intervention. Information provided at the start of this review (see section 2.3) relates to difficulties around measuring the concepts intended to be targeted through the SEAL programme; therefore, the current study seeks to find out how school practitioners have attempted this more elusive aspect of SEAL small group work implementation. With regard to training and support provided to the staff allocated to facilitate SEAL small groups, it is important to note that for logistical reasons SEAL small group work cannot be delivered by the Class Teachers and so this role often falls to support staff if not the SENCO (e.g. TA, LSA, Learning Mentor). For the last fifteen years the number of support staff in schools has greatly increased and recent research has focused on how support staff can be most effectively deployed. A systematic review by Alborz, Pearson, Farrell and Howes (2009) showed that where support staff were prepared and trained for specific curricular interventions (most of the studies they looked at were in the area of literacy), with support and guidance from the teacher and school about practice, there tended to be positive effects on pupil progress. Thus, previous research on targeted interventions suggests that with appropriate training and guidance support staff can have a beneficial role to play at least where pupils' academic progress is concerned. This research aims to uncover the support mechanisms and training programmes that are available to support staff regarding the SEAL small group programme, both from other school staff and outside professionals.

It now seems that Humphrey et al.'s recommendations need to be accompanied by more extensive implementation guidance that will help practitioners in schools put the espoused organisational principles of SEAL into practice; and thereby promote S&ES in an effective manner at a both a strategic and an operational level.

2.6.3 Summary

The SEAL documentation and Humphrey et al.'s (2008) study make some reference to the different approaches that can be adopted by school staff who teach S&ES; however little information is provided on the activities that children are expected to undertake in their small groups. Research into pedagogy across the whole of the primary curriculum concludes that more attention needs to be paid to the combination of interactive-experiential learning and meta-cognition and therefore to the practical strategies which teachers can use to facilitate children's thinking and learning of S&ES. The current study aims to investigate models of pedagogy that characterise the delivery of SEAL small group work as well as other practical aspects of the programme's implementation, including the extent to which it is integrated into the whole-school curriculum, training and support available to the facilitator of SEAL small group work, methods of selecting pupils for the programme and means of evaluating outcomes.

2.7 The current study

2.7.1 Context of the study

Some mention was made in Chapter One of the local context in which this research was conducted. It is important to re-iterate that the current study was conducted in an inner-London borough, where there were high levels of deprivation relative to other local authorities across England. It would have been valuable to consider the extent to which the findings obtained from the current study were conditioned by the demographic of this particular local authority. Maxwell et al.'s (2008) stated that there is a transferability problem for research based on different demographics, policy and service context between the United States and Britain, and the same point may well be true for different geographical areas of England. However, this question, while an interesting and worthwhile one to explore, does not relate to the current research questions which focus on the views and experiences of a small sample of primary school practitioners regarding how they have approached the implementation of a relatively new school-based S&ES intervention. To fully address issues of

transferability of findings from studies such as this one would involve conducting research in many different local authorities across England. The requirements of completing a professional doctorate meant that the current study could only be conducted within one single local authority.

2.7.2 Research rationale

The rationale for the current research is that more information is needed about how to develop S&ES interventions for children and young people in the UK, particularly small-group interventions that involve targeted support. The literature on this topic remains scarce, and as Wigelsworth et al. (2010) state, 'has not kept pace' with the increasing emphasis in both legislation and practice on promoting S&ES in schools and other community-based settings. It is therefore important to continue building the evidence base relative to S&ES interventions in schools, both in terms of the extent of their effectiveness (impact) and factors that relate to their successful implementation. To date there has been little research into the SEAL programme at both Waves 1 and 2 despite it being the most recent and widely implemented S&ES intervention in UK schools. Systematic investigations into the impact of SEAL are fraught with ongoing methodological issues including difficulties around defining and measuring the constructs of S&ES, as well as the more generic obstacles to conducting empirical research such as the reported lack of control and comparison groups and the lack of longitudinal assessment. The scope of these issues is beyond the remit of the current research. However one study that can be realistically and usefully undertaken is a detailed investigation of how a small sample of primary schools in an inner-London local authority are implementing the small group (Wave 2) SEAL intervention to the everyday fabric of school life.

The current study is an investigation of the implementation of the SEAL small group programme in a small sample of inner-city primary schools in London, in light of prior research that identifies effective approaches to developing children's emotional well-being in UK schools and the SEAL programme guidance. The current study focuses on elements of pedagogy underlying SEAL as well as other practical aspects of implementation that have not been addressed by previous literature.

Having identified in the current review a) principles of best practice in implementation of S&ES interventions in UK schools that academic research highlights as being most effective in delivering positive outcomes, b) the degree to which the SEAL programme is consistent with and supports such principles, and c) principles of effective pedagogy that may underlie small group S&ES interventions, the current study now seeks to identify the extent to which practical implementation of SEAL small group work (SGW) in the current sample of schools is consistent with these principles. Specifically the current study aims to examine the implementation strategies and practices adopted by educators within participating schools with respect to SEAL small group work, seeking to understand:

- The linkage between SEAL small group work and the whole-school ethos
- The linkage between SEAL small group work and the teaching and learning of S&ES in the mainstream classroom
- The selection process for participants in the programme
- The style of teaching and learning that characterises the small group sessions
- The training and support that facilitators of SEAL small group work receive
- The way in which measurement of outcomes is undertaken.

The above findings it is hoped will provide a perspective on the alignment between what is implemented 'on the ground' in each school - and its vehicle, the SEAL programme - and best practice as identified by academic research.

2.7.3 Research Questions

The research questions which lead on from the aims of the current study are as follows:

1. How does SEAL small group work fit in with / complement the whole-school ethos?

2. How are the messages in SEAL small groups reinforced in the classroom and other contexts within school?
3. How are pupils selected for the SEAL small group sessions?
4. What methods of teaching and learning characterise the delivery of the SEAL small group sessions?
5. What training and support do facilitators receive for implementing SEAL small group work?
6. How are the outcomes of SEAL small group work evaluated?

Chapter Three - Methodology

3.1 Overview

The previous chapter indicates a lack of research into the practical implementation of small-group programmes for social and emotional skills (S&ES) - including SEAL - in UK primary school settings. This is despite increasing reference to children and young people's S&ES in the legislation (the Children's Plan, (DCSF), 2007; the primary curriculum review (Rose, 2009)), as well as the growing emphasis in the literature on ways of promoting children's social and emotional wellbeing (Weare and Gray, 2003).

This chapter presents the rationale for the research design and outlines the specific approach to data collection and analysis, with reference to the overall research aim and related questions of this study. Details of the sample, procedure and other preparatory work will also be discussed.

3.2 Research Design and Assumptions

The broad aim of this study was to explore the processes by which staff members from a sample of inner-London primary schools implemented the SEAL small group intervention in their respective settings. Related to this aim, the research questions of this study were focused on the following aspects of implementation: links between SEAL SGW and the whole-school ethos, links between SEAL SGW and social and emotional learning in the classroom, training and support for the facilitator of SEAL SGW, processes of selecting pupils for the intervention, methods of teaching and learning adopted by the SEAL small group facilitator, and evaluation of outcomes.

In order to answer these questions, I set out to elicit primary school staff members' accounts of the aforementioned aspects of making SEAL SGW practicable in their respective settings. I therefore assumed that the data to be gathered in this study was a reflection of participants' subjective experiences of the SEAL SGW

intervention as opposed to an objective reality per se. The present study, therefore, adopted a social constructionist perspective. This perspective challenges the notion of taken-for-granted knowledge and "... invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world un-problematically yield its nature to us" (Burr, 2003, p.3). Within this theoretical framework, it follows that a person's account of a phenomenon does not necessarily bear a direct relation to the outside world and so is not akin to uncovering a factual record. This standpoint can be viewed in opposition to what is referred to as positivism and empiricism in traditional science; that knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. The development of social constructionist psychology is underpinned by the discipline of Symbolic Interactionism, which acknowledges that meanings are negotiated and influenced by the daily interactions that take place between people in the course of their social life (Blumer 1969, Denzin 1995). The present study is based on the philosophical assumption that what respondents say has significance, and is based on their own 'reality'. In this way it is reality for the individuals concerned that is valued and explored.

In keeping with the philosophy outlined above, I considered a qualitative approach most appropriate in order to address the overall research question: How do members of primary school staff implement the SEAL small group intervention? Qualitative research aims to uncover how individuals interpret the world and how they experience events (Willig, 2001). Creswell (2007) explains that researchers who adopt qualitative methodologies are accepting the notion that multiple realities exist. That is a perspective which recognises that experiences are unique to each individual and that individuals make sense of their experiences in different ways. In the context of the current research, I appreciated that participant's accounts of how they had approached the implementation of the SEAL small group programme would differ from person to person and from school to school. Although there are apparently universal principles underlying the effective implementation of S&ES interventions in UK schools identified in the literature, the aim here was to discover what school practitioners' subjective experiences have been in view of these principles and, therefore, to shed some light on how participants have made sense of what is still a relatively new, albeit widely used targeted S&ES intervention for primary aged children in English schools.

It is important to point out that qualitative research is concerned with validity rather than reliability. The aim of such research, therefore, is not to produce results that can be replicated at a later date with another sample or researcher but to develop a rich and in-depth understanding of the area under investigation (Hayes, 2000). The considerable value of this approach is that it permits the researcher to explore new topics and discover new phenomena; to analyse subtle, interacting effects of context and time; and to engage with participants to create new understandings (Yardley, 2003).

3.3 Participants

In view of the aim of the current study, which was to elicit the experiences of school practitioners in making SEAL SGW practicable, my intended sample at the planning stage of the research were primary school staff members who were involved at any level in implementing SEAL SGW. In spite of individual differences between school's organisational structures, I anticipated that there would be at least the following four categories of SEAL SGW stakeholder in each of the participating schools: 1. The Facilitator of SEAL SGW (it was expected that in most cases this staff member would be the school's Learning Mentor or a member of support staff); 2. The/a Class Teacher of pupils attending the SEAL SGW sessions; 3. The SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator); and 4. A member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). It was my aim to involve participants from each of these four roles within each of the five schools approached. This would have yielded a total sample size of twenty participants. I assumed that a sample size of twenty would provide information of sufficient breadth and depth to answer the current research questions as well as offer new insights into topics that I had not previously considered.

Initially, I sought and received provisional consent to participate from three primary schools in the local authority who were implementing SEAL small group work. Contact was made in the Autumn Term of 2009 via the borough's Primary Behaviour Consultant, who at that time was the lead co-ordinator for rolling out the primary SEAL SGW programme in schools. Following this initial contact, I made direct

contact with these schools to confirm that they were still interested in participating and to provide further information about the research. This was followed up by a visit to each school. Having met with school staff members in person, I established that two of the schools remained in a position to participate: the Learning Mentor in one of the schools explained that the SEAL small group work intervention was no longer running. In order to restore the size of the sample to three schools, I approached staff at one of my link schools as a TEP who had more recently begun implementing SEAL SGW and secured their interest in participating in the study.

In the Autumn Term of 2010, the link school of mine ceased to run the SEAL small group programme. In order to recruit three further 'new' schools for the sample, I approached the local authority's Learning Mentor Co-ordinator, who provided an updated list of all the primary schools in the borough whose Learning Mentors were known to be facilitating SEAL small group work. The list also included schools whose Learning Mentors would be receiving training for facilitating the intervention in January 2011. I made contact with all schools either currently or soon to be implementing primary SEAL SGW, and secured consent to participate from three schools, thereby obtaining the required sample size of five schools.

Data were collected over the Spring Term of 2011. Of the finalised five participating schools, one school was no longer able to participate due to an internal dispute between staff members that were to be interviewed. For this reason, I deemed it no longer appropriate to collect data from the given school. By the beginning of March 2011, I had collected data from four schools: two were from the initial sample having been contacted by the borough's Primary Behaviour Consultant; and the other two were identified from the list provided by the borough's Learning Mentor Co-ordinator. Due to time constraints, and also the ongoing difficulty of making contact with schools not already known to the researcher, I decided in conjunction with my research supervisors to finish data collection in Mid-March of 2011. Figure 1 in Appendix 3 summarises the sampling process over the research, including the methods of identification employed at each stage.

The actual total sample size for this study was 15 participants: four different staff members or stakeholders from three of the four participating schools (Schools A, B

and D), and three different staff members from the other participating school (School C). Given that each school's system was unique in terms of which particular staff members were most involved in implementing the SEAL SGW programme, I maintained some flexibility regarding the categories of stakeholders who were selected. Table 1 in Appendix 3 illustrates both the commonalities and variation between schools of the positions held by the different staff members who participated in the study.

It is important to note how class teachers were selected, given that in each of the participating schools there were children from more than one class or year group partaking in the SEAL SGW intervention at any one time. My decision about which teacher to interview was guided by the SENCo or principle co-ordinator of SEAL SGW in each school: I assumed that the SENCo or main co-ordinator would have a good overview of which staff members were most involved in the SEAL SGW intervention, and that they would accordingly solicit the participation of the class teacher who was best placed to comment on the various aspects of its implementation. In allowing my sample selection to be determined by other participants I acknowledged the inherent bias in my sample; for example the possibility of the social desirability effect whereby only the most enthusiastic or knowledgeable class teachers were selected to speak with me. In school D, the two class teacher who participated (see Table 1 in Appendix) were the only teachers whose classes consisted of children attending the SEAL small group sessions and so there was no decision to make with regard to which teachers to speak to.

In the interests of providing as much contextual detail as possible, I have provided a case profile of each of the four schools in the final sample below. The case profiles provide background information on each school, and are drawn from participants' responses during data collection and supporting documentation, including recent OFSTED reports.

Schools A-D are all mainstream primary schools situated in the same local authority in an inner city area of London. All schools are located within two square miles of one another.

School A

School A is a one-form entry school for children aged 3-11 with 235 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are from African and Caribbean backgrounds. About two thirds of pupils have home languages other than English and about one in four are at an early stage of learning English. The numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, and of those who receive support for their learning difficulties or disabilities, are above average. The numbers of pupils who join the school other than at the start of Year 1 or through the Foundation Stage is close to the national average. Those who join the school in the higher year groups are mainly new to the country and have limited knowledge of the English language. The school has achieved Healthy School status and been awarded the Activemark. The school's SLT consists of the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head who is also the SENCo. School A initially implemented SEAL for a period of one year but then disbanded it due to logistical difficulties around implementation and perceived overlap with other S&ES initiatives. School A re-launched the whole-school SEAL programme two years ago, with the small group work element being introduced more recently (last academic year). SEAL has an emerging profile in the school

School B

This is a two-form entry school for children aged 3-11, with 414 pupils on the school roll. Pupils come from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds: the largest group, and a far higher proportion than usual, have Bangladeshi backgrounds. Two thirds are at an early stage of speaking English. The range of first languages is very wide. 47% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, and is high for those with statements of special educational needs. Most of these are related to dyslexia, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, or difficulties in the autistic spectrum. The school has achieved several awards including Healthy Schools and Artsmark Gold. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school's SLT comprises the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head, an Upper School Assistant Head and a Lower School Assistant Head. School B began implementing SEAL as a whole-school programme seven years ago and the SEAL SGW element was introduced 'officially' as a consequence of this; prior to the development of SEAL small group work per se, School B ran similar interventions

for children in need of extra support to develop their social and emotional difficulties. Staff members at School B were involved in a pilot project run by the borough's Primary Behaviour Consultant in the academic year of 2007 to 2008 to help develop and roll out materials for SEAL small group work provided by the local authority. SEAL has a high profile within the school.

School C

School C is a one-form entry school for children aged 3-11 where 231 pupils are on roll. Almost 90% of pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest being Black Caribbean. Over two fifths of pupils speak an additional language to English and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 44. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average. Many of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Many pupils join and leave the school outside normal times. The school has awards for promoting inclusion and physical education. It is part of an education action zone that provides additional resources for curriculum enrichment. The school's SLT consists of the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head and an Assistant Head. School C began implementing SEAL four years ago. As with School B, key members of staff were involved in the pilot project that led to the release of materials and resources for SEAL small group work in the Summer Term of 2008. Following this project, the small group work element of SEAL was introduced at School C. SEAL has an extremely high profile within the school.

School D

School D is a two-form entry school for children aged 3-11 with 396 pupils on role. It is situated in a racially, religious and culturally diverse area with features of significant socio-economic disadvantage. 35% of its pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. About one third of these are at the early stages of speaking English. There is a wide variety of minority ethnic groups and over thirty different languages spoken in the school. The largest minority ethnic groups are from Turkish, Black African and Caribbean backgrounds. About one tenth of the pupils are from refugee or asylum seeking families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and those who have a statement of special educational need is above average. There

are high but reducing levels of pupil mobility. The school's SLT, due to there being no Head Teacher at the time of the research, was structured as follows: an Executive Head Teacher, a Partnership Assistant Head, and an Associate Deputy Head all based at another primary school in the borough; a Deputy Head based within School D; and two Assistant Heads who are also classroom teachers at School D. School D began implementing SEAL two years ago. The small group work element was introduced around the same time but was disbanded after one year due to issues around funding of support staff. SEAL SGW at School D was re-launched in January of this academic year. SEAL has an emerging profile within the school.

In School B, it was not the school SENCO who held the principle co-ordinating role with regard to SEAL SGW, but the member of staff whose position in the school was the Extended Schools and Pastoral Care Manager (ESPCM). In School C, the permanent SENCO was on maternity leave and it was felt by all school staff that the new, interim SENCO did not have experience of implementing SEAL SGW to be able to participate. However, as can be seen in Table 1 (Appendix 3), the participating class teacher was also the school's PSHE co-ordinator and played a significant co-ordinating role with regard to the SEAL SGW programme. At the time of the research, the SLT in School D was in a state of flux – consisting of an Associate Head and Deputy Head from another school (see case profile above) – with no internal senior member of staff sufficiently well placed to comment on the SEAL SGW intervention; therefore it was considered more appropriate and sensitive to that school's context to solicit participation instead from both class teachers of pupils who were attending the SEAL SGW sessions.

3.4 Data Collection

The present research employed semi-structured interviews. Pilot work was conducted in the summer of 2010 before data 'proper' was collected in the Spring Term of 2011.

3.4.1 Pilot Work

In June 2010 I piloted a draft interview schedule with one staff member from each of the initial three primary schools who agreed and were able to participate in the research: the SENCO and the SEAL SGW facilitator respectively from the two schools contacted by the Primary Behaviour Consultant earlier that year, and the facilitator of SEAL SGW at the researcher's link primary school as a TEP. The piloting process aimed to develop interviewing techniques and to inform the interview schedule's design. The pilot interviews highlighted the following areas for development in interviewing technique:

- avoidance of leading questions
- greater use of open-ended questions
- greater use of pauses
- knowing which areas to pursue further
- greater exploration of participants' responses where the meaning was unclear

The piloting procedure also served the purpose of delineating respective topics or lines of enquiry to be explored in further detail or discarded.

3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviewing

Qualitative interviews enable researchers to understand experiences and reconstruct events of which they have no first-hand experience (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that:

"The research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an 'inter view', an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest."

(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.2).

I decided to employ semi-structured interviews in the current study because they afforded me the opportunity to clarify information and follow up on interesting issues that were particular to the schools and educators, while allowing the participating

adults working in primary schools to talk freely and openly about their experiences of implementing SEAL SGW. As well as enabling the researcher to follow up on novel areas that emerge in the interview, this approach to interviewing facilitates rapport and empathy between the researcher and the respondent; and it therefore tends to produce richer data than a structured interview or questionnaire approach (Smith, 1995).

For the present study, and in line with the guidance provided by Smith and Osborn (2003), I identified topic headings in relation to the research questions and used them as a guide for the interview (see Appendix 4). Three different interview schedules were devised according to the following categories of school staff respectively: 1. The SEAL SGW Facilitator; 2. The Class Teacher of pupils who were attending SEAL small group sessions; and 3. The SENCo and the senior member of staff. Topics covered across all of the interview schedules included the following areas drawn directly from the research questions: training and support for the facilitator, pupil selection, methods of teaching and learning, links with the whole-school SEAL programme, generalisability to the mainstream classroom and other contexts in school, and evaluation of outcomes. Chapter Two identified some of the factors contributing to the successful implementation of SEAL SGW and other school-based interventions, both universal and targeted, for promoting pupils' social and emotional skills. The research reported here aimed to explore the extent to which members of staff in the present study felt that these factors were important in relation to the implementation of primary SEAL SGW in their own settings, and also allowed them to identify other events or experiences that were significant for them.

It was acknowledged by the researcher that some members of school staff would be better placed than others to talk about given topics; therefore topic headings were selectively included in each interview schedule, with only SENCos and senior staff members being asked about all six areas previously mentioned. However the level of depth in which each topic was explored varied between different groups of participants. For example, more questions around the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills were posed to the facilitators of SEAL SGW given that they were the members of staff most directly involved in delivering the programme to pupils.

To facilitate rapport and to enable staff to speak freely and comfortably the interview was conducted more like an informal conversation, including open-ended questions and an emphasis on narrative and experience, than a structured sequence of questions and answers. A particularly general and open-ended question - regarding what staff members themselves thought of the SEAL small group intervention - was used at the start of each interview to put participants at ease and engender a sense of ownership over their responses, before moving on to discuss questions that were guided by the topic headings formulated by the researcher. This also allowed participants to raise issues which then the interviewer responded to rather than questioning being led by the interviewer. Members of staff other than the SEAL SGW facilitator were asked to explain how they defined their own role in relation to the implementation of the SEAL small group programme as this varied considerably from school to school. As the interviewees talked, questions were asked to encourage elaboration where events or experiences were not fully described.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical permission was sought from and granted by the Institute of Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Particular points covered in the application (see Appendix 5) included ensuring that participants had been provided with enough information to give informed consent and emphasising that all data obtained would remain anonymous and confidential in the write-up of the study, with participants remaining unidentifiable by others on the basis of what they said. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time. The research adhered to the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2006). Permission from the Principal Educational Psychologist of the local authority and the Head Teacher of each of the participating schools was obtained before embarking on the interviews. Formal consent to take part in the research was confirmed with participants themselves at the start of each interview.

3.6 Procedure

Once the Head Teacher of each of the participating schools had agreed for staff to take part in the research, the SENCO of the school was contacted to discuss the research and to arrange a time for the interviews to be conducted. In School D, where there was no Head Teacher – the school was being run by an Associate Head attached to another primary school in the borough – permission was sought from the school SENCO. Interviews were conducted at the convenience of school staff on the school premises in a quiet location where distractions could be kept to a minimum.

At the outset, the researcher introduced herself in person to participants whom she was not already known to and outlined the purposes of the research. Staff members were informed of the anticipated duration of the interview and asked if they had any questions with regard to the procedure before the interview began. They were also asked if they would consent to the interview being recorded using a digital voice recorder. All interviews were recorded and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

At the end of each interview, staff members were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback about the experience of the interview. Verbatim transcripts of each interview were produced (see Appendix 6 for a sample transcript).

3.7 Data Analysis

This section outlines the rationale for the chosen method of data analysis in the current study: thematic analysis. It then provides details about the particular strategy used within this methodological framework for analysing the interview data gathered.

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis offers a qualitative approach deemed suitable for use in psychology (e.g. Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was decided that this technique should be used to analyse data in the present study as it offered the most appropriate match to the overall research aim; to explore how members of staff from a small sample of primary schools approached the implementation of the SEAL SGW intervention.

Thematic analysis is a useful and flexible method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (or themes) within data. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis as a methodology in its own right overcomes the problems faced by researchers who wish to identify and analyse themes in the data, but who do not, or are not able to, subscribe to the theoretical or epistemological positions to which other qualitative approaches are tied. For the current study, I wished to maintain some flexibility regarding the extent to which my analysis of the data was top-down (theory driven) or bottom-up (data driven) - a point which will be explained in more detail later - so I therefore favoured thematic analysis over other, more-theoretically grounded qualitative methodological approaches including Grounded Theory (e.g. Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (e.g. Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

I considered using thematic analysis as part of a multiple case study design, given that sensitivity to the context of participants' experiences is an important part of demonstrating the validity of qualitative research (Yardley, 2003). However, given that the total sample size was only fifteen, I was keen to elicit the 'story' or set of experiences of each individual staff member who participated. The advantage, I felt, of carrying out one overall thematic analysis of participants' responses as opposed to four separate case study analyses was that it enabled me to make sense of each person's story irrespective of issues that were specific to each school and the dynamics between participants from the same school. A single integrated analysis also ensured that outlying views expressed by school staff were less likely to be eliminated from the overall picture painted by the data analysis. With a small sample size, the most valid way of extracting general information about SEAL SGW implementation was arguably to first look at individual staff members' responses; and then second, to make inferences about implementation within and between school organisations.

A number of decisions were made before embarking on the collection of data. According to the model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) it is necessary to determine whether the primary aim of the research is to provide a rich description across the entire data set, identifying predominant themes, or whether the analysis is

intended to provide a more detailed in-depth account of one particular theme. In the research reported here, the aim was to identify, code, and analyse themes to reflect some of the content of the whole data set in relation to some fairly specific research questions around the different aspects of implementing the SEAL SGW intervention. In my own thematic analysis, my intention was to produce accounts of themes that were most relevant to my research questions while being open to identifying additional themes that emerged, rather than to analyse the whole of the data set.

A key distinction is made in thematic analysis between *theoretical* and *inductive* identification of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An inductive approach involves a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. A theoretical analysis on the other hand is influenced by the researcher's prior theoretical knowledge, and does not render it problematic for the researcher to have pre-determined key ideas that may be identified in the data. The research reported here occupies a middle ground between these two approaches to data analysis. I had drawn up some relatively well-defined research questions and shared the sentiments of Humphrey et al. (2008), who stated, 'our interpretations need to be meaningful to policy-makers and the educators whose work is being explored – thus, by creating categories drawn from our research questions, we are able to connect more directly with practice.' (p. 56: 2008). However, I was keen to ensure that my thematic analysis would be sufficiently flexible to allow new categories of meaning to be identified. It was important in the current research to explore the issues pertinent to facilitators and other staff members who are involved in implementing primary SEAL small group work in an inner city area of London. Therefore, some degree of being guided by the topics that participants cared about most when coding for themes was important. The thematic analysis undertaken here allowed for both theoretically driven coding and inductive emergence of themes.

3.7.2 Analytical Strategy

Consistent with a 'contextualist' tradition, interview transcripts were subject to a thematic analysis at a semantic level rather than a latent level (involving

interpretation and going beyond what has directly been said, before themes are identified). At a semantic level, themes are identified from the explicit or surface meaning of the data. The information given by the interview is taken at face value and themes are drawn directly from what is said. Data are organised to show patterns in the semantic content and are then interpreted.

I adapted the following 6 phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) in such a way that I could answer the current research questions:

- *Familiarising yourself with the data*

Prior to transcription all interviews were listened to in full, and any initial thoughts documented. Each transcript was then read a number of times, with ideas of possible themes and patterns being noted each time.

- *Generating initial codes*

During this stage I began to apply initial codes to units of meaningful text that appeared relevant to my research questions. The same unit of text could be included in more than one category. Units of text belonging to the same category were grouped together, thus collating data relevant to each code. Several codes were subsequently amalgamated with others or discarded if they were felt upon further consideration not to match the data extracts. The process of amalgamating and discarding codes was then further refined until all the data under each code was felt to reflect the same type of information.

- *Searching for themes*

The next stage involved organising the codes into potential themes. A theme here was taken to be “an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations.” DeSantis & Ugarriza (2000) (p. 362). At this point some initial codes were extended and some

were discarded. All remaining extracts of data were coded according to a number of main themes and sub themes.

- *Reviewing themes*

Themes were reviewed to ensure that data within a theme were correctly placed. Where extracts did not fit, the theme was investigated again to ensure that it was not the theme itself that was inadequate. Once a set of themes was produced that was deemed to represent a 'good enough' reflection of the data, the next step of the analysis was undertaken.

- *Defining and naming themes*

The final phase involved precisely defining and naming the themes. In total, six themes were indicated. These themes, their constituent sub-themes, and categories where applicable, were shared with my research supervisors to ensure their robustness. Where there was disagreement about where to place categories and sub-themes, I have justified my final decisions in Chapter Five. Full details of themes, sub-themes and codes are shown in Appendix 7.

Chapter Four - Findings

4.1 Overview of Themes and Sub-Themes

Six themes were identified from an overall thematic analysis of the data. These themes reflected the different aspects of implementing the Primary SEAL Small Group programme across four school settings. The integration of SEAL SGW into the whole-school curriculum, including links with the whole school ethos and links with the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills in the classroom, was a particularly salient theme. Processes and issues regarding pupil selection were also felt to be an important aspect of implementing SEAL SGW. This second theme shed light on staff member's perceptions of the purpose of the SEAL small group intervention as well as procedures for identifying potential candidates. The methods of teaching and learning that characterised the delivery of the SEAL small group sessions emerged as another theme and encompassed the following sub-themes: child-centred models of pedagogy; the skills and qualities of the facilitator; and the value added of learning S&ES in a small group environment. The remaining themes to emerge from the data analysis were training and support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator, processes and issues around evaluating the outcomes of SEAL SGW and links between SEAL SGW and non-school based settings.

The table below (Table 2) outlines all themes and sub-themes. For larger themes (i.e. Themes 1-3), each theme with its constituent sub-themes and categories is illustrated at the outset of the related section. The categories and/or sub-themes are made up of one or more of the individual codes shown in Appendix 7. The sub-themes are considered individually and are illustrated with examples from interviews with the various members of primary school staff. Due to constraints on space, only one supporting quotation per section of narrative is included, and for less salient points there are no supporting quotations; instead, these or other quotations have been placed in Appendix 8 to show the scope of the data gathered. Quotations have been attributed to individuals by ascribing their positions held within school and a letter indicating in which of the four participating schools they were based.

Table 2 Themes and Sub-Themes

- Theme One - Integration of SEAL Small Group Work into the Whole School Curriculum
 - **Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos**
 - **Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Learning of S&ES In The Mainstream Classroom**

- Theme Two - Processes and Issues Regarding Pupil Selection
 - **Procedures for Selecting Pupils for SEAL Small Group Work**
 - **Profiles of Children in the SEAL small groups**

- Theme Three - Teaching and Learning during SEAL Small Group Work
 - **Child-Centred Models of Pedagogy**
 - **Skills and Qualities Required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator**
 - **Value Added of the SEAL Programme in a Small Group Context**

- Theme Four - Training and Support for SEAL Small Group Facilitator
 - **Training and Support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator from the Local Authority**
 - **Support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator within School**
 - **Resources and Materials Available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator**

- Theme Five - Processes and Issues Around Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL Small Group Work
 - **Methods of Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL Small Group Work**
 - **Difficulties with Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL Small Group Work**

- Theme Six - Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Non-School Based Settings
 - **Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Home Environment**
 - **Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Adult Life**

4.2 Theme One - Integration of SEAL Small Group Work into the Whole School Curriculum

Many comments related to the extent to which SEAL SGW appeared to be integrated in the whole school curriculum on both a strategic and an operational

level. The strategic aspects of integrating the SEAL small group intervention into the whole school system were reflected in comments regarding links between SEAL SGW and the whole school ethos; operational aspects of integration were reflected in comments concerning links between SEAL SGW and the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills in the mainstream classroom. Table 3 outlines the sub-themes and categories of Theme One.

Table 3 Theme One - Integration of SEAL Small Group Work into the Whole School Curriculum

- Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos
 - **Strong Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos**
 - **Uncertain / Tenuous Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos**

- Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Learning of S&ES In The Mainstream Classroom
 - **Strong Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of S&ES in the Mainstream Classroom**
 - **Uncertain / Tenuous Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of S&ES in the Mainstream Classroom**

4.2.1 Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos

This sub-theme considered comments made about the strength of links between the SEAL SGW intervention and the vision of each participating school. Many comments were related to the SEAL small group programme being a significant part of the whole school ethos, whereas other comments suggested that the SEAL small group intervention was less well embedded within the school's set of underlying beliefs and attitudes. The comment below, made by the Head Teacher of School C, seemed to reflect a common thread running through all of the responses under this sub-theme:

...it's about what you value isn't it? (HT, School C)

4.2.1.1 Strong Links

Over half of all the participating staff members spoke positively about the SEAL small group intervention and expressed an awareness of its potential value and utility for the children. A senior member of staff asserted the benefits of SEAL SGW, particularly in view of the composition of one of her year groups:

(INT): ... what do you think about small group SEAL as an intervention?

(RES): Absolutely brilliant when you've got a class of 22 boys and 8 girls in year 2 that have very immature boys as well and need a lot of identified and targeted support. (HT, School C)

This member of staff also pointed out the willingness of her team of staff to embrace the SEAL small group intervention and the enthusiasm with which they approached its implementation:

...there's my deputy X who leads on pastoral care, I've got ... [the SENCo] ... all with the same vision and values within the school. It's cascaded down, I've got X who is an outstanding PSHE coordinator, rolls SEAL out ... he's done... all the planning sessions and lots of INSET on staff, hugely supportive, and as a result I've got many staff came forward wanting to take on small group work ... (HT, School C)

Within the same school, the SEAL Small Group Facilitator explained that other members of staff took an active interest in the SEAL small group programme and conveyed a sense of the intervention being very much valued across the school:

It's not 'ah you've gotta take our children out for half-hour or 45 minutes,' it's ... they know it's worthwhile which is, you know, I've spoken to other people in different schools and I don't think they see it as a worthwhile ... activity, or worthwhile thing to do. Where this school embraces it and X [Class Teacher/PSHE Co-ordinator] is always at the forefront to sort of push the SEAL work, yeah. (Fac, School C)

Members of school staff spoke of the pupils showing a high level of engagement with SEAL SGW, both in terms of their familiarity with the programme and their active enjoyment of it.

...when I go and collect [the children] from classes, they know ... who's going to join their group so they're like 'Come on, come on, we've got group work to do.' And they're all like excited about coming out which is a good thing. I don't have anyone saying 'oh I don't want to go.' They're all willing to ... come up and do some work with me ... (Fac, School B)

In two of the four participating schools, reference was made to frequent communication between the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and other members of staff regarding the progress of the children attending the SEAL small group sessions. Communication took place as a matter of course, via informal opportunities or through set times:

I think that the communication that [the Learning Mentors/SEAL Small Group Facilitators] have as a team is actually really good. I mean, I also think they are the type of team and individuals that talk to the staff. So whether it's on that feedback sheet or whether it's just in general ... And if there's any issues ... there would always be feedback ... (SMT, School B)

Another salient feature of these two aforementioned schools was the close relationships and teamwork between staff; it appeared that staff valuing one another in their respective roles also played a part in ensuring that SEAL SGW was well-embedded within the school ethos:

... all the staff are approachable, cause I can go up to the Learning Mentors [the SEAL small group facilitators] any time of the days and just talk to somebody and they won't say, "Oh I'm busy, come back later." They've always got enough time to talk through it really. (CT, School B)

Participants spoke not only of SEAL SGW being incorporated into the overall whole school vision, but also of it being linked to the whole-school SEAL programme specifically - including the word of the week delivered during assembly time – and other interventions in school for promoting social and emotional skills:

...we always have in assemblies every week, word of the week. Today... this week was 'proud,' you know, what makes you proud, etc.? So we're always bringing that into our [SEAL small] group ... It's not just about our group, it's about what's going on [around us] and we have to be aware of that ... we'll talk for two minutes at the beginning of a session, what makes us proud? What can we do to make people proud of us? ...we're always thinking about the bigger picture rather than just what we're concentrating on. (Fac, School C)

A senior member of staff from one of the participating schools explained that their particular set of school rules provided a useful framework for linking the material covered during SEAL SGW with the curriculum of the whole-school SEAL programme.

4.2.1.2 Uncertain / Tenuous Links

Some of the comments made by school staff suggested that SEAL SGW was not as strongly integrated into the whole school vision as it could otherwise be. The SENCo of one of the participating schools pointed out that due to a high staff turnover it was difficult for the SEAL small group programme to be a well-recognised intervention across the school:

... I think people do see [SEAL] as a positive thing but there's also lots of new staff and I'm not sure if they all know about [SEAL] so probably we need to sort of have a bit of an INSET or a little chat about what SEAL is and why some children have been taken out to do certain focus activities with X [SEAL SGW facilitator] ... (SENCo, School D)

This member of staff also spoke of the difficulties of allocating and releasing an appropriate adult to facilitate the SEAL small groups; a further barrier to SEAL SGW being regularly implemented:

... [SEAL small group work] went well for virtually a year, and then we had some ... financial difficulties within the school and we had to ... put a close to certain contracts that were agency. And therefore someone like X who was running the groups then got pulled away because she had to go into class ... So then really we had ... I would say a bit of a fallow year... (SENCo, School D, p.1)

Comments were made about the lack of unqualified endorsement by other staff members, both senior and across the school, of the SEAL small group intervention:

... I don't know higher up if [the SEAL small group facilitator is] supported so, no comment there. (CT2, School D)

The SENCo of another participating school remarked that she had not taken the time to openly communicate her support to the SEAL small group facilitator:

More and more I'm beginning to think that ... I need to sit down with X [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] ... and just sort of talk through how it's going for him... I'm sure he would appreciate that ... I'm sure if he had any problems he would come but ... if he's not got an opportunity to talk about it, or ... to share it then it kind of diminishes ... what you feel you do ... so we to have to sort of make sure he feels that what he does is valuable to us, because it is. That is ... how we feel. Don't tell him often that. (SENCO, School A)

Within the same school, it appeared that a significant impediment to SEAL SGW being a valued and respected intervention within school had been the lack of an appropriate and consistent location for the sessions to take place:

*... I know he [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] used to get fed up cause he never had a space. I know it's really bad but sometimes I would forget that he had a certain space and ... someone else would use it ... but I've managed to ... sort that out ... he has had a difficult time, and I know he has got upset because he's very passionate ... about what he does ... so I hope that he feels happier about that.
(SENCO, School A)*

4.2.2 Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of Social and Emotional Skills in the Mainstream Classroom

This sub-theme incorporated comments made about the strength of links between the SEAL SGW intervention and the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills to pupils in the mainstream classroom as part of the whole school SEAL programme and other school-based interventions for promoting social and emotional skills. Many comments seemed to reflect a high degree of synchronicity between the planning and delivery of the material being covered in the small groups and in the classroom. Other responses indicated that there was little opportunity for the messages conveyed by the SEAL Small Group Facilitator to be reinforced and acknowledged by the classroom teacher.

...if it's just like, 'Oh I'm gonna send these kids somewhere and they come back', whatever, you know there's no point doing it. Cause it just seems like getting rid of a couple of kids for an hour ... it only really works when it's done as part of the lesson ... linked in with what we're doing in the class ... (CT, School B)

4.2.2.1 Strong Links

A particularly salient feature of strong links between SEAL SGW and social and emotional learning in the classroom seemed to be allocated time and space for the SEAL small group facilitator and class teacher to communicate:

... X [ESPCM] does give us time to do these feedback sheets ...you know, sit down and do your sheets cause the teacher's obviously expecting it so... she does give us that time ... to do anything to do with SEAL ... go and sit down, quickly do your bits

and then when you're ready go and do the next bit, so ... She's okay with that ... It's not always rushed ... then you just sit down and think of what you need to do so... it's good. (Fac, School B)

Within the aforementioned school, it appeared that the information shared between the SEAL small group facilitator and class teacher was of sufficiently high quality to enable both parties to think of ways in which to further enhance pupils' social and emotional development in the classroom:

... when teachers refer [pupils for SEAL small group work] ... we have a form that they fill out to say right, what your concerns are, and then what targets you want us to achieve through having the small groups or the one-to-one sessions. Because if we don't know what they want then it's gonna be kind of useless. (ESPCM, School B)

A further indicator of solid links between the acquisition of social and emotional skills in SEAL small groups and in the classroom was a shared planning framework for the SEAL topics between the facilitator and class teacher:

...I do the whole school SEAL program, so this term will be 'Going for Goals'. So the whole school are writing their goals and we've got their 'I can' statements each week. Now the learning mentors [SEAL small group facilitators] will also have those 'I can' statements, but their activities will be ... on a smaller scale ... So I do everything for the school and then make sure that the learning mentors fit in with that ... we like work with the teacher constantly, and what they're doing in class. And then we'll say right, how can we link in with what you're doing in class? ... So the learning mentors will have the same 'I can' statements, under the different year groups. And their activities will be based around what the statement is. (ESPCM, School B)

Further comments related to teachers setting up small group activities in the classroom that would provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate the skills being promoted during SEAL SGW:

Funnily enough through, when we do things like speech and language groups and things like extra literacy groups, that can often turn into a SEAL group ... So, even when I'm doing my focus activities in the classroom and we're doing things like, I don't know, writing about what we did at the weekend for example, if they're just concentrating on their work and not finding out about other children it's not gonna produce the best piece of work. It's not gonna get them thinking. When they're open to ideas and open to other children it will boost their work and boost confidence as well. (CT, School B)

It appeared that there was a relative ease with which SEAL SGW could be integrated within the mainstream curriculum for children in the early years. The class teacher

from School B, who taught in Reception, explained that the feedback forms filled out by the SEAL Small Group Facilitator were a useful source of evidence for the criteria specified by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile:

... the forms that [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] comes back that I steal for evidence are brilliant ... And how she fills them in, cause they're quite detailed as well. I'm like, how did she find the time to write all that about what happened, but no they're nice and detailed and they're very helpful actually ... (CT, School B)

4.2.2.2 Uncertain / Tenuous Links

Some comments reflected a degree of incongruence between the work covered in the SEAL small groups and the social and emotional learning taking place as part of other related interventions in school, with no shared planning framework to link the messages conveyed between different contexts:

X and Y are school mentors ... one of the main things that they do is deal with behaviour issues, squabbles, you know, children being sent off the playground at lunchtime if they had a fight ... what [the school mentors] do is more ... ad hoc's the wrong word ... but, it's much more like on the spot, right, we've got to deal with this problem, how are we going to do it? ... I suppose what [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] does is planned for, isn't it? ... so the children are working through a scheme, whereas what X and Y do... they might be dealing with something one day and then something else different, you know, a different day. (SMT, School A)

Members of staff referred to the lack of communication between the SEAL small group facilitator and class teacher, due to there being insufficient opportunity during the school day for both individuals to exchange information:

...we're all using the same [SEAL] unit, so we're all Going for Goals this term ... so obviously wherever we are [the SEAL small group facilitator] kind of is ... But to be honest ... we don't have much dialogue about it at the moment... So I don't really know what's going on with them ... The thing is I'm really busy, he's really busy, so actually finding time to sit down and talk probably is a bit of an issue ... he's a Play Worker as well, so he's always working at a lunch time. He doesn't come in until lunchtime. Works through lunchtime then has classes and SEAL groups ... then he goes into play centre so he pretty much works solid. And obviously I've got meeting after meeting after meeting so we don't really get a chance... (CT, School A)

Comments also related to the academic curriculum taking precedence over whole-school SEAL in the classroom, making it difficult for class teachers to reinforce the material being covered by the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and vice-versa:

...I suppose [SEAL is] something that we could focus on more, but with the constraints of the rest of the curriculum, it's something unfortunately that will be sidelined in favour of literacy and maths ... I think it's quite difficult sometimes to promote those kind of foundation-ey subjects ... timetables are crammed you know? And so sometimes those kinds of things do get sidelined, like Art as well, that can get pushed to the side too. So it's a shame ... I know that people do do [SEAL] regularly... but, time wise it can be difficult, can be sidelined. (SMT, School A)

4.3 Theme Two – Processes and Issues Regarding Pupil Selection

Theme Two encapsulated comments relating to the selection of pupils for SEAL SGW. This theme included procedures for referring pupils for the intervention and for monitoring their progress in the longer term. It incorporated comments made about the profiles of the children in the small groups both in terms of the broader, more collective characteristics of the groups and also the areas of need of individual pupils. Information provided about the nature of the difficulties experienced by individuals attending SEAL small group sessions was felt to be synonymous with staff perceptions of the purpose of the SEAL SGW intervention. Sub-themes and categories are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Theme Two- Processes and Issues Regarding Pupil Selection

- Procedures for Selecting pupils for SEAL Small Group Work
 - **Identification of Potential Pupils for SEAL Small Group Work**
 - **Monitoring of Pupils Attending SEAL Small Group Work sessions**

- Profiles of Children in the SEAL Small Groups
 - **Characteristics of the SEAL Small Groups**
 - **Perceived Purpose of SEAL Small Group Work**

4.3.1 Procedures for Selecting Pupils for SEAL Small Group Work

This sub-theme related to procedures for identifying potential candidates for the SEAL SGW intervention and for monitoring the progress of pupils throughout the duration of their attending the small group sessions. The comments made by school staff revealed differences between the four participating schools in terms of their

processes adopted for referring pupils and regulating the composition of groups; however, it seemed that in all schools the procedure for selecting pupils for the intervention was a collaborative one.

4.3.1.1 Identification of Potential Pupils

School staff spoke of the process of referring pupils for the SEAL SGW intervention, including key members of staff involved and systems specific to each individual school which facilitated the process of referral:

...the Learning Mentor Team works with each class, identifies those children that they feel need to benefit from extra support around the SEAL. [The class teachers] normally refer to our Inclusion Team, who then will allocate [the children] ... either a one-to-one or small group ... (ESPCM, School B)

As stated above, it appeared that across all the four participating schools some degree of communication between school staff had taken place when identifying potential candidates for the SEAL small group intervention:

...normally [the SENCo will] sit down with me. The Deputy Head teacher as well, or the Assistant Head ... So it comes from many people, it's not one person's responsibility; it's normally like a little group ... (Fac, School D)

Further comments related to the different methods of determining the needs of pupils being considered for the intervention, such as through observation or conversation with the class teacher:

...it goes back to having discussions ... or maybe just an observation from class if the [child's] not doing something. [The Learning Mentor] will go into class or observe, speak with the class teacher and then we'll see what we can do to ... help that child. (Fac, School C)

Participating staff members spoke of taking a needs-led approach to setting up SEAL small groups; and in some cases, staff were open to creating new small groups in order to meet the needs of particular individuals:

... there was just a child the other day who is starting to present some unusual problems and we think it's because he's got a disabled brother at home ... so we've

been working with the family and I've suggested that maybe we create a SEAL group with just this child and just some other kids ... and just talk about what it's like to have a younger sibling [with disabilities] ... so we try and deal with problems and I think that the small group stuff has got lots of roles and lots of different ways. (SMT, School B)

The SENCo of School D spoke of involving the pupil in the decision about who to include in the small group:

... X [LSA/previous SEAL Small Group Facilitator] [is] supporting one of our statemented children, and I've actually asked her to use some of the time to run maybe a little group for that particular child ... for her and him to have a discussion and so ... he could sort of be involved as to who he invites into the group because if he invites them to be part of the group, is our thinking, he's more likely to engage rather than us deciding ... because he's our key target ... (SENCo, School D)

4.3.1.2 Monitoring of Pupils

Staff members in three of the four participating schools explained it was important for them to monitor the progress of the children attending the SEAL small group sessions and to continually assess the extent to which the children's needs were being met by the intervention. Comments, therefore, reflected flexibility in the composition of the small groups due to the dynamic nature of pupils' needs:

... the demand might change ... so it is sort of a loose-ish... passage of children coming and going ... but obviously there are certain children who need a lot more and are sort of earmarked for... a continuous amount of support. (CT, School C)

4.3.2 Profiles of Children in the SEAL Small Groups

This sub-theme considered comments made about the profiles of the children in SEAL small groups. Staff members talked about the broader characteristics of the small groups such as the number of pupils within each group and the dynamics between the pupils. Information was provided about the nature of the difficulties being experienced by individual pupils attending SEAL small group sessions, which was felt to be equivalent to staff perceptions of the purpose of the SEAL SGW intervention.

...we've looked at children ... who are quite passive in the class, who don't kind of engage, who sit back, the children who need to develop confidence ... to speak and [have] an opinion ... who need a chance to sort of talk and to feel good about what they say. (SEnCo, School A)

4.3.2.1 Characteristics of the SEAL Small Groups

The following data extracts relate to the number of SEAL small groups that were currently being implemented within each school at the time of the research, the size of the small groups and the year groups of the pupils in each small group:

...it is six boys [in one group] and four girls [in the other] [both from Year 6] ... (CT1, School D, p.4)

There are three sessions during the week ...there are different children in each of those ... So ... there's a key stage 2 one, a key stage 1 [one] ... and then just sort of a focussed [one] ... more about a couple of quite tricky children... (CT, School C)

Staff talked about establishing an appropriate dynamic within each of the SEAL small groups so that pupils were able to work together harmoniously and learn effectively from one another:

... we also weigh personalities up, so we know that if actually we do need that boy in year 2 to work with another child, but actually we need to get him away from the child that he always goes towards, we would never put that child in the group with him ... it's very careful selection of dynamics ... (HT, School C)

As well as aiming to ensure that pupils within each SEAL small group were compatible with one another, school staff spoke of trying to make the small groups as diverse as possible so that pupils could learn to respect differences in one another and work alongside others whom they may not otherwise interact with:

...it is an eclectic mix. It's not going to be children ... who'll play together in the playground and that's essentially what we're trying to do. We're trying to get people to look at the difference in each other ... and ... work together ... or share ... give compliments. People ... that wouldn't normally do that to each other... (Fac, School A)

One member of staff commented that some degree of diversity within the SEAL small groups was essential for creating a productive dynamic between the pupils, and therefore enhancing the quality of discussions during SEAL SGW:

... we had two groups going, but ... [the children] were so full of the same kind of issues ... that ... it didn't work, the dynamics were just difficult, you've gotta ... have a good mixture ... of children who are there for different reasons, because all the same it doesn't work. If they're too passive, maybe they wouldn't even speak out, so [this time] we were a mixture of different children ... you know good speakers as well as children who are quiet, timid ... (SENCo, School A)

Members of staff from three of the four participating schools explained that role model pupils had been placed in the SEAL small groups in order to demonstrate effective social and emotional skills to the pupils being targeted by the intervention:

With X, the SENCO ... we knew the children we needed to target ... maybe two or three, but we also stuck in some really good role models, of maybe a different gender, maybe the same gender, ... [so] they were building up a rapport or trust or turn-taking or whatever it is that we are targeting within that group ... (HT, School C)

4.3.2.2 Perceived Purpose of SEAL Small Group Work

Many comments were made about the nature of difficulties being experienced by the pupils in the SEAL small groups, and therefore about the perceived aims and goals of the intervention. Ten of the fifteen interviewed members of staff commented that SEAL SGW was a confidence-building intervention. They explained that, in spite of the wide range in attainment levels and behaviours of the pupils in SEAL small groups, the one area of difficulty that many of these children shared was a lack of self-belief:

I think [SEAL small group work is] a fantastic way to build confidence ... seeing the children's need, seeing what they ... lack either in the classroom or the playground. So just ... give them the platform to have their say. They might be ... academically doing well, but their confidence of being able to speak in a group or to stand out, rather than being in the background ... (Fac, School C)

Staff members also commented that SEAL SGW provided a forum for pupils to express themselves:

... [SEAL small group work] sort of helps [the children] ... express their feelings ... I find it interesting to see a lot of children ... the way they express their selves, some

don't know how to do it so ... they're just finding other ways of doing it ... (Fac, School B)

Many respondents commented on the value of SEAL SGW in enhancing children's interpersonal skills, including their ability to interact appropriately with others and to build and maintain relationships:

... we look closely ... at children who are isolated ... so we try to organise ... social skills groups, where children can learn how to socialise ... I think SEAL is a part of that as well because the children are in a small group, they're listening to each other, they're talking to each other, learning from each other, so again they're socialising, they're developing those skills aren't they? ... So that ... they can become a good friend to people ... and keep friends cause that's kind of important isn't it? See the importance of friendship and what it can do and how it can enrich your life ... (SENCo, School A)

Some staff members spoke of the SEAL small group intervention as a means of helping children to resolve conflict:

So we've got small group work for both the girls and boys... early part of last term, we had issues with the girls. They fell out and it became a big thing... and parents were involved ... Whereas the girls were really good friends prior to the incident, the incident really circled around the internet and them accessing it, and calling each other... unsavoury names ... Miss X [the Executive Head] got involved so ... it was a process of sorting it out ... those group of girls are now friends, but ... you can still see there's still tension there so that's how those groups of girls were selected for that actual small group work... the boys were chosen really on a similar note as well. (CT1, School D)

Staff members also commented that SEAL SGW provided an opportunity for pupils to empathise with one another:

...for the children having them taken out of class and be in a small group and be removed from their normal environment ... I think that makes them feel a bit special ... that they can talk about their problems and realise that actually it's not just me, that other people share their same ... issues. (SMT, School B)

4.4 Theme Three – Methods of Teaching and Learning used during the SEAL Small Group Work programme

Theme Three encompassed methods of teaching and learning which constituted the SEAL small group programme. Within this theme, reference was made to SEAL small group facilitators adopting models of pedagogy that were guided by the

presenting needs of the children in the groups and aimed at fostering a sense of autonomy in the pupils. Comments were made regarding the skills and personal qualities of the SEAL small group facilitator that were required to make the small group sessions successful. Participants also talked about the value added of the small group environment in promoting children's social and emotional skills. Sub-themes and categories are shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5 Theme Three - Teaching and Learning during SEAL Small Group Work

- **Child-Centred Models of Pedagogy**
 - **Flexible / Needs-Led Approach to the Delivery of the SEAL SGW programme**
 - **Encouraging Pupils to be Reflective and take Ownership of their Learning in SEAL Small Groups**

- **Skills and Qualities Required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator**
 - **Close Relationship between SEAL SGW Facilitator and Pupils**
 - **Making the SEAL SGW Sessions Purposeful**

- **Value Added of the SEAL Programme in a Small Group Context**
 - **More Time and Space to Individualise Learning**
 - **A Safe and Supportive Environment**

4.4.1 Child-Centred Models of Pedagogy

This sub-theme reflected comments that related to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator adopting a flexible and facilitative approach to engendering the desired social and emotional skills in pupils being targeted in the SEAL small groups. Both the facilitators themselves and other members of school staff spoke of adapting the available resources and guidance for the SEAL SGW programme when planning and delivering the sessions. Comments reflected the SEAL Small Group Facilitator playing a guiding as opposed to an instructing role during the sessions and encouraging pupils to reflect on their own learning.

...it's kind of giving [the children] the opportunities to facilitate the discussion and let them develop and learn for themselves ... 'cause you can't teach SEAL can you? (CT, School B)

4.4.1.1 Flexible / Needs-Led Approach

In spite of there being a set structure to the guidance for the SEAL small group programme, which comprised seven themes or scheme of work to be covered throughout the year, many comments were made in relation to the facilitator tailoring the suggested activities and resources to meet the needs of the individual children within each small group:

... [the borough's Learning Mentor Co-ordinator] was very helpful in the sense that he said ... you put your own touches to the group, you know, you don't just follow a strict guideline, because children respond to you and you know the children, so you know what they need. So just to be able to have that sort of freedom with the group, rather than just being stuck rigid, 'This is what we're going to do today.' (Fac, School C)

SEAL Small Group Facilitators explained that maintaining some degree of flexibility in adherence to the guidance enabled them to engage more with the pupils and ensure smooth-running sessions:

And you've just gotta be flexible ... if you're too rigid [in that] you're just gonna stick to what's in the book, then ... it will become like reading a text book to them. Whereas ... if you're flexible, you can actually make it adaptable to them, and make it a little bit more enjoyable. But not only for them, but also for yourself, because if they ... can see you're enjoying the discussion, and you can sort of instigate it and let them continue it ... it allows you to step back and ... then have an overview of what's going on. (Fac, School A)

4.4.1.2 Encouraging Pupils to be Reflective and take Ownership of their Learning

The SEAL small group facilitators in all four of the participating schools talked about fostering a capacity for self-reflection in the pupils being targeted and the ability to take control of their learning, both within the SEAL small groups and when applying their learning in other contexts:

...it's them seeing that ... they're actually developing more confidence or better self-esteem within themselves to go about and tackle problems and situations and issues that do arise on a daily basis whether it be in the classroom or the playground ... for example, today, there was a girl ... that said 'Oh I'm not happy because my friend's not playing with me' ... I said, 'Didn't we do this in Getting On and Falling Out?' She said 'Yeah we did, but I didn't realise it hurt as much.' ... So I know that ... she's actually thought about it, and thought well I'm not happy but I'm not going to take out my unhappiness on someone else ... she's not actually going to do something to

make the situation escalate so she came to me and spoke to me about it ... (Fac, School A)

Facilitators also referred to adopting a facilitative model to the delivery of the SEAL small group programme; in this way, their aim was to elicit pupils' own views and experiences rather than providing them with answers:

I give them all the tools that they need ... give them sort of a question on maybe we'll talk about something what I can debate, where they can all be involved, rather than sort of me be the person at the front saying 'You've got to do this, this, this and this is what we're going to talk about.' I'll bring the general theme of that session, or I'll introduce it, then the rest will be down to them to ... everyone will have a turn ... They can ... take ownership actually of the group rather than ... it's like another lesson and you've got to do X Y and Z. I'll just sort of give them the tools that they can use and then they can take it further. (Fac School C)

Members of staff other than the facilitator likewise advocated for a facilitative approach to delivering the SEAL SGW programme:

[It's] being able to let the [SEAL small] group almost run itself, so you're very much the facilitator and then let the kids go ... which I think a lot of adults find really difficult to sit back and just kind of prompt slightly. (SMT, School A)

As well as allowing the pupils to lead the delivery of the SEAL small group sessions, one of the facilitators explained that he drew upon pupil feedback in order to inform his planning of the subsequent session:

... at the beginning of every theme ... I'll do the first session off my own back and then I'll say 'okay, this is what we're going to be doing next week,' and then I'll talk to [the children] about what we're going to do. And then they'll just give me a little idea of what ... how we can sort of just tinker it so it'll fit? What they'll enjoy ... what will benefit them? And then I'll just start that next session and then it'll just go from there really. So always the feedback is important... (Fac, School C)

Facilitators also referred to promoting pupils' collaborative learning during the SEAL small group sessions:

... when ... they're working in a group of two or three, then they're bouncing ideas of each other and then they're coming up with ... plots and plans, and stuff like that ... which shows they can work together... (Fac, School A)

4.4.2 Skills and Qualities Required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator

This sub-theme encompassed skills and qualities in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator that were felt to contribute to the SEAL small group programme having a positive impact on pupils' social and emotional learning. Many staff members talked about the facilitator needing to have a close relationship with the pupils in the SEAL small groups. Facilitators and other school staff also emphasised the importance of making the SEAL small group sessions purposeful.

... I think [the facilitators] need to have all those things, the trust, the humour, the sensitivity, the flexibility ... (SEnCo, School D)

4.4.2.1 Close Relationship between SEAL SGW Facilitator and Pupils

Many comments related to the honesty, trust and openness which characterised the relationship between the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and the pupils attending the small group sessions:

The key things I would say is ... for me, to be honest with the children ... so I think just that honesty, that trust, because ... as an adult I know when I was a kid if I spoke to a teacher and I don't really feel that they done enough for me or they ... broke what I consider trust. It's hard to get that back and hard to earn that back. So I think honesty and trust between the groups ... (F, School C)

Comments were made regarding the facilitator taking a holistic view of the children in the SEAL small groups and having a sound knowledge of their needs and interests:

... I know that group of boys, and that's the bonus that I've got, is that I know nearly all the children's characters. So I know what their interests are as well, and I know that they're all really good drawers and they love to sketch. I couldn't see them doing the whole gluing and cutting sort of thing. They'd be bored within five minutes and then that'll impact on the group, because then their behaviour becomes challenging. (Fac, School D)

Other comments related to the SEAL Small Group Facilitators being role models for the children in the groups:

You have to be able to talk nicely to the children. You have to be able to show the children what they have to do. Cause there's no point doing it if you're gonna then snap at the next person who comes in the room. (CT, School A)

Additional qualities required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator included patience, calmness and the ability to listen:

I suppose they're got to be a good listener, to be able to listen to the children... (SENCO, School A)

Patience ... Calmness ... because I've seen some people talk to children where you can see they're worked up. They say nice things, but you can see that it's irritating them or they're agitated. And ... even with beautiful words like 'please' and 'thank you' the children pick up that you're frustrated ... the calmness that X [SEAL small group facilitator] has got is reinforcing things the whole time. (CT2, School D)

4.4.2.2 Making the SEAL SGW Sessions Purposeful

School staff remarked that it was important for the facilitator to have clear learning objectives and to maintain the pace of the SEAL small group sessions:

I think that [the SEAL SGW facilitators] have to ... Make the sessions reasonably pacy, set out clearly what they're trying to achieve, all those things. (CT, School C)

Facilitators and other staff also spoke of the need to establish meaningful boundaries and clear expectations within the SEAL small groups:

... [I'm] always emphasising what is important, why are we doing it. So they have that constant reminder. We have our big rule chart on the wall; [the children] have their individual rules ... (Fac, School C)

4.4.3 Value Added of the SEAL Programme in a Small Group Context

This third sub-theme incorporated comments relating to the benefits specific to delivering the SEAL programme in a small group environment. It appeared from participants' comments that small group sessions allowed more time and space than was possible in the mainstream classroom to personalise children's learning of social and emotional skills. Comments also related to small groups providing a safe and supportive outlet for pupils to find their voice and to build trusting relationships.

Smaller groups ... a better adult to child ratio. That just makes a difference with everything I think because you can target the children more... (Fac, School A)

4.4.3.1 More Time and Space to Individualise Learning

Staff commented that within small groups there was more time to explore issues and cover the topics of the SEAL programme in further depth:

I think [in small groups] that [the children] definitely would divulge more into anger. I'm just thinking about the idea of ... I've talked to the children about being a volcano and feeling like you've got a volcano about to explode ... and you definitely don't ... you just don't have the time in the classroom ... which is awful but it's true, to do all of those things ... So I think that definitely the small groups, yeah, divulge more and I think the classroom skims the surface probably. (SMT, School B)

It was noted that the small group context allowed the facilitator more time and space to unpick the nature of the difficulties being experienced by the pupils and therefore to develop more specific means of supporting their learning:

... [the children are] more exposed in that small group situation really ... obviously with fewer of them ... it will show up if they don't use anything, or if they domineer or ... they're not doing what we're asking them to do ... And you can unpick it a bit more ... it depends who it is that ... you've targeted and what you've targeted them for, but you can unpick it ... (HT, School C)

Members of staff remarked that the small group setting allowed the facilitator more time to scaffold tasks and prompt pupils in their thinking:

... if we're on the same session for two weeks in a row, we'll just model that behaviour, depending on the activity. So we'll do role-play, we'll talk about, we'll write about, we'll draw a picture. We just go over and over... even if it's repetitive, until they get why we're doing it, then I think they will... you know, they'll slowly learn... (Fac, School C)

4.4.3.2 A Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

Comments related to small groups being a less intimidating forum than the whole class, and therefore one in which pupils felt comfortable to talk more frequently and find their voice:

...it's a support and a place for [the pupils] to be able to talk about, think about things in a small group ... a lot of our children ... they're a bit lost in class but within a small group they can become a bit more independent, a bit more confident, raise their self-

esteem, be able to talk about and have an opinion on things ... so we hope it gives them a bit more of a chance to have a voice ... (SENCO, School A)

Another member of staff remarked that the small groups helped the pupils to feel more at ease and that this allowed them to develop more trusting relationships:

A lot of our children are worried about taking risks to sort of share their opinions in class. I think that [SEAL small group work] gives them ... a ... little safe environment to kind of share their opinions and just be able to talk but in a safe way. They know hopefully in those groups, no-one's gonna laugh at them, no-one's gonna be ... unkind to them, cause that's not the rules of the group. So they can do that in a safe way, and, and be themselves, and kind of trust that that's gonna be ok and trust the group and hopefully then they learn confidence from that and can then take that back into the whole class. (SENCO, School A)

4.5 Theme Four – Training and Support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator

Data analysis revealed a smaller but distinct theme that encompassed training and support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator, including training and support provided by the local authority and forms of support available within school. Facilitators' comments about their training experiences reflected training packages that had already been provided for them as well as their ongoing training needs. In terms of desired future training for the facilitator, members of staff spoke of the value of sharing good practice with other schools. Staff members also commented on the nature and effectiveness of the resources and materials available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator.

4.5.1 Training and Support from the Local Authority

This sub-theme encompassed all comments relating to training and support for the SEAL small group facilitator provided by external agencies from the local authority. The training experiences of the four SEAL small group facilitators who were interviewed varied; with two of the facilitators having received training specific to the SEAL small group programme from the borough's Learning Mentor Co-ordinator, and the other two having not. The SEAL small group facilitator in School A had received no specific training on SEAL SGW, but explained that his knowledge, skills

and experiences as a Play Worker had stood him in good stead for delivering the intervention:

... I'm on the diploma Level 3 in play work ... and I'm understanding the fundamentals of actually how a child's mind works a lot more intricately but with regard to play, but it's like bringing the things like child protection, bullying, and the certain policies and procedures that we've got to sort of follow as educators. You can see how that can be like implemented within the structure of a SEAL session because it's all the PSHE ... you're looking at their social economic environment and, and how their, their sort of behavioural patterns are, how they interact etcetera, so within this course I'm actually learning a lot about how the children behave and ... what to look out for, and how we as educators can interact with them to get the best out of them. (Fac, School A)

The SEAL Small Group Facilitator in School B had likewise received no specific training in relation to the SEAL small group programme. It appeared that this facilitator's training experiences consisted of the more generic training that she had received in her over-arching role as a Learning Mentor:

...our learning mentors have been on behaviour training and how to deal with conflicts, and they've been on a lot of training but [not] when it comes to actual SEAL groups ... (ESPCM, School B)

The other two facilitators commented that they had received some introductory training from the local authority's Learning Mentor Co-ordinator who was responsible for rolling out SEAL SGW across the borough:

...he delivered about three or four sessions, also watched me do a couple of my own sessions ... we saw a video that the [local authority] provided, a DVD. Yeah, so just by ... watching other people do sessions ... (Fac, School C)

Members of staff spoke of the value of sharing and disseminating good practice. They expressed a wish to liaise more with other schools implementing SEAL SGW and commented that this would serve as a useful form of training for SEAL Small Group Facilitators in the future:

...we all could do with a little bit more feedback and resources ... So it's always good to be able to share what other schools are doing and just make sure that ... we're meeting standards of other schools ... maybe using what they're doing and then we can share good practice and what went well ... We're like generally always used as a school to represent good practice in SEAL. Which is great, but we've kind of done it ourselves ... we don't know everything. (ESPCM, School B)

In terms of non-training based forms of support provided by outside professionals, one of the two facilitators who had received training from the Learning Mentor Co-ordinator co-facilitated one of her SEAL small groups with an Assistant Psychologist from the borough's Educational Psychology Service:

...they kind of support each other. X [SEAL SGW facilitator] leads on one [small group] and I think Y [Assistant Psychologist] then runs the other ... X has a sort of ... less intrusive ... a supportive role but maybe not as a lead. So ... one leads, one is sort of in the background ... So hopefully they're learning from each other as well as from the children. (SENCo, School D)

4.5.2 Support for SEAL Small Group Facilitator within School

Many comments were made regarding forms of support available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator within school. It appeared that internal support systems had a compensatory function for facilitators who had received little or no training for delivering SEAL SGW from the local authority:

... I haven't ... received any specific training with regard to SEAL apart from talking with my deputy head and my line manager who is the lead mentor... (Fac, School A)

Eleven of the fifteen participating members of staff interviewed provided information regarding who in school supported the facilitator, the nature of the support that was provided and/or the frequency with which this support was accessed:

... I will give [SEAL Small Group Facilitators] guidance on what activities they could use in part of the group sessions ... I'll meet with [them] once a week and we assess how the sessions are going, or if there [is] anything that we need to change or adapt, or resources that we may need ... Every Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock ... so many other things happen you've got to schedule. (ESPCM, School B)

Class teachers spoke of taking an active role in supporting SEAL SGW including providing resources for the facilitator, assisting with pupil selection and sharing the achievements of pupils in small groups with the rest of the class:

When [the children] come back [from SEAL small group work] they're completely buzzing and they kind of bound into the classroom and show me what they've done and I try and make a big deal of it ... we have a sort of carpet session then and get them to tell everyone what they've done ... Apart from maybe thinking about who I can select to do it, my role ... once they've gone to their small group activity ... is the

kind of, the bit afterwards. So talking through what they've done and again, like I said, sort of making a big deal of it ... a lot of the time, they come down and they've made something or done a picture or anything like that and we can put that up and kind of make them feel a bit more special. (CT, School B)

4.5.3 Resources and Materials Available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator

Staff members commented on the nature and quality of the resources and materials available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator. In this particular local authority, facilitators were provided with a customised booklet developed by the borough's Primary Behaviour Consultant that was based on the National Strategies booklet and contained schemes of work and session plans for each theme or unit of the SEAL small group programme:

... the SEAL pack's good, because most of your resources that you need ... it'll tell you any additional resources that you need as well. So it's basically normally just photocopying the resource out the book ... you haven't really got to go far to get whatever you need. And the rest you can just sort of scratch from round the school: pencils, paper and stuff. (Fac, School D)

4.6 Theme Five – Processes and Issues around Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL Small Group Work

Another smaller yet significant theme to emerge from the data analysis was evaluation of the outcomes of SEAL SGW. None of the participating four schools had established tools in place for measuring the impact of the SEAL small group intervention; with staff relying mainly on observations and verbal feedback from other staff and the children themselves. The difficulty of assessing social and emotional skills was widely acknowledged.

4.6.1 Methods of Evaluating Outcomes

Members of school staff spoke of both existing and possible future methods for evaluating the outcomes of SEAL. In terms of existing means for gauging the impact of SEAL SGW on targeted pupils, staff commented that they relied on their own observations and feedback from colleagues in order to assess progress:

I guess it's ... feedback from LSA to class teacher, class teacher to me; I pick up on how well things are going just through conversation. Obviously any reports that are written up or anything ... [the Learning Mentor] will take on and deal with ... I'm constantly having dialogue with all my staff and I know that it's the communication between LSA and class teacher that is ... how I suppose they know how the child is doing. And records will be written up for them as well. (HT, School C)

Staff spoke of the value of using pupil feedback in order to make judgements about their children's social and emotional development:

...there is a particular child who is ... getting a lot more goals, cause we have the Staying On Green policy, and he's actually achieving a lot more golds and bronze and silvers, which before he was you know just green, or you know just below green because he was being disruptive in the group but he's understanding his self-worth now and looking on it that you know he wants to achieve ... And he has been telling me that as well ... he's come up to me and said look, this is what I'm doing, I, I feel really good, which ... shows that he's getting a bit more confidence and enjoying what he's doing in class. (Fac, School A)

Across all the participating schools it seemed from staff comments that there was little in the way of more formalised methods of assessing SEAL, both at a whole school and a small group level. One member of staff explained that he had liaised with the local authority's SEAL co-ordinator who had developed a provisional assessment framework for school staff to pilot, while a Class teacher referred to the benefits of using the assessment framework contained within the Early Years curriculum. Another class teacher referred to an inventory which the SEAL Small Group Facilitator had asked her to fill out by way of formative assessment of the pupils' progress.

In terms of school staff's ideas about potential future tools for measuring children's social and emotional development, reference was made to forms of assessment that were child-centred and formative:

I like to believe that children are involved in monitoring their progress as well. So you might have a set of questions ... that are linked into this really, but in a kind of child-friendly way so that they can say how well they're doing, or what they might need help with next to help them with their own personal issues, or personal social development that they'd like to work on ... maybe have a little logbook that they fill in, maybe every fortnight or at the end of each session, could be a smiley face or maybe two comments to say I've really enjoyed this ... it's not so much about 'oh my learning today is...' it's more the children thinking about their own personal development, how they feel ...it's more child centred, it's coming from them rather than the programme... itself. (CT1, School D)

4.6.2 Difficulties with Evaluating Outcomes

Many of the comments made regarding both existing and possible means of assessing social and emotional skills in children also referred to the inherent difficulty of measuring social and emotional skills. From a theoretical and practical point of view respectively, staff talked about the difficulty of quantifying emotions and the need for sufficient time and space during the school day in order to track pupils' social and emotional development accurately:

[SEAL is] a very difficult area to... to assess... you can see it visually in the way that children are... but [it's] ... difficult to quantify.... (CT, School C)

4.7 Theme Six – Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Non-School Based Settings

The sixth and final theme to be identified encompassed all comments relating to the relevance of the SEAL small group intervention to settings outside of and beyond school. Staff members of one school in particular talked about Family SEAL, including the benefits of and difficulties with involving parents. Many comments were made about the SEAL Small Group Facilitator's aim to engender lifelong social and emotional skills in pupils.

4.7.1 Links with the Home Environment

Staff members in School C explained that they wanted to build on the positive impact of their implementing SEAL by involving parents and carers as far as possible in the programme. The class teacher, who was also the school's PSHE coordinator, shared his ideas about what steps would be involved in instigating the Family SEAL programme. The other three participating schools commented that Family SEAL was very much in the emerging phases of being implemented. Staff discussed the difficulties with implementing Family SEAL, such as the struggle meet with parents regularly in school. Other obstacles for staff to overcome included translating the

principles of the SEAL programme into user-friendly terms, and allaying anxieties that parents and carers might have about their children being in the small groups.

4.7.2 Links with Adult Life

Nearly half of the staff members interviewed talked about equipping pupils with life skills through SEAL SGW. One class teacher spoke of the importance of prioritising S&ES over academic performance in order to help prepare pupils for their careers after school.

4.8 Summary

The thematic analysis outlined above highlighted the issues and experiences most pertinent to fifteen members of staff across four primary schools in implementing the SEAL small group intervention. Five prominent themes that corresponded directly to the research questions of the present study emerged from the analysis of the data: integration of SEAL SGW into the whole school curriculum; processes and issues around selecting pupils for the intervention; methods of teaching and learning employed by the SEAL small group facilitator; training and support for the SEAL small group facilitator; and processes and issues regarding evaluation of the outcomes of SEAL SGW. A sixth theme was identified in addition to the researcher's pre-determined areas of enquiry: links between SEAL SGW and non-school based settings. The responses of school staff suggested that they were able to talk freely of the difficulties and obstacles they encountered in their efforts to make the SEAL small group intervention practicable and beneficial within their respective settings; however, all those who were interviewed expressed unreserved support for the work of the facilitator and a belief that SEAL SGW could have a positive impact on pupils' social and emotional skills when implemented under the right conditions.

Chapter Five – Discussion

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, the findings for each theme presented in Chapter Four are discussed in relation to the existing literature and implications for practice. The limitations of the study are then considered, and areas for future research identified. In the following section, the research question or questions to which each theme corresponds (where applicable) is presented in italics directly underneath the subheading.

5.2 Factors Contributing to the Successful Implementation of SEAL Small Group Work

5.2.1 Integration of SEAL Small Group Work into the Whole School Curriculum

RQ1: How does SEAL small group work fit in with and complement the whole-school ethos?

RQ2: How are the messages in the SEAL small groups reinforced in the classroom and other contexts within school?

Participants spoke of the ways in which SEAL SGW was integrated into the whole school system. It is well cited within the existing literature that any intervention for promoting pupils' S&ES needs to be adopted as a whole-school approach with all staff members engaged and involved at some level (e.g. Curtis and Norgate, 2007; Hallam et al., 2006; Kelly et al. 2004; Maxwell et al. 2008). Comments under this theme included links with the whole-school ethos and links with the teaching and learning of S&ES in the classroom. In two of the four participating schools (Schools B and C) it was apparent that links between SEAL SGW and the whole-school curriculum at both a strategic and operational level were relatively strong, with few barriers if any to this aspect of implementing the intervention. In the other two participating schools (Schools A and D) there appeared to be factors that

strengthened the links of SEAL SGW with both the whole-school vision and social and emotional pedagogy in the classroom, yet also factors that weakened these links.

It was evident across the four schools who participated in the present study that links between SEAL SGW and the whole school ethos were particularly enhanced where leadership was strong. A significant feature of School C was that the Head Teacher was very encouraging of SEAL SGW and of all of the staff involved in its implementation, and was therefore keen to ensure that there was time and space for this initiative to happen. Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews (2002) note that without such an overall, 'top-down' commitment, emotional literacy can often be received sceptically by school staff, who may view it as beyond the scope of their role to promote. Kam, Greenberg & Walls (2003) similarly found that adequate support from school principals contributed to the successful implementation of the PATHS programme, and Hallam et al., (2006) concluded that SEAL as a whole-school programme was more likely to be successfully implemented where the school's leadership team were committed to it. As the Head Teacher of School C commented:

'It's about what you value isn't it?'

This comment, I felt, demonstrated a fundamental factor contributing to the successful implementation of SEAL SGW and indeed any school-based intervention for promoting S&ES; which is that it has to be positively valued by the school's leadership team. It seems that leaders of schools who make clear their values to the rest of the staff team set a tone against which all the other aspects of making an intervention like SEAL SGW practicable will take place. It may well be that different Head Teachers value different aspects of the education system; with some believing that promoting S&ES in children is a large part of the remit of school staff, and others upholding the view that enhancing areas of pupil development beyond the realm of the academic is better left to other professionals. As Humphrey et al. (2007) note, promoting EI in schools has proven to be a controversial pursuit, as it challenges more traditional and "rationalist" views of education. There is ongoing debate about the role of emotion in academic learning; with some researchers such as Goleman (1996) and Zins et al. (2004) firmly arguing that S&ES are inextricably linked with

cognitive development, and others such as Barchard (2003) and Matthews et al. (2004) expressing their reservations about the empirical basis of S&ES interventions in educational settings. It would appear from the current study that senior leadership teams in schools need to be of the former viewpoint in order for programmes such as SEAL – and particularly the small group elements of these interventions that effectively ‘replace’ mainstream teaching for part of the school day – to be prioritised, and therefore fully integrated into the whole-school curriculum.

All participating members of school staff spoke highly of the work of the SEAL small group facilitator and were enthusiastic about the potential benefits of the intervention for the children whom they were targeting. This finding in itself was an indicator of strong links between the SEAL small group intervention and the whole-school ethos. It would appear therefore, that local enthusiasm among staff alongside a strong leadership and management team, contributes significantly to SEAL SGW being implemented effectively. All four of the facilitators who participated seemed highly skilled and committed to the intervention; a finding which perhaps overlaps with data classified under the sub-theme ‘Skills and Qualities required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator’ discussed in section 5.2.4. The importance of a supportive staff climate has been demonstrated in previous research into other school-based S&ES interventions. Kelly et al. (2004), in their case-study investigation of the PATHS programme, found that a positive school ethos and supportive attitude to children showing emotional and behavioural problems were felt to contribute significantly to the beneficial effects that the PATHS programme had on pupils’ emotional, social and behavioural development.

Before going on to discuss the rest of the findings in relation to the current research questions, I wish to make a general point about the members of school staff who were interviewed. I feel that this information provides a useful and important context in which to consider the other themes and sub-themes that emerged. It was notable that participating staff members conveyed considerably less reluctance or cynicism about the SEAL small group intervention than they might otherwise have done in view of the various hindrances to its implementation which they referred to. I considered a variety of possible reasons as to why the general response towards SEAL SGW in the current sample was overwhelmingly positive. The first likely

explanation is that the ethos of all four participating schools was a relatively nurturing one, in which staff seemed to give equal value to social and emotional learning as they did to academic attainment. When considering how the current sample was selected (see Chapter Three), two of the four schools were participating schools in the local authority's three-year Emotional Health and Wellbeing Project which was being run at the time of data collection. Of the other two schools, one had been identified as a lead school in the borough for implementing Restorative Justice, another school-based intervention for promoting S&ES, and for this reason was chosen as one of the pilot schools by the borough's Primary Behaviour Consultant (PBC) who was responsible for rolling out SEAL SGW in the local authority. The other school had liaised with the borough's PBC regarding a peer mediation programme and so was chosen as another pilot school for helping to develop materials and resources for the SEAL small group programme. Had I also spoken with members of staff within schools that were not so predisposed or accustomed towards explicitly targeting pupils' social and emotional skills, attitudes towards SEAL SGW may have been more mixed.

While all the participants who were interviewed for the present study expressed a supportive attitude towards SEAL SGW, some mention was made of other colleagues who were less engaged with the programme. The Head Teacher of School C remarked that there were a minority of people who did not 'come on board' with the SEAL initiative. This finding reflects Zeidner et al.'s (2002) observation that there can be great variability in the level of acceptance and willingness of staff in different schools to undertake training in emotional literacy (EL). It also echoes the findings of Perry et al. (2008), who in exploring teacher's perceptions of implementing EL initiatives in a UK primary school, discovered that many of the factors influencing the development of EL initiatives were concerned with people's attitudes such as individual personalities who were not 'on board', people who only paid lip service to the concept of EL and willingness or otherwise of management and staff to try something new/different. As Perry et al. (2003) and Weare and Gray (2003) point out, one cannot 'make' schools emotionally literate; and it may be that some teachers are more disposed to an approach that fosters S&ES than others. One teacher in Perry et al.'s study commented, 'It's human nature. I can't help it.' Perry et al. suggested that improved communication was a starting point for

engaging less enthusiastic members of staff. The importance of communication will be discussed below.

It was my strong impression that, together with positive staff attitudes instigated by the school's SLT, communication was also crucial to making SEAL SGW an embedded school-based intervention at both a strategic and operational level. Many staff members referred repeatedly to the interactions that took place between the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and other members of staff who were involved in implementing SEAL SGW. In Schools B and C, it appeared that there were effective modes of communication which allowed regular and valuable exchange of information. The Assistant Head of School B described the school as having a 'flat' structure to its management, which enabled staff to have a clear overview of what was happening and allowed concerns to be raised and addressed in a timely fashion. It was interesting to note that, while participants in the current study spoke positively of the work of the SEAL Small Group Facilitator, the SENCo of School A felt that she had not taken the time to openly communicate her endorsement of the SEAL small group intervention to the facilitator. Furthermore, staff members from schools A and D explained to me that there was little opportunity for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and Class Teacher to communicate; and that this was a major factor prohibiting the SEAL small group curriculum from being reinforced in the mainstream classroom. In Perry et al.'s (2008) case study of a UK primary school, it was found that where lack of staff engagement seemed to prohibit the development of school-wide interventions for emotional literacy, communications and relationships between staff members were not as strong as they could be. The researchers concluded that open communication at all levels was vital to promoting S&ES in school-based settings. The findings of the present study support Perry et al.'s conclusions and suggest that communication is a necessary facilitative factor in the implementation of SEAL SGW; even in schools where members of staff do value the promotion of S&ES.

5.2.2 Processes and Issues Regarding Pupil Selection

RQ3: How are pupils selected for the SEAL small group sessions?

When analysing participants talk around procedures for selecting pupils for SEAL SGW, the main finding was that communication between staff played an important role in both careful identification of pupils for the intervention and continual monitoring of the pupils' progress over time. Across all four schools, I discovered a high level of collaboration in the referral phase of implementation. For example in School A the facilitator conducted playground observations of potential candidates for SEAL SGW, and then shared this information with the Class Teacher and SENCo/Deputy Head who added their own insights. In this way, three of the pupils originally identified from the facilitator's observations remained in the finalised group of six and the other three were identified through subsequent discussions with other staff members. This finding suggests that all participating schools had followed the recommendation made in Humphrey et al.'s (2008) 'good practice' vignette to have a triangulated referral procedure for pupil selection. Staff in three of the four participating schools, particularly in Schools B and C, spoke of varying the composition of the small groups throughout the year so as to ensure that the Wave 2 SEAL intervention was catering for needs of those who needed it most at any one given time. It appeared that there was greater flexibility in the composition of SEAL small groups in schools where communication systems were more established, perhaps because the facilitator and other members of staff were more likely to be alerted at an earlier stage of any difficulties or breakthroughs being experienced by the children and because there was more opportunity for staff to discuss the progress of the children in SEAL small groups over time.

Interestingly, two thirds of the school staff members interviewed, and at least one staff member from each participating school, described SEAL SGW as a confidence-building intervention. The finding that lack of self-worth in pupils was a commonly perceived area of need across the sample of four schools in the current study suggests that there may be some similarities between the respective ethos' and value-systems of the participating schools. In section 5.2.1, I pointed out that all the participating schools placed high value on social and emotional learning, and it may be that self-confidence is one particular skill or quality that staff in these schools aim to bring out in the pupils. As well as considering links between the category 'Perceived Purpose of SEAL Small Group Work' and the theme 'Integration of SEAL

Small Group Work into the Whole-School Curriculum', I felt that the sub-theme 'Profiles of Children in the SEAL small groups' tied in with one of the three sub-themes under the theme of Teaching and Learning (see section 5.2.3) which was 'Value Added of the SEAL Programme in a Small Group Context'. Judgements made by staff regarding the characteristics of the small groups and pupils whose individual needs were likely to be met by the small group environment, seemed to be linked in with creating the right conditions for learning S&ES. As will be discussed in section 5.2.3, staff explained in more detail how the small group environment per se was a valuable forum in which to target pupils who lacked confidence and/or who had difficulty with expressing their emotions.

Both the current study and other studies (e.g. Humphrey et al. 2008) show the wide range of needs deemed appropriate to target through S&ES interventions including anger management, shyness, conduct and behavioural problems, peer problems and social skills, emotional understanding and emotional regulation. Given that the Primary SEAL guidance (DfES, 2005) provides little indication as to what is meant by 'social and emotional learning' other than Goleman's (1996) five identified facets of EI, and there is hardly firm consensus in the academic world regarding what the term conveys (Wigelsworth et al. 2010), it remains largely up to school staff to define what they mean by S&ES. As discussed in Section 2.5.1, compared to other, more prescriptive small group S&ES interventions that are used in schools, it seems that SEAL is "essentially what individual schools make of it rather than being a single, consistently definable entity" (Humphrey et al. 2010, p.7). Many of the targeted S&ES interventions reviewed by Shucksmith et al. (2007) clearly specify the category of need being addressed, for example the Queensland Early Intervention and Prevention of Anxiety Project (Dadds et al. 1997) as its title suggests is designed to target anxiety in children, while the Brain Power programme developed by Hudley and colleagues (1996; 1993) is intended to reduce peer-directed aggression. Humphrey et al. (2010) point out that the advantage of conceptualising SEAL according to a relatively loose framework is that it avoids the lack of ownership and sustainability that might be associated with the more 'top down', prescribed approach that is taken in the USA. However, and as Weare (2010) explains, "too much tailoring to local needs and circumstances can lead to dilution and confusion."

In view of the lack of clarity over the type of need that SEAL small group work aims to target, what seems important is that all staff members within any given school are *clear* about their reasons for putting a particular group of children in a small group and that their rationale for doing so has been *shared* among all key adults involved with those children. Staff sharing of pupils' targets in the SEAL small groups seemed to be one of the key indicators of SEAL SGW being well-embedded within classroom teaching of S&ES.

Zeidner et al. (2002) state that one of the challenges for practitioners in the implementation of school-based EI programmes is the careful specification of the goals of the programme; and that goals should be targeted at '... those key components of EI targeted on the basis of the conceptual framework underpinning the program. Once the EI universe of discourse is clearly defined, developing operational program objectives (and procedures to achieve these objectives) should be fairly straightforward.' (p.226, 2002) The findings of the current study support Zeidner et al.'s recommendation for carefully specified goals and behaviour outcomes for EI and other such school-based programmes like SEAL. However, given that neither practitioners, policy-makers nor researchers have been able to arrive at an adequate definition of the concepts in the field of S&ES, perhaps the best that school staff can do at this point is to use the framework of the SEAL programme as a 'vehicle' for targeting whatever they deem to be their children's areas of need. Staff perceptions about pupils' needs are likely to be influenced by both the culture of the school and the pupil population. That is to say that perceived purposes of SEAL SGW can relate either to areas of the whole-school vision (a pre-determined approach) or to particular problems that pupils in a school are experiencing (a needs-led approach), with most schools likely drawing upon a combination of both approaches. For example, the Head Teacher of School C referred to two areas of the school vision that pupils in SEAL small groups found particularly difficult to engage with, yet also pointed out that pupil selection for SEAL SGW was dictated by the school population.

5.2.3 Teaching and Learning of S&ES in SEAL Small Group Work

RQ4: What methods of teaching and learning characterise the delivery of the SEAL small group sessions?

My overall impression of participants' comments in relation to the teaching and learning of S&ES, both in SEAL small groups and in other contexts across school, was that social and emotional skills cannot be instructed or 'imposed' upon pupils; instead, a context can be created for drawing out these skills in targeted children over a gradual period of time. It followed that both facilitators and teaching staff referred to adopting models of pedagogy for promoting S&ES that were child-centred rather than adult-centred; based on a facilitative model of delivery as opposed to a transmission model. This finding supports one of the recommendations made by Weare and Gray (2003) regarding the explicit teaching and learning of social and emotional competences, which is to teach skills in participative and empowering ways. This recommendation is echoed in the section of the SEAL policy documentation regarding specific features of programmes for teaching and learning S&ES (DfES, 2005). Weare and Gray point out that pupils' behaviour does not have to be externally determined, and that it is perfectly possible as well as desirable to work on behaviour change with the full participating and consent of the child involved, '...indeed it may well be they who decide what behaviour they would like to change and how they wish to go about it' (p.69, 2003). Wider approaches which work on values, attitudes, feelings, and underlying motivations, often called the 'empowerment approach' encourage people to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

With reference to the previous point, one finding that particularly struck me was the maturity with which the SEAL small group facilitators treated the pupils. There was much reference in the facilitators' talk of encouraging the children to take ownership over their learning and to monitor their own progress towards their goals. This approach towards teaching and learning seems to be one that fosters pupils' meta-cognition, the importance of which has been demonstrated by many researchers of pedagogy (Bruner 1996; Mortimore and Watkins; 1996). Such an approach involves teachers encouraging children to think about what they are learning, to make sense of it and to link it with other concepts, constructs or pieces of information. The facilitator in School A felt passionately about creating opportunities for the pupils to

actively self-reflect and take control of their learning, so that they would become better able to consider the different options available to them for managing difficult emotions.

A further salient finding to emerge with regard to methods of teaching and learning adopted during SEAL SGW was the holistic view that the facilitators took of the pupils. It was clear from facilitator's comments that they knew the children in their groups extremely well as a function of other roles that their respective positions in school entailed (e.g. Learning Mentor, Play Worker) and that they had enough of an invested interest in the pupils in order to take steps to find out their strengths and interests. It appeared that having a broad knowledge of the children's needs enabled the facilitator to build a more comprehensive picture of the key factors motivating the behaviours being targeted, and, therefore, to provide support that was as individually tailored as possible. Facilitators and other staff members also commented that the small group environment itself helped the facilitator to get to know the children better and to 'unpick' their difficulties. Kelly et al. (2004) cite an important principle of the PATHS programme as stipulated by Greenberg et al. (1995) which is that one must teach the "whole person" and recognise that the feelings of both teacher and student are critical to success. They demonstrated the effectiveness of the PATHS programme in a primary school whose ethos they described as one of educating the whole child.

The SEAL Small Group Facilitator's capacity to see each child in his or her entirety appeared to stem from the honesty, openness and trust that characterised the facilitator's relationship with the pupils in small groups; making it possible for the facilitator to elicit the children's own views and thoughts about the issues to be discussed in each session. Comments made about the nature of this relationship prompted me to consider whether the work that takes place in SEAL small groups is more akin to a therapeutic intervention than a form of teaching. Research has shown that the therapeutic relationship is essential to the effectiveness of any therapeutic intervention (Safran, Muran & Meissner, 2003) and it has been argued that the most successful therapists are those who are particularly attuned to the interpersonal relationship they have with their patients (Miller, Hubbis & Duncan, 2007). However, a good relationship between educators and pupils is likewise an important

component of effective teaching. For example, Gipps and MacGilchrist (1996) cite two studies of primary age pupils which demonstrate powerfully the link between teacher expectations and pupil progress. It may be, therefore, that the delivery of SEAL SGW involves combining particular types of pedagogy (as discussed above) with therapeutic techniques.

Finally, it was interesting to note some close overlap between the value added of the small group environment per se – irrespective of the skills and qualities of the facilitator and the materials and resources specific to the SEAL small group programme – and the perceived purposes of SEAL SGW (as discussed above in section 5.2.3). Participants' talk about the nature of pupils' difficulties that had led to their being selected for SEAL SGW was interwoven with their efforts to create a context that would more readily allow targeted pupils to acquire the S&ES that were intended. Where staff members spoke of SEAL as a confidence-building intervention, there was some explanation regarding how this particular area of need could be met in a small group in ways that would not be possible in the mainstream classroom. Participating staff explained that with fewer people present there was more opportunity for pupils to talk and find their voice. It appeared, therefore, that a unique feature of the SEAL curriculum being delivered in small groups as opposed to whole classes was the provision of a safe and supportive environment in which pupils could learn to share their opinions in front of others.

5.2.4 Training and Support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator

RQ5: What training and support do facilitators receive for implementing SEAL small group work?

My main interpretation of the data gathered in response to Research Question 3 was that in spite of the variation in SEAL small group facilitators' prior experiences of training and support, there was a large degree of commonality across people's responses with respect to future training required: the need to share good practice with other schools. Both facilitators and other staff members commented that they would greatly appreciate the opportunity to visit other schools that were

implementing SEAL SGW and learn more about alternative and possibly more effective ways of working. Related to this point, staff commented that it was particularly valuable for the SEAL small group facilitator to observe other adults delivering SEAL small group sessions. Bell (2003) discusses the utility of peer observation and feedback in supporting reflective practice in tertiary education by providing participants with the opportunity to research their own problems in practice, build confidence, examine alternative actions, anticipate the consequences of their actions, identify useful resources and evaluate their experience. It would seem this approach was equally valued by the primary school practitioners in the current study

Facilitators and other staff spoke positively of the structure provided by the local authority's tailor-made SEAL SGW book adapted from the National Strategies guidance. Facilitators also commented that the autonomy with which they were encouraged to deliver the SEAL small group programme by both external professionals and other staff within school was helpful in providing them with the confidence to engage with the pupils. As will be discussed under Research Question 5, flexibility in adherence to the available guidance emerged as a major feature of the teaching and learning that characterised the delivery of the SEAL small group programme (see Section 5.2.4). Interestingly, one of the recommendations for the successful implementation of SEAL SGW put forward in Lendrum et al.'s (2009) vignette was that facilitators deliver SEAL SGW 'with a high degree of fidelity to the national guidance' (p.233, 2009). The findings from the current study suggest that the SEAL booklet and its associated resources provided the facilitators with a useful starting point for planning the sessions, but that they could be adapted as necessary.

I noticed that the two Class Teachers interviewed from Schools B and C described the nature of their support to the SEAL small group facilitator in particularly broad terms. All five participating Class Teachers explained that they had liaised with the facilitator in selecting children for the small groups; however, the teacher in School C commented that he was able to provide resources for the facilitator and the teacher in School B spoke of 'making a big deal' out of the work accomplished by the children in SEAL groups when they returned to the classroom. It is likely that the scope of the Class Teacher's role with regard to implementing SEAL SGW, and therefore the extent of the support available to the facilitator from the Class Teacher,

was a reflection of the extent to which the programme was embedded in the whole-school curriculum. As discussed in relation to Research Questions 1 and 2 (see section 5.2.1), it appeared that there were few barriers to links between SEAL SGW and the whole-system system in Schools B and C and that this was in part due to good communication between staff. It is also worth noting that the Class Teacher in School C was the school's PSHE co-ordinator and by virtue of this joint role perhaps had a larger stake in SEAL than other teachers.

5.2.5 Processes and Issues around Evaluating the Outcomes

RQ6: How are the outcomes of SEAL small group work evaluated?

Across all four participating schools, there was little in the way of established measures for evaluating the impact of SEAL SGW on pupils' S&ES: the 'formal' assessment of SEAL was very much in the emerging phases. In keeping with the literature (Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Weare and Gray, 2003; Humphrey et al., 2007), staff members spoke of the difficulties around defining and measuring the concept of 'social and emotional skills'. The Class Teacher in School C reported that staff from the local authority had been very helpful in drawing up a framework of level descriptors for teachers to use; a framework that was loosely based on the objectives of the SEAL sessions within each theme. For staff in School D, the EP Team's Assistant Psychologist made copies of the Social Competence Inventory from Frederickson and Dunsmuir's *Measures of Children's Mental Health & Psychological Wellbeing* (2009) to be filled out before, during and after the SEAL small group intervention. Other than these measures, it seemed that staff relied largely on their own observations of the children, verbal feedback from other staff and feedback from the children themselves in order to make judgements about changes in the pupils' S&ES. School C employed a system whereby pupils could give written feedback via a box in the classroom about issues that were concerning them, and it appeared that within this school there was very much a culture of privileging pupil voice. As discussed in relation to pupil selection, the relatively flexible nature of the SEAL small group work programme can result in a lack of clarity for practitioners in schools when deciding which area of need to target through

the intervention. From an evaluation point of view, this flexibility is also problematic because it is conflict with the homogeneity that dominates quasi-experimental inquiry i.e. the assumption that all 'SEAL schools' are doing the same or similar things. In the absence of a universal measure of the constructs that are specific to the SEAL programme (see Zeidner et al.'s (2002) recommendation in section 5.2.2), it is currently very difficult for schools to systematically evaluate the outcomes of implementing SEAL small group work.

In terms of potential future measures of children's S&ES, school staff members spoke of gathering the pupils' own views about their progress. There seemed to be links between this child-centred approach to assessment and the ownership that was accorded to the pupils during the delivery of SEAL small group sessions: encouraging children to learn about their learning seemed to go hand-in-hand with enabling them to monitor their progress towards their own personal goals; with approaches to teaching, learning and assessment of S&ES all reflecting facilitators' and other staff members' views of the children as 'thinkers' (Bruner, 1996). Staff also pointed out that the acquisition of S&ES tended to be gradual – perhaps more so than in academic subjects where there is a 'body' of subject knowledge to be learned - and so they advocated for measures that were formative, and therefore more sensitive to tracking changes over time. Wigelsworth et al. (2010) point out that detailed, multi-dimensional measures such as the SSRS (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) are more for likely to be effective in evaluating the impact of S&ES interventions as they capture long-term change more precisely than broader, uni-dimensional measures. However, Wigelsworth et al. also note the time consuming nature of administration of multi-dimensional measures of S&ES, and staff in the current study pointed out the practical infeasibility of tracking pupils' S&ES due to time constraints on the school day.

5.2.6 Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Non-School Based Settings

This sixth and final theme was identified in addition to the themes above which mapped directly onto the research questions of the current study. Although this theme did not address the aim of the current study, which was to explore factors

contributing to the successful implementation of Primary SEAL SGW in the school setting, I nonetheless felt that it was important to discuss how the SEAL small group intervention relates to pupils' social and emotional learning outside of school. The current movement towards educational settings promoting S&ES requires school staff to embrace a holistic view of the children they interact with, and in keeping with an eco-systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) this involves being mindful of the variety of environments in which children operate – both within and outside of school. Furthermore, the facilitative model of pedagogy that seems to characterise effective teaching and learning of S&ES (see section 5.2.3) involves educators seeing children as “thinkers”, who will need to continue learning and making sense of their experiences well after leaving school.

Staff members across all four participating schools made some reference to involving families in the SEAL programme; however, it was the Class Teacher and SEAL Small Group Facilitator in School C who spoke most about the intention to liaise more with parents and carers with regard to implementing SEAL SGW. Both staff members expressed their opinion that parental involvement was a crucial way of furthering the positive impact of SEAL SGW, especially for pupils with more deep-seated issues that could not be addressed by school staff alone. Maxwell et al.'s (2008) review found that working with parents can not only substantially complement work undertaken with children and young people, but importantly, it can form a promising, stand-alone intervention by altering parents' perceptions and enhancing parents' skills to cope with their children's emotional well-being and mental health needs. This may be taking schools into new territories as they increasingly become organisations which participate in and support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of the local community. This movement away from the more traditional function of school is likely to create controversy though it may well be beneficial.

5.3 Implications for Practice

This section considers the practical applications of the findings of the current study discussed above. Implications for practice have been organised according to the

category of stakeholder to whom they are applicable: school practitioners, local authority staff, policy makers and educational psychologists (EPs).

5.3.1 Recommendations for Schools

A fundamental implication of the findings of this study is for staff within schools to implement SEAL SGW in ways that allow it to connect with the whole-school curriculum as much as possible. As discussed under the findings for Theme One, 'Integration of SEAL SGW into the Whole-School Curriculum', there appear to be both strategic and operational elements to making this possible. At the strategic level of implementing SEAL SGW, it seems imperative that Head Teachers and SLTs in schools 'buy into' interventions for promoting S&ES (including SEAL and its small group component) and that they explicitly communicate their endorsement of such programmes to the rest of the staff team. While strong leadership and effective communication may go a long way towards changing some of the underlying beliefs and attitudes of staff members who are more sceptical towards S&ES initiatives, it may be the case that there are some schools where SEAL SGW cannot be implemented successfully; simply because senior staff do not value it.

At the operational level of making SEAL SGW a well-embedded part of the school curriculum, it seems essential that school staff build in opportunities for class teachers to communicate with facilitators; as in the current study, lack of time and space for both parties to share information was cited as a major barrier to the SEAL small group intervention being linked to classroom work. Given that Class Teachers have extremely busy timetables, and often the working hours of staff members contracted to facilitate SEAL SGW do not extend beyond the school day, written communication can be a more than adequate substitute for verbal conversations as staff from School B demonstrated. It is important nonetheless that time is allocated for facilitators' written communication to be regular and of sufficiently high quality to inform Class Teacher's planning and assessment for the targeted children. Shared planning frameworks for both whole-school and small group SEAL are an effective way of ensuring that the messages given to pupils in their small groups are reinforced elsewhere within school. It is important that senior staff not only openly

value SEAL SGW but ensure that there is enough space allocated in the mainstream curriculum for Class Teachers to explicitly 'teach' S&ES in the classroom, such as through Circle Time or discrete PSHE lessons. This recommendation is made in full acknowledgement of the ever growing pressure on school staff to raise standards through demonstrating pupils' academic attainment.

In terms of the teaching and learning of S&ES, it seems important for SEAL Small Group Facilitators and Class Teachers alike to adopt child-centred, facilitative models of pedagogy and assessment; ones that enable pupils to reflect on their own learning and to monitor their own progress towards goals that are meaningful to them. Aside from the external pressures on school staff to deliver more 'traditional', academic aspects of the curriculum, it may be that some of the initial misgivings Class Teachers may have about teaching S&ES in the classroom are due to internally generated insecurities. The findings of the current study when considered alongside previous literature suggest that S&ES may be most effectively taught through empowering, reflective and participative approaches, but, and as the Head of Early Years in School A commented, it can be difficult for adults to 'let go' and experiment with more facilitative ways of educating pupils. Teaching staff need to feel confident in their ability to adopt a range of models of pedagogy so that they can be effective practitioners; and it is important that they are supported in this regard by their line managers and other colleagues within school, both through specific training programmes and via informal reassurance in everyday interactions.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Local Authority Staff

External professionals besides EPs within the local authority are in a position to help practitioners within schools in a variety of ways when it comes to the successful implementation of SEAL SGW. The following recommendations reflect forms of support that had already been received or were on offer to the participants in the current study: regular network meetings for updates on the SEAL programme; a user-friendly booklet outlining schemes of work for each SEAL theme; suggested assessment frameworks; training packages that are structured yet adaptable for the facilitator's use; and generally being on hand to support school staff when needed.

Professionals from the local authority also have an important role to play in empowering school staff to implement relatively new initiatives like SEAL SGW and in encouraging educators to adopt approaches to teaching and learning that may initially feel out of their comfort zone. Participants in the current study expressed a strong desire to share good practice with other schools, and this could perhaps be achieved through local authority staff arranging cycles of peer observations throughout the school year between SEAL small group facilitators from a given cluster of schools.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Policy Makers

Policy makers can contribute to the successful implementation of SEAL SGW through the information they provide for schools in published guidance for the planning and assessment of this programme. The National Strategies resources consist of fairly detailed schemes of work for the SEAL programme. However there is little guidance provided with respect to how S&ES should be conceptualised or measured by school staff; and until a situation is reached where this area is not so fraught with the controversy and inconsistency that Wigelsworth et al. (2010) highlight, it remains very difficult for schools to evaluate the impact of SEAL SGW systematically and according to universally recognised criteria. It would be helpful, and indeed valuable, if the National Curriculum for school-aged children (like the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile) encompassed criteria for evaluating S&ES as well as academic attainment. This latter recommendation, if put into practice, would not only provide a nationally-used interim measure for assessing the outcomes of SEAL SGW but would help to ensure smooth integration of the small group programme into the whole-school curriculum.

5.3.4 Recommendations for Educational Psychology Services

Educational Psychologists (EPs), through a Consultation model of Service Delivery, can discuss and 'talk through' the various aspects of SEAL small group intervention with school staff. Consultation could take place regarding issues at the level of the individual child, for example pupil selection, and also aspects of implementation at a

more systemic level such as support for the SEAL small group facilitator, ways in which the whole-school curriculum can be adapted to allow for explicit teaching and learning of S&ES and means of engaging with parents and carers. With respect to the latter point, EPs are uniquely placed professionals in terms of having links with both schools and families. The sixth, additional theme identified in the current study (Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Non-School Based Settings) suggests that EPs have an important role to play in helping schools make SEAL more of a community-embedded initiative. McKay (2006) highlights the need for a more holistic, community based perspective on what the role of an educational psychologist is, including “the goal of finding effective interventions within the community and not in an institutionalised context”. (2006, p. 9). EPs, along with other staff from the local authority can also help senior staff think of ways of engaging colleagues who are less ‘on board’ with S&ES initiatives.

5.4 Limitations and areas for further research

Limitations to the current study are largely concerned with sampling issues. Firstly, the actual sample size was smaller than intended and so fewer data than hoped for were gathered. As stated in the Methodology section, due to time constraints and the difficulty with securing the participation of schools without a prior contact, it was not possible to recruit a fifth school. Secondly, school staff members who constituted the actual sample all seemed to be in favour of the SEAL small group intervention and so to some extent were self-selecting. This issue is discussed more fully in section 5.2.1 and it is acknowledged that the gathering of alternative perspectives on SEAL SGW would have perhaps offered a more representative view of the range of school staff attitudes that exist towards S&ES interventions. However, there is an inherent ‘catch-22’ in securing the participation of schools in which the overall attitude of school staff towards SEAL SGW is more dissenting; as such schools would be unlikely to be implementing the intervention in the first place.

Finally, in view of the above limitations and the qualitative nature of the current research, the findings of current study do not seek to be generalisable to other schools either within or outside of the local authority in which the research was

conducted. It is nonetheless hoped that the findings obtained, which usefully enhance those of other related studies in the field of S&ES interventions in schools, and their implications for practice will be informative and of interest and relevance to school practitioners and other professionals who are involved in implementing SEAL SGW.

In terms of areas for further research, it would be useful to triangulate the responses of school staff in the current study with pupil views about the different aspects of implementing SEAL SGW. Observational data would also be useful in identifying whether what people have suggested regarding successful implementation of the SEAL small group programme is consistent with other's perspectives. Perry et al. (2008), for example, found some discrepancies between teacher and pupil views about the extent to which teachers' values and beliefs influenced their emotional literacy.

5.5. Conclusions

The current study has gone some way towards identifying factors that facilitate the implementation of SEAL SGW; the English government's most recent national initiative for promoting pupils' S&ES in primary schools. It would appear that a fundamental prerequisite for this intervention having a positive impact on pupils' S&ES is that Senior Leadership Teams in schools value social and emotional learning and believe in the effectiveness of school-based S&ES initiatives like SEAL. It also seems that SEAL SGW may only make a desirable difference to pupils' S&ES where it is linked in with the curriculum being followed by the Class Teacher, and if both the Class Teacher and the SEAL Small Group Facilitator are clear about the reasons for putting given pupils in small groups and what those pupils' targets are through being in the small groups. Communication at all levels between school staff members who are involved in implementing SEAL SGW seems vital for ensuring that pupils' needs are continually met through being in the small groups and that all children are receiving the right balance of small group and whole-class teaching.

It seems as though the successful delivery of the SEAL small group programme is characterised by facilitative and empowering models of teaching and learning that encourage pupils to reflect on and take ownership of their learning. The value added of pupils being in a small group appears to be that there is more opportunity for children to articulate and share their experiences in a supportive, collaborative and child-centred context, and that this type of learning environment is perhaps not possible to achieve in the mainstream classroom where there is much to cover in a short space of time. The involvement of families in SEAL SGW was also identified as an important facilitative factor, and is a factor that seems to be taking schools into a different realm; not just in educating children but participating in community mental health. Both current legislation and research into the promotion of children and young people's S&ES seems to implicate a commitment in school staff to educating the whole child, irrespective of whether one agrees with the notion that a teacher is 'in loci parentis' during the school day. This philosophy appears to be no less applicable where the implementation of SEAL SGW is concerned.

References

- Achenbach, T. (1991). *Manual for the Child Behaviour Checklist/4-18 and 1991 Profile*, Burlington VT, USA: University of Vermont, Dept of Psychology.
- Adi, Y., A. McMillan, A. Kiloran and S. Stewart-Brown (2007). *Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Interventions to Promote Mental Wellbeing in Primary Education*, Warwick: University of Warwick.
- Alborz, P., Farrell, A., Howes, D. and Pearson, A. (2009). *The Impact of Adult Support Staff on Pupils and Mainstream Schools.* London: HMSO.
- Antidote. (2009). "Antidote - Who we are - Our History." from www.antidote.org.uk/who/history.php.
- Askew, M., Brown, M., Rhodes, V., Johnson, D. and Wiliam, D. (1997). *Effective Teachers of Numeracy*, London: School of Education, King's College.
- Barchard, K.A. (2003). "Does emotional intelligence assist in the prediction of academic success?" *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, **63**: 840-858.
- Barratt, P., Joy, H., Potter, M., Thomas, G. and Whitaker, P. (1998). "Circle of Friends: A peer based approach to supporting children with autistic spectrum disorders at school." Retrieved 16th October 2011 from http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/circle_of_friends.pdf
- Barrett, P.M., Somderegger, R. and Xenos, S. (2003). "Using FRIENDS to combat anxiety and adjustment problems among young migrants to Australia: a national trial." *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, **8**(2): 241-60.
- Barrett, P.M., Farrell, L.J., Ollendick, T.H. and Dadds, M. (2006). "Long-term outcomes of an Australian universal prevention trial of anxiety and depression symptoms in children and youth: an evaluation of the FRIENDS programme." *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, **35**(3): 403-11.
- Bar-On, R. (1997). *Bar-on Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i): Technical Manual*, Toronto: Multi-Health Systems.
- Bell, M. (2003). "Supported Reflective Practice: A Programme of Peer Observation and Feedback for Academic Teaching Development." *International Journal for Academic Development*, **6**: 29-39.
- Blatchford, P., P. Kutnick, E. Baines and M. Galton (2003). "Toward a social pedagogy of classroom group work." *International Journal of Educational Research* **39**: 153-172.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, Prentice-Hall.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information; Thematic Analysis and code development*, London: Sage Publications.
- Brackett, M. and J. Mayer (2003). "Convergent, Discriminant and Incremental Validity of Competing Measures of Emotional Intelligence." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* **29**: 1-12.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* **3**: 77-101.

- British Psychological Society (2006). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. BPS.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *Folk Pedagogy. The Culture of Education*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (1999). "Initial Impact of the Fast Track Prevention Trial for Conduct Problems: I. The High-Risk Sample." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* **67**(5): 631-647.
- Corbin, J.M. and Strauss, A.L. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Sage Publications.
- Cresswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Sage Publications.
- Curtis, C. and R. Norgate (2007). "An Evaluation of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies Curriculum at Key Stage 1." *Educational Psychology in Practice* **23**: 33-44.
- Dadds M.R., Spence S.H., Holland D.E., Barrett P.M. and Laurens K.R. "Prevention and early intervention for anxiety disorders: A controlled trial." *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology* **65**: 627-635.
- DCSF (2007). *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*, Department for Children, Schools and Families: ISBN 9780101728027.
- DeSantis, L. and Ugarizza, D.N. (2000). "The Concept of Theme as Used in Qualitative Nursing Research." *West J Nurs Res* **22**: 351-372.
- Denham, D. (2005). *Assessing Social-Emotional Development in Children from a Longitudinal Perspective for the National Children's Study: Social-Emotional Compendium of Measures*, Columbus, OH: Battelle Memorial Institute.
- Denzin, N.K. (1995). *Symbolic Interactionism and Cultural Studies: the Politics of Interpretation*, Blackwell.
- DfES (2004). *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*: DfES/1081/2004.
- DfES (2005). *Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)*, Department for Education and Skills: DfES/0110/2005.
- DfES (2007). *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) for Secondary Schools: Guidance Booklet*, Department for Education and Skills: Ref: 00043-02007BKT-EN.
- DoH (2004). *The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity*, Department of Health: Gateway 3779.
- Durlak, J. and A. Wells (1997). "Primary Prevention Mental Health Programs for Children and Adolescents: a Meta-Analytic Review." *American J of Community Psychology* **25**: 115-152.
- Edwards, L. (2003). *Promoting Young People's Wellbeing: a Review of Research on Emotional*

Health, SCRE Report 115, The SCRE Centre, University of Glasgow.

Elias, M., J. Zins, R. Weissberg, K. Frey, M. Greenberg, N. Haines, R. Kessler, M. Schwab-Stone and T. Shriver (1997). *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning*, Alexandria, VA ASCD.

Farrell, L.J. and Barrett, P.M. (2007). "Prevention of Childhood Emotional Disorders: Reducing the Burden of Suffering Associated with Anxiety and Depression." *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 12(2): 58-65.

Frederickson, N. and Dunsmuir, S. (2009). (Eds.) *Measures of Children's Mental Health & Psychological Wellbeing. A Portfolio for Educational and Health Professionals*. GL Assessment.

Frederickson, N., and Turner, J. (2003). "Utilizing the classroom peer group to address children's social needs. An evaluation of the 'circle of friends' intervention approach." *Journal of Special Education* 36: 234–245.

Frederickson, N., Warren, L. and Turner, J. (2005). "'Circle of Friends' – An Exploration of Impact Over Time." *Educational Psychology in Practice* 21(3): 197-217.

Gannon, N. and R. Ranzijn (2005). "Does Emotional Intelligence Predict Unique Variance in Life Satisfaction Beyond IQ and Personality?" *Personality and Individual Differences* 38: 1353-1364.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Multiple Intelligences*, New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H., M. Kornhaber and W. Wake (1995). *Intelligence: Multiple Perspectives*, London: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Gipps, C. and B. MacGilchrist (1999). *Primary School Learners. Understanding Pedagogy and its Impact on Learning*. P. Mortimore. London: Paul Chapman.

Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*. London, Bloomsbury.

Green, J., F. Howes, E. Waters, E. Maher and F. Oberklaid (2005). "Promoting the Social and Emotional Health of Primary School-Aged Children: Reviewing the Evidence Base for School-Based Interventions." *Int. J of Mental Health Promotion* 7: 30-36.

Greenberg, M., C. Domitrovic, P. Graczyk and J. Zins (2005). *The Study of Implementation in School-Based Preventive Interventions: Theory, Practice and Research*. Washington DC; Dept Health and Human Services.

Greenberg, M., C. Kusche, E. Cooke and J. Quamma (1995). "Promoting Emotional Competence in School Age Children: the Effects of PATHS curriculum." *Development and Psychopathology* 7: 117-136.

Gresham, D. and S. Elliott (1990). *Social Skills Rating System: Manual*, Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Hallam, S., J. Rhamie and J. Shaw (2006). *Evaluation of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot*, Research Report RR717, Nottingham: DfES Publications.

Hariri, A. R., S. Y. Bookheimer and J. C. Mazziotta (2000). "Modulating emotional responses: effects of a neocortical network on the limbic system." *Neuro-report* 11(1): 43-48.

- Hayes, N. (2000). *Doing Psychological Research: Gathering and Analysing Data*, Open University Press.
- HEA (1997). *Mental Health Promotion: A Quality Framework*, London: HEA.
- Hudley C and Graham S. (1993). "An Attributional Intervention to Reduce Peer-directed Aggression among African-American Boys." *Child Development* **64**:124-138.
- Hudley C and Friday J. (1996). "Attributional Bias and Reactive Aggression. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine.*" **12**(5):75-81.
- Humphrey, N., Curran, E. Morris, P. Farrell and K. Woods (2007). "Emotional Intelligence and Education: A critical review." *Educational Psychology* **27**(2): 235-254.
- Humphrey, N., Kalambouka, J., Bolton, A., Lendrum, M., Wigelsworth, C., Lennie, C. and P. Farrell (2008). *Primary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning: Evaluation of Small Group Work*. Research Report RR064, Nottingham: DCSF publications.
- Humphrey, N., A. Kalambouka, J., Lendrum and M. Wigelsworth (2009). *A Systematic Review of Social and Emotional Skills Measures for Children and Young People (DCSF 2008/056B)*, Nottingham: DCSF publications.
- Humphrey, N., Lendrum, A and Wigelsworth, M. (2010). *Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme in secondary schools: national evaluation (DFE-RR049)*, DfE Publications.
- Kam, C., M. Greenberg and C. Wall (2003). "Examining the Role of Implementation Quality in School-Based Prevention Using the PATHS curriculum." *Society for Prevention Science* **4**: 55-63.
- Kelly, B., J. Longbottom, F. Potts and J. Williamson (2004). "Applying Emotional Intelligence: Exploring the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies Curriculum." *Educational Psychology in Practice* **20**: 221-240.
- Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Sage.
- Kusché, C. A. (2002). "Psychoanalysis as Prevention: Using PATHS to Enhance Ego Development, Object Relationships, & Cortical Integration in Children." *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* **4**(3): 283-301.
- Law, K., C. Wong and L. Song (2004). "The Construct and Criterion Validity of Emotional Intelligence and its Potential Validity for Management Studies." *J Applied Psychology* **89**: 483-496.
- Layard, R., J. Dunn and I. Children's Society. *The Good Childhood (2009). A good childhood: searching for values in a competitive age*. London, Penguin.
- Lendrum, A., N. Humphrey, A. Kalambouka and M. Wigelsworth (2009). "Implementing Primary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) Small Group Interventions: Recommendations for Practitioners." *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties* **14**: 229-238.
- Lochman, J.E. (1992). "Cognitive-behavioural intervention with aggressive boys: Three-year follow-up and preventive efforts." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* **60**: 426-432.
- MacKay, T. (2006). "The Educational Psychologist as Community Psychologist: Holistic Child

- Psychology across Home, School and Community.* Educational & Child Psychology **23**: 7-15.
- MacLean, P. D. (1977). "The triune brain in conflict." *Psychotherapy and psychosomatics* **28**(1-4): 1-4.
- Matthews, G., M. Zeidner and R. Roberts (2004). *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Maxwell, C., P. Aggleton, I. Warwick, E. Yankah, V. Hill and D. Mehmedbegovic (2008). "Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health in England: a Review." *Health Education* **108**: 272-286.
- Mayer, J., D. Caruso and P. Salovey (1999). "Emotional Intelligence Meets Standards for a Traditional Intelligence." *Intelligence* **27**: 267-298.
- Mayer, J. and C. Cobb (2000). "Educational Policy on Emotional Intelligence: Does it Make Sense." *Educational Psychology Review* **12**: 163-183.
- Mayer, J. and P. Salovey (1997). What is Emotional Intelligence? *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Educational Implications*. P. Salovey and J. Sluyter, New York: Basic: 3-31.
- Medwell, J., Wray, D., Poulson, L. and Fox, R. (1998). *Effective Teachers of Numeracy*, University of Exeter.
- Meyer, J., P. Salovey, D. Caruso and G. Sitarenios (2003). "Measuring Emotional Intelligence with the MSCEIT V2.0." *Emotion* **3**: 97-105.
- Miller, S., Hubbis, M. and Duncan, B. (2007). "Supershrinks: What is the secret of their success?" *Psychotherapy in Australia* **14**(4): 14-22.
- Morrow, V. and B. Mayall (2009). "What is wrong with children's well-being in the UK? Questions of meaning and measurement." *J. Soc. Welf. Fam. Law Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* **31**(3): 217-229.
- Newton, C., Taylor, G., & Wilson, D. (1996). "Circles of friends. An inclusive approach to meeting emotional and behavioural difficulties." *Educational Psychology in Practice* **11**: 41-48.
- NICE (2008). Promoting Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Primary Education, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence: Public health guidance PH12.
- Park, J., A. Haddon and H. Goodman (2003). *The Emotional Literacy Handbook: Processes, Practices and Resources to Promote Emotional Literacy*, London: David Fulton.
- Payton, J., D. Wardlaw, P. Graczyk, M. Bloodworth, C. Thompsett and R. Weissberg (2000). "Social and Emotional Learning: a Framework for Promoting Mental Health and Reducing Risk Behaviours in Children and Youth." *J of School Health* **70**: 179-185.
- Penza, S., J. Zeeman and K. Shipman (1998). Validation of the Emotion Dysregulation Scale for Children (EDS). *Human Development*. Mobile, AL, USA: poster presentation.
- Perez, J., K. Petrides and A. Furnham (2005). Measuring Trait Emotional Intelligence. *Emotional Intelligence: An International Handbook*. R. Schulze and R. Roberts, Gottingen, Germany: Hogrefe

and Huber: 181-202.

Perry, L., C. Lennie and N. Humphrey (2008). "Emotional literacy in the primary classroom: teacher perceptions and practices." *Education 3-13* **36**(1): 27-37.

Petrides, K., N. Frederickson and A. Furnham (2004). "The role of trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior at school." *Personality and Individual Differences* **36**(2): 277-293.

Petrides, K. and A. Furnham (2001). "Trait Emotional Intelligence: Psychometric Investigation with Reference to Established Trait Taxonomies." *European Journal of Personality* **15**: 425-448.

Petrides, K., Y. Sangareau, A. Furnham and N. Frederickson (2006). "Trait Emotional Intelligence and Children's Peer Relations at School." *Social Development* **15**: 537-547.

Rolls, E. T. (2004). "The functions of the orbitofrontal cortex." *Brain and Cognition* **55**(1): 11-29.

Rones, M. and K. Hoagwood (2000). "School-Based Mental Health Services: a Research Review." *Clinical Child and Family Psychological Review* **4**: 223-241.

Rose, J. (2009). *The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications.

Rose-Krasnor, L. (1997). "The Nature of Social Competence: a Theoretical Review." *Social Development* **6**: 111-135.

Rosenkranz, J. A., H. Moore and A. A. Grace (2003). "The prefrontal cortex regulates lateral amygdala neuronal plasticity and responses to previously conditioned stimuli." *The Journal of neuroscience: the official journal of the Society for Neuroscience* **23**(35): 11054-11064.

Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Sage.

Ryecroft-Malone, J., K. Seers, A. Titchen, G. Harvey, A. Kitson and B. McCormack (2004). "What Counts as Evidence in Evidence-Based Practice?" *J Advanced Nursing* **47**: 81-90.

Safran, J.D., Muran, J.C. and Meissner, W.W. (2003). "Negotiating the Therapeutic Alliance: A Relational Treatment Guide." *Contemporary Psychology* **48**: 431.

Salovey, P., M. A. Brackett and J. D. Mayer (2004). *Emotional intelligence: key readings on the Mayer and Salovey model*. Port Chester, N.Y., Dude Pub.

Salovey, P. and J. Mayer (1990). "Emotional Intelligence." *Imagination Cognition and Personality* **9**: 185-211.

Salovey, P., J. Mayer, S. Goldman, C. Turvey and T. Palfai (1995). Emotional Attention, Clarity and Repair: Exploring Emotional Intelligence Using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale. *Emotion, Disclosure and Health*. J. Pennebaker, Washington, DC: APA: 125-154.

Schulte, M., M. Ree and T. Carretta (2004). "Emotional Intelligence: Not Much More Than g and Personality." *Personality and Individual Differences* **37**: 1059-1068.

Seligman, M. E. P. and Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). *Positive psychology*. Washington, D.C.

- Sharp, P. (2001). *Nurturing Emotional Literacy*, London: David Fulton.
- Shortt, A.L., Barrett, P.M. and Fox, T.L. (2001). "Evaluating the FRIENDS Program: A Cognitive-Behavioral Group Treatment for Anxious Children and Their Parents." *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology* **30**(4): 525-535.
- Shucksmith, J., C. Summerbell, S. Jones and V. Whittaker (2007). *Mental Wellbeing of Children in Primary Education (Targeted/Indicated Activities)*.
- Smith, J.A. (1995). Semi-Structured Interviewing and Qualitative Analysis. *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. J.A. Smith, R. Harre and L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), London: Paul Chapman.
- Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. J.A. Smith. (Ed.), London: Sage Publications.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*, Sage Publications.
- Southampton Psychology Service (2003). *Emotional Literacy: Assessment and Intervention*, Slough: NFER Nelson.
- Stewart-Brown, S. (2000). Parenting, Wellbeing, Health and Disease. *Promoting Children's Emotional Wellbeing*. A. Buchanan and B. Hudson, Oxford: OUP: 28-47.
- Thorndike, E. (1921). "Intelligence and its Measurement: a Symposium." *J Educational Psychology* **12**: 123-147, 195-216, 271-275.
- UN (1989). Convention of the Rights of the Child, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- UNICEF (2007). Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.
- Van Rooy, D., C. Viswesvaran and P. Pluta (2005). "An Evaluation of Construct Validity: What is This Thing Called Emotional Intelligence?" *Human Performance* **18**: 445-462.
- Warwick, J. and T. Nettleback (2004). "Emotional Intelligence is ...?" *Personality and Individual Differences* **37**: 1091-1100.
- Watkins, C., E. Carnell, C. Lodge and C. Whalley (1996). *Effective Learning*, London: Institute of Education School Improvement Network (Research Matter Series).
- Watkins, C. and P. Mortimore (1999). *Pedagogy: What do we know? Understanding Pedagogy and its Impact on Learning*. P. Mortimore. London: Paul Chapman.
- Weare, K. (2000). *Promoting Mental, Emotional and Social Health: a Whole School Approach*, Routledge.
- Weare, K. (2003). *Developing the Emotionally Literate School*, London: Paul Chapman.
- Weare, K. (2010). "Mental health and social and emotional learning: evidence, principles, tensions, balances." *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion*, **3**: 5-17.

Weare, K. and Markham, W. (2005). "What do we know about Promoting Mental Health through Schools?" *Promotion and Education* **12**: 118-122.

Weare, K. and G. Gray (2003). What works in developing children's emotional and social competence and wellbeing? Nottingham, Department for Education and Skills.

Webster-Stratton, C., Reid, J. and Hammond, H. (2001). "Social Skills and Problem-solving Training for Children with Early-onset Conduct Problems: Who Benefits?" *Journal of Child Psychiatry* **42**(7):943-952.

Wells, J., Barlow, J. and Stewart-Brown, S. (2003) "A Systematic Review of Universal Approaches to Mental Health Promotion in Schools." *Health Education* **103**: 197-220.

Whitaker, P., Barratt, P., Joy, H., Potter, M., & Thomas, G. (1998). "Children with autism and peer group support: Using 'circles of friends'". *British Journal of Special Education* **25**: 60–64.

Wigelsworth, M., Humphrey, N., Kalamouka, A. and Lendrum, A. (2010). "A review of key issues in the measurement of children's social and emotional skills." *Educational Psychology in Practice* **26**(2): 173-186.

Willhelm, O. (2005). Measures of Emotional Intelligence: Practice and Standards. *Emotional Intelligence: an International Handbook*. R. Schulze and R. Roberts, Cambridge, MA: Hogrefe and Huber: 131-154.

Willing, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures on Theory and Method*. Open University Press.

Yardley, L. (2003). Demonstrating Validity in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. J.A.Smith. London: Sage.

Zeidner, M., Matthews, G. and Roberts, R.D. (2004). "Emotional intelligence in the workplace: A critical review." *Applied Psychology-an International Review* **53**(3): 371-399.

Zeidner, M., Roberts, R.D. and Matthews, G. (2002). "Can Emotional Intelligence be schooled? A Critical Review." *Educational Psychologist* **37**: 215-231.

Zins, J. E., R. P. Weissberg, M. C. Wang, H. J. Walberg and D. Goldman (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: what does the research say?* New York, Teachers College Press.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Definitions of Abbreviated Terms

CBT – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES – Department for Education and Skills
DOH – Department of Health
EI – Emotional Intelligence
EL – Emotional Literacy
EP – Educational Psychologist / Educational Psychology
ESPCM – Extended Schools and Pastoral Care Manager
LA – Local Authority
LEA – Local Education Authority
NICE – National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
PATHS – Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies
PBC – Primary Behaviour Consultant
PSHE – Personal, Social, Health and Economic education
S&ES – Social and Emotional Skills
SEAL – Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEAL SGW – SEAL Small Group Work
SENCo – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SLT – Senior Leadership Team
SSRS – Social Skills Rating System
TEP – Trainee Educational Psychologist
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

Appendix 2: Supplement to section 2.3.1

2.3.1.1 Emotional and social intelligence

'Emotional intelligence' is arguably the most widely used and understood term of reference. It is attributed to Salovey and Mayer (1990), who gave it a somewhat technical and value free meaning that focused on its cognitive and behavioural aspects:

'The ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings which facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.' (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, p.10)

Salovey and Mayer also worked with the concept of 'social intelligence' which they characterised as the understanding of group dynamics, social status, political relationships, interpersonal activities and leadership. The work of Salovey and Mayer coincided with that of Gardner (see for example Gardner et al.1995) who argued that the whole concept of intelligence was much wider than is generally supposed. He split intelligence up in the following ways:

- conventional intelligence - IQ, logical/rational and linguistic
- specialist intelligences e.g. musical, spatial, kinaesthetic
- personal intelligences - intrapersonal (self understanding) and interpersonal (understanding other people)

Goleman (1996) then popularised and used the term 'emotional intelligence' in a much looser way than Mayer and Salovey to include all kinds of skills and competences, including social ones.

2.3.1.2 Emotional literacy

The term 'emotional literacy' was popularised by various influential figures in the 1990s, many from a psychotherapeutic background, such as Susie Broach, who helped found Antidote: the Campaign for Emotional Literacy in the UK. Weare and Gray (2003) cite the following definition provided from Sharp (2001):

'Emotional literacy may be defined as the ability to recognise, understand, handle, and appropriately express emotions.' Sharp (2001, p.1)

They point out that 'emotional literacy' is a meaningful term in an educational context, and is now very popular with and much used by educational psychologists, schools and LEAs in the UK.

2.3.1.3 Emotional and social competence

Like 'emotional literacy', 'emotional and social competence' is a familiar term to those who work in education; however Weare and Gray (2003) argue that it is also perhaps a straightforward, non-specialist and non-threatening term in most contexts. They offer the following definition for this term:

'Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development.' (Elias et al., 1997, p.2)

Weare and Gray (2003) are advocates of the term 'emotional and social competence' because '... definitions of competences in educational contexts include knowledge, attitudes and behavioural components, and are thus inclusive.' (p. 17). In keeping with this statement, they argue that competences are partly cognitive, and to do with functions such as perception, information processing and decoding; that competences are also partly emotive, and therefore to do with the way feelings both influence what we perceive and are also influenced by our perceptions; and that competences have outputs in terms of skills and behaviours.

2.3.1.4 Mental health

Traditionally, 'mental health' was a term that was mostly used in the health service in the following contexts:

- as a pseudonym for mental illness, for example 'mental health is a growing problem'
- as a label for services that deal only with the diagnosis, management and treatment of mental illness, often in a medical context, for example some hospital psychiatry departments have been renamed 'departments of mental health'
- to focus on the (usually negative) states of individuals

Weare and Gray (2003) point out that nowadays there is in practice an increasing overlap between work on mental health in some contexts and work on emotional and social competency – often they are addressing the same issues but using different terminology. This means that many modern definitions of mental health include emotional and social components, positive wellness and a concern with the determinants of mental health; while work in the field of mental health often includes a focus on learning and capacity building, not just the static states of individuals. The current situation is a reflection of the aforementioned legislation that encourages professionals across a range of settings to promote 'mental health' such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004), the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity (Department of Health (DOH), 2004) and the Children's Plan (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2007), as well as the emerging positive psychology movement, which aims to uncover factors that maximise individual welfare (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) as opposed to the focus on pathology that characterised much of the conceptualisation of 'mental health' in the twentieth century.

2.3.1.5 Emotional and social wellbeing

'Emotional and social wellbeing' is a term widely used in both educational and health contexts, however its origin is difficult to trace. Weare and Gray (2003) state that it can be defined as:

'A holistic, subjective state which is current when a range of feelings, among them energy, confidence, openness, enjoyment, happiness, calm, and caring, are combined and balanced'. (Stewart-Brown, 2000)

Weare and Gray explain that it is a generic, broad and positive term, and is often used alongside 'mental health' (as in 'mental, emotional and social health') so as to 'unpack' the term 'mental health' and help it lose some of its medicalised and negative connotations. They add that it is acceptable in a wide range of educational, social care and health related environments, and so can help bring disparate professional groups together. Unlike 'mental health', 'emotional and social wellbeing' is a non-medical term and thus has implications of being the 'business' of everyone such as parents and teachers, not just doctors. The more normalised connotations of this word also imply a focus on whole populations, not just those with problems.

Appendix 3: Information on data gathering

Figure 1. Identification of the sample.

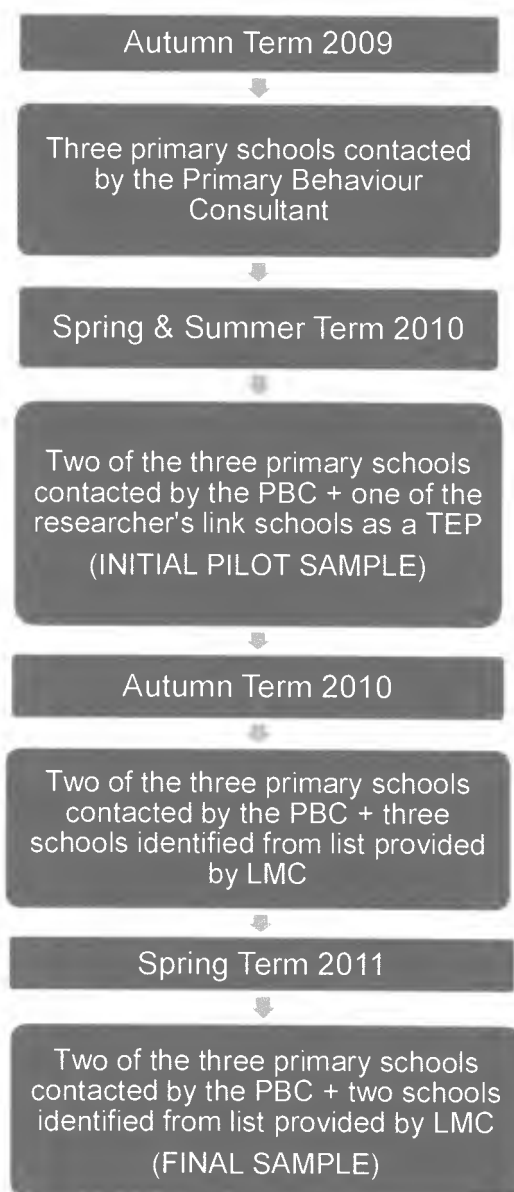


Table 1. Details of participants' positions held within each school.

School	Participant	Position Held
A	1	SEAL SGW facilitator/Play Worker
	2	Class Teacher/Senior staff member
	3	SENCO/Deputy Head Teacher
	4	Senior staff member (Head of Early Years)
B	5	SEAL SGW facilitator/Learning Mentor
	6	Class teacher
	7	Extended Schools and Pastoral Care Manager/Principle co-ordinator of SEAL SGW
	8	Senior staff member (Assistant Head of Lower School)
C	9	SEAL SGW facilitator/Learning Support Assistant (LSA)
	10	Class Teacher/PSHCE co-ordinator
	11	Senior staff member (Head Teacher)
D	12	SEAL SGW facilitator/Learning Mentor
	13	Class Teacher
	14	Class Teacher
	15	SENCO

Appendix 4: Interview Schedules

Interview schedule – SEAL small group work facilitator

Hello and thank you for agreeing to take part in my research into SEAL small group work. It is expected that this interview will last for between 30 and 40 minutes. Does that sound ok and do you have any questions before we begin?

Introductory question

- **What do you think about small group SEAL as an intervention?**

Training (RQ 1)

- **How confident do you feel about delivering/teaching the SEAL small group programme?**
- **What training has been made available to you in relation to delivering the SEAL small group work? What are your views about the quality and effectiveness of the training you have received?**
- **Are there any areas in relation to SEAL small group work that you would like to receive further training on?**

Pupil selection (RQ 2)

- **How are the pupils in your school selected for SEAL small group work?**
- **Are there any priority areas that staff already have in mind during selection – e.g. behaviour problems, shyness and social withdrawal, bullying – or is it that the groups are formed in response to whatever difficulties pupils seem to be experiencing?**
- **Are the groups organised specifically to synchronise with the delivery of Wave 1 SEAL e.g. if the whole-school theme is on Relationships, would it be children having difficulty making friends who would most likely be selected for small group work?**
- **What is the composition of each of your small groups in terms of the pupils' year group, their gender and their profiles of difficulty?**

Delivery – methods of teaching and learning (RQ 3)

- **How do you feel children normally learn social and emotional skills?**

- Has there been any particularly successful session that you've delivered? / And what was it about that session which made it work so well?
- How did you go about planning that session?
- Has there been any session that you feel didn't go so well? / What do you feel could have improved that session?
- What resources and materials are available to you in relation to delivering SEAL small group work? How closely do you follow the available guidance? Who creates these materials? How useful do you find them?
- What do you feel are the key skills required for the role of SEAL small group work facilitator?

Links with the mainstream classroom and whole-school SEAL (RQs 5 & 4)

- To what extent would you say the messages that pupils are given during your SEAL small group sessions are reinforced and modelled in the mainstream classroom and other contexts within school?
- What do you feel helps, or would help, the material that pupils learn during your SEAL small group work to be reinforced in the classroom and other contexts within school?
- What do you think hinders or gets in the way of the messages that you give to pupils attending SEAL small group sessions being reinforced in the classroom and other contexts in school?
- We talked earlier about the training that is provided by external agencies for delivering SEAL small group work. To what extent do you receive support from other staff members within school for delivering the programme? What form does it take?
- To what extent, that you are aware of, does the SEAL small group programme fit in with or complement the whole-school SEAL programme?

Concluding comments

- What do you feel are the key factors that influence the success of SEAL small group work in a school such as yours?
- Is there any other information about SEAL small group work in your school that you would like to tell us about that has not been covered during this interview?

Interview schedule – Class teacher

Hello and thank you for agreeing to take part in my research into SEAL small group work. It is expected that this interview will last for between 30 and 40 minutes. Does that sound ok and do you have any questions before we begin?

Introductory question

- **What do you think about small group SEAL as an intervention?**
- **How would you describe your own role in relation to the implementation of SEAL small group work?**

Pupil selection (RQ 2)

- **How are the pupils in your school selected for SEAL small group work?**
- **Are there any priority areas that staff already have in mind during selection – e.g. behaviour problems, shyness and social withdrawal, bullying – or is it that the groups are formed in response to whatever difficulties pupils seem to be experiencing?**
- **Are the groups organised specifically to synchronise with the delivery of Wave 1 SEAL e.g. if the whole-school theme is on Relationships, would it be children having difficulty making friends who would most likely be selected for small group work?**
- **What is the composition of the small group from your own class in terms of the pupils' genders and their profiles of difficulty?**

Links with the mainstream classroom and whole-school SEAL (RQs 5 & 4)

- **In what ways would you say the messages that your pupils are given during the SEAL small group sessions are reinforced and modelled in the mainstream classroom and other contexts within school?**
- **What do you feel helps, or would help, the material that pupils learn during your SEAL small group work to be reinforced in the classroom and other contexts within school?**
- **What to you think hinders or gets in the way of the messages that pupils are given during SEAL small group sessions being reinforced in the classroom and other contexts in school?**
- **To what extent, that you are aware of, does the SEAL small group programme fit in with or complement the whole-school SEAL programme?**

- In what ways would you say the facilitator(s) of SEAL small group work is supported by other staff members in school for implementing the programme? And what form does it take?

Delivery – methods of teaching and learning (RQ 3)

- How do you feel children normally learn social and emotional skills?
- What do you feel may be provided by the small group sessions in addition to the whole school SEAL programme that makes a difference to pupils' social and emotional learning?
- What are your views about the quality and effectiveness of the resources and materials that are available to the SEAL small group facilitator?
- What do you feel are the key skills required for the role of SEAL small group work facilitator?

Concluding comments

- What do you feel are the key factors that influence the success of SEAL small group work in a school such as yours?
- Is there any other information about SEAL small group work in your school that you would like to tell us about that has not been covered during this interview?

Interview schedule – SENCO & SMT

Hello and thank you for agreeing to take part in my research into SEAL small group work. It is expected that this interview will last for between 30 and 40 minutes. Does that sound ok and do you have any questions before we begin?

Background/Role/SEAL in general

NB: ONLY ASK SMT or SENCO – depending on who is best placed to answer these questions

- **How long has your school been involved in:**
 - SEAL at a whole-school level?
 - SEAL small group work?
- **How did your school come to be involved with implementing the SEAL small group programme?**
- **What kind of profile does SEAL have within your school?**
- **How has SEAL been received by the different stakeholders, including staff, governors, pupils, and families?**
- **How would you describe your role in relation to the implementation of SEAL small group work?**

Introductory question

- **What do you think about small group SEAL as an intervention?**

Links with Wave 1 SEAL and the mainstream classroom (RQ 4 and RQ 5)

- **To what extent would you say the SEAL small group work is linked to, or fits in with, the whole-school SEAL programme?**
- **What do you feel helps / would help the co-ordination of the small group work with the wider SEAL programme across the school?**
- **What do you think hinders or gets in the way of the small group work being synchronised with the school's universal SEAL programme?**
- **To what extent do you feel the messages that pupils are given during SEAL small group sessions are reinforced and modelled in the mainstream classroom and other contexts within school?**

- **In what ways would you say the facilitator(s) of SEAL small group work is supported by other staff members in school for implementing the programme? And what form does it take?**

Pupil selection (RQ 2)

- **How are the pupils in your school selected for SEAL small group work?**
- **Are there any priority areas that staff already have in mind during selection – e.g. behaviour problems, shyness and social withdrawal, bullying – or is it that the groups are formed in response to whatever difficulties pupils seem to be experiencing?**
- **Are the groups organised specifically to synchronise with the delivery of Wave 1 SEAL e.g. if the whole-school theme is on Relationships, would it be children having difficulty making friends who would most likely be selected for small group work?**
- **What is the composition of each of the small groups in terms of the pupils' year group, their gender and their profiles of difficulty?**

Delivery – methods of teaching and learning (RQ 3)

- **How do you feel children normally learn social and emotional skills?**
- **What do you feel may be provided by the small group sessions in addition to the whole school SEAL programme that makes a difference to pupils' social and emotional learning?**
- **What are your views about the quality and effectiveness of the resources and materials that are available to the SEAL small group facilitator?**
- **What do you feel are the key skills required for the role of SEAL small group work facilitator?**

Training (RQ 1)

- **What training from external agencies that you are aware of has been made available to the facilitator (X) in relation to delivering/teaching the SEAL small group programme? What are your views about the quality and effectiveness of the training which the facilitator (X) has received?**

Evaluation of outcomes (RQ 6)

- To what extent does your school audit or evaluate the impact of SEAL small group work? How is this done? How often does this take place? Is this part of the whole school SEAL evaluation?

Concluding comments

- What do you feel are the key factors that influence the success of SEAL small group work in a school such as yours?
- Is there any other information about SEAL small group work in your school that you would like to tell us about that has not been covered during this interview?

Appendix 5: Ethical Approval

BPS Ethical Approval Form

STUDENT RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

Psychology & Human Development

This form should be completed with reference to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct – available online from www.bps.org.uk

On which course are you registered? Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent Psychology _____

Title of project: An exploratory study of how primary schools implement SEAL small group work.

Name of researcher(s): Rachel Friend _____

Name of supervisor/s (for student research): Ed Baines (Academic), Greta Sykes (EP) _____

Date: 11.02.11 Intended start date of data collection (month and year only): February 2011__

1. Summary of planned research (please provide the following details: project title, purpose of project, its academic rationale and research questions, a brief description of methods and measurements; participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria; estimated start date and duration of project). It's expected that this will take approx. 200–300 words, though you may write more if you feel it is necessary. Please also give further details here if this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee.

Project title:

An exploratory study of how primary schools implement SEAL small group work.

Purpose of project:

To investigate the processes by which a sample of primary schools in an inner-city borough of London have implemented the small group work component of the government's SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme.

Academic rationale:

Recent years have seen an increase in school-based interventions designed to promote pupils' social and emotional skills (S&ES), the most widely-used of which in the UK is the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme. Previous research has focused on the impact of similar interventions in schools prior to SEAL as well as factors contributing to their effectiveness. However the majority of investigations in this area are based in the US and the stringent criteria of systematic reviews preclude further insight being gained into how more recently developed interventions to enhance pupils' social and emotional learning can successfully be implemented in UK contexts. The present study builds on a DCSF-commissioned study by Humphrey et al. (2008) in investigating the processes by which a sample of primary schools in an inner-city borough of London have

implemented the small group work component of the SEAL programme. Research questions centre on different aspects of implementing SEAL small group work including training and support, pupil selection, methods of teaching and learning S&ES, links to the whole-school SEAL programme, and evaluation of outcomes.

Research questions:

1. What training do facilitators receive for implementing SEAL small group work?
2. How are pupils selected for the SEAL small group sessions?
3. What methods of teaching and learning characterise the delivery of the SEAL small group sessions?
 - a. What models of pedagogy do facilitators adopt?
 - b. How closely do facilitators follow the available guidance for implementing SEAL small group work?
4. How does SEAL small group work fit in with or complement the whole-school SEAL programme?
5. To what extent are the messages in the SEAL small group context reinforced and modelled in the mainstream classroom and other contexts within school?
6. How are outcomes of the small group SEAL programme evaluated?

Design of the study:

The pilot phase of data collection for this study took place in June 2010 and involved informal, semi-structured interviews with the SEAL small group facilitators in 3 primary schools. This information gathered has been used to help determine more precisely the next and current phase of data collection, where it is intended that more in-depth data on facilitators and other staff members' experiences of implementing SEAL small group work in primary schools will be gathered. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, with participants' permission, to allow for thematic analysis of facilitators' responses at a later stage. Approval for this phase of the research was granted by the IOE ethics committee: however since then the design of the current study has been altered (see below).

The current phase of data collection will include semi-structured interviews with the following four categories of stakeholder in each of the participating schools: a senior member of staff, the SENCo, the SEAL small group work facilitator, and the/a class teacher of pupils who are undertaking SEAL small group work. As with the pilot phase, these interviews will be recorded with participants' permission to enable a thematic analysis of their responses.

- 2. Specific ethical issues** (Please outline the main ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research, and how they will be addressed. It's expected that this will require approx. 200–300 words, though you may write more if you feel it is necessary. You will find information in the notes about answering this question).

I will obtain informed consent from the participants in my research.

I will ensure that all data obtained from all the participants in each school remains anonymous and confidential by omitting all names when I write up the study and I will ensure as far as possible that participants will not be identifiable by others on the basis of what they say.

I will explain the purpose of my research study to the participants in my letter requesting their participation, as well as their anonymity and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Recorded data will be kept in accordance with the data protection act.

3. Further details

Please answer the following questions.

		YES	NO	N/A
1	Will you describe the exactly what is involved in the research to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have ticked **No** to any of Q1-8, please ensure further details are given in section 2 above.

		YES	NO	N/A
9	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort? If Yes , give details on a separate sheet and state what you will tell them to do if they should experience any problems (e.g. who they can contact for help).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Will your project involve human participants as a secondary source of data (e.g. using existing data sets)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have ticked **Yes** to any of 9 - 11, please provide a full explanation in section 2 above.

		YES	NO	N/A
12	Does your project involve working with any of the following special groups?			
	• Animals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• School age children (under 16 years of age)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Young people of 17-18 years of age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• People with learning or communication difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Patients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• People in custody	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	• People engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug-taking)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have ticked Yes to 12, please refer to BPS guidelines, and provide full details in sections 1 and 2 above. **Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory CRB clearance (or equivalent for overseas students).**

There is an obligation on the Student and their advisory panel to bring to the attention of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

4. Attachments

Please attach the following items to this form:

- Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee, if applicable
- Where available, information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research.

5. Declaration

*This form (and any attachments) should be signed by the Trainee, Academic and EP Supervisors and then submitted to the Programme Office. You will be informed when it has been approved. If there are concerns that this research may not meet BPS ethical guidelines then it will be considered by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. **If your application is incomplete, it will be returned to you.***

For completion by students

I am familiar with the BPS Guidelines for ethical practices in psychological research (and have discussed them in relation to my specific project with members of my advisory panel). I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Signed Print Name
 Date.....
 (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

For completion by supervisors/ advisory panel

We consider that this project meets the BPS ethics guidelines on conducting research and does not need to be referred to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Signed Print Name
 Date.....
 (Academic Research Supervisor)

Signed Print Name
 Date.....
 (EP Supervisor)

FREC use
 Date considered: _____ Reference: _____

Approved and filed Referred back to applicant Referred to RGEC

Signature _____ of _____ Chair _____ of _____
 FREC: _____

Dear X [Head Teacher],

My name is Rachel Friend and I'm a trainee educational psychologist from X [the Local Education Authority]. As part of the doctoral programme to become fully qualified I am required to conduct and write a research thesis. I have chosen to look at SEAL small group work and the different ways in which it is implemented within a small number of [X Borough] primary schools.

The rationale for me doing this research is that in spite of SEAL being the most recent and widely used intervention to promote emotional health and well-being in schools, there is nonetheless a lack of literature so far on SEAL and other such school-based programmes in the UK. Your consent for X School to participate in this study would enable me to shed some light on the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of the Wave 2 SEAL programme in primary schools. The first systematic evaluation of small group (or Wave 2) primary SEAL was carried out in 2008 in a study commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. My aim is to build on this large-scale study with findings that are specific to inner city settings such as X School where SEAL and other interventions related to emotional health and well-being are intended to have the greatest impact. I also hope that my findings will add to those that are currently being obtained as part of the wider evaluation of the Emotional Health and Well-Being Project in [X Borough].

My plan is to conduct an informal interview with each of the following people, for about 40 to 50 minutes, regarding how SEAL small group work is implemented at X School:

- the school SENCO
- a senior member of staff
- the/a SEAL small group work facilitator in your school
- the/a class teacher who teaches pupils attending the SEAL small group sessions.

These interviews would be recorded with your permission so that I can analyse the transcripts at a later stage.

All data resulting from the study will of course be confidential and anonymous and any personal information that might serve to identify persons will be removed. The information that I obtain will be stored in a secure place for the duration of the study and will only be used for the stated research purpose in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

As mentioned above, I hope that this study will be of interest and relevance to you and your staff. If you would be happy, therefore, for me to pursue my research at X School please could you reply to this email by way of written permission?

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely, Rachel Friend

Appendix 6: Interview with Facilitator at School C

School C - Facilitator

Interviewer:

Okay, so thanks again X for being able to take part in my research, I really appreciate it, and it's expected that this interview will last for between 30 and 40 minutes so does that sound okay?

Respondent:

Yes that's absolutely fine.

Interviewer:

Great, and do you have any questions before we begin?

Respondent:

No. No, I'm ready to go.

Interviewer:

Great. So first of all, what do you think about small group SEAL as an intervention?

Respondent:

I think it's a fantastic way to build confidence or behaviour in the schools. You know, speaking to the SENCOs teachers, other TAs, seeing the children's need, seeing what they sort of lack either in the classroom or the playground. So just the sort of... give them the platform to have their say. They might be sort of academically doing well, but their confidence of being able to speak in a group or to stand out, rather than being in the background, I think is... and in general social skills I think it's a really good thing that we have in schools, so...

And now we do key stage 1, especially here, it's... it starts them at an early age really to prepare them for the older years, so no so...

Interviewer:

Fantastic. I know obviously I've... oh sorry, I've actually got the wrong schedule in front of me. It's all a bit... sorry here we go...

Respondent:

That's right, that's okay.

Interviewer:

And I met with X2 early this morning, and X2 explained to me that there's you and X3. X3's the Learning Mentor, and you're X2's LSA for the year 3 class.

Respondent:

Year 3, I do year 3... at key stages I do year 3 and year 4. I also work... I do intervention work and SEAL work with year 5, but targeting specific children to... that need that one-to-one, that social skill to allow them to be in class, just the... to be able to show respect, the politeness, the general way how we go about it. Have good role models around them to model that behaviour. I also do key stage 1, which is year 1, so...

Interviewer:

Great. And just to check this because I'm sort of... this is just sort of for my own information, so X2 was saying that there's apparently three SEAL small groups at School C...

Respondent:

Yep.

Interviewer:

...There's one for key stage 1, one for key stage 2, and there's a third group that seems to be arranged more around those particular pupils... and that you facilitate the key stage 2 group and X3 does the other two, is that correct?

Respondent:

Yeah, it's... me and X3 will speak to see who is available to do that group and we'll talk between us so normally it's... I do key stage 2 with year 3, and me and X3 will split year 4, and I also do work with year 5, but again it's between me and X3, depending on timetable. But it's always set in stone that we'll... you know, we discuss that when... as and when.

Interviewer:

Great. And... how would you describe your own role in relation to SEAL small group work and SEAL across the school?

Respondent:

I think for my own role, I don't think I actually sort of give much in the sense... I give them all the tools that they need, you know, give them sort of a question on maybe we'll talk about something what I can debate, where they can all be involved, rather than sort of me be the person at the front saying 'you've got to do this, this, this and this is what we're going to talk about.' I'll bring the general theme of that session, or I'll introduce it, then the rest will be down to them to... everyone will have a turn.

We set our group rules, our SEAL session rules so... about respecting each other, listening to each other, taking turns. So everyone has a copy of the group rules, so everyone... that group can sort of take control. They can feel like their... take ownership actually of the group rather than... it's like another lesson and you've got to do X Y and Z. I'll just sort of give them the tools that they can use and then they can take it further.

Interviewer:

Fantastic.

Respondent:

Yeah, so which is...

Interviewer:

Great. And sort of... so I guess yeah, this is quite a general question, but how do you feel children normally learn social and emotional skills?

Respondent:

I think as with the groups we've chosen, with the groups that we've chosen, we have the kids that need that to see how to model... that we have kids that have got... have got, you know, they can do the social skills. So we have a mixture so we can have role models and we can show that... you know, depending on how every session goes, we... if we're on the same session for two weeks in a row, we'll just model that behaviour, depending on the activity. So we'll do role-play, we'll talk about, we'll write about, we'll draw a picture. We just go over and over... even if it's repetitive, until they get why we're doing it, then I think they will... you know, they'll slowly learn and...

One of the rules that we have is what happens in a group, stays in a group. So whatever happens in our group, when we go to the playground we try and use the skills that we've

learnt to... [unintelligible 0:05:42.7] to the classroom, to the playground. So hopefully, fingers crossed, that it is working so...

Interviewer:

Absolutely.

Respondent:

Yeah, but I think yeah, I think just basically... just emphasise that work, having role models and to... we always remind ourself, 'look at Mr C, look how he's doing it, look at Charlie, look at...' we just always remind ourself how we go about it and just that constant reminder so... yeah.

Interviewer:

Absolutely. And... so sort of going back to... you're one of the facilitators of SEAL small group work. And how confident do you feel about delivering the SEAL small group program?

Respondent:

Yeah very confident. I've been doing it for... I'd say, 16 months now. So... I just started, when I started last... well when I first started, I only had one group. And this year, this new year, I've taken on more groups so yeah, very confident.

Interviewer:

Great. And what do you think it is that's helped you feel confident about that?

Respondent:

I think the feedback from the children. At the end of the sessions that we have, whether it be written or just a general feedback, I have an evaluation sheet so I just say... 'So how did it go today? What did you enjoy? What didn't you enjoy? How can we improve our session, what can I do to make our time together better?' So... and I say 'it's not you attacking me, I'm here to help you and you're here to help me.' So I think the general respect for each other sort of gives me the confidence to...

Interviewer:

Fantastic.

Respondent:

...When the kids are excited and they see me in the playground and they say 'oh what do we do in our group?' Hopefully I think I'm doing a good job, so yeah.

Interviewer:

Fantastic. So there's always that kind of feedback at the end of each small group session.

Respondent:

Yeah every session we'll finish... even if we're sort of doing our work, I'll just go round the group and say, 'before the end, before we finish, can we just have a little time to think about what we're enjoying?'

Interviewer:

And what training has been made available to you for delivering the SEAL small group sessions?

Respondent:

With the groups someone from the Learning Trust, X4... I can't think of his surname.

Interviewer:

Oh yeah, X4 [X4's surname] I think it is.

Respondent:

Yeah, X4 come in... he delivered about three or four sessions, also watched me do a couple of my own sessions. So yeah, that was quite good to... we saw a video that the Learning Trust provided, a DVD. Yeah, so just by watching and... watching other people do sessions, it was...

Interviewer:

Fantastic. And was that the start of the 16 months that you've been...

Respondent:

Yeah that was at the start, yeah, just before... when it was being introduced from, moving from more the Learning Mentor to staff. Then I got good training provided so... yeah.

Interviewer:

And you were saying that watching other people deliver it was useful. Was it just X4 that you observed or was it...?

Respondent:

I observed X4 and then it went to... X3 also had a group, and another one of my colleagues, Scott, so just by seeing how they do it. And X4 was very helpful in the sense that he said it's... you put your own touches to the group, you know, you don't just follow a strict guideline, because children respond to you and you know the children, so you know what they need. So just to be able to have that sort of freedom with the group, rather than just being stuck rigid, 'this is what we're going to do today.' So yeah, to...

Interviewer:

To have that flexibility.

Respondent:

Yeah, that's... yeah exactly, so you can put your own twist on.

Interviewer:

Absolutely. And are there any areas and any... yeah, any areas in relation to SEAL small group work that you'd like to receive further training on?

Respondent:

For now, what I... what I've put for my own personal development and maybe for some of the other staff, is family SEAL groups. So we can sort of hopefully, as well as working with the children, work with the parents as well, so they can see as much as what the children are going through, the children can find out what the parents are going through.

So hopefully by... I think my training is in June, when I get the training done for that then we can implement it in the new year, so... we can see both sides, we know what the parents are going through, we know what the children are going through and we can see if we can work together to...

Interviewer:

Absolutely. I know X2 was talking about the family SEAL and how you're planning to get it up and running. Once it was to be up and running, what would your expectation be of the parents' involvement in terms of how often they need to come in, what they have to do?

Respondent:

Depending obviously the situation, if some parents were working, then we'll try and run maybe a 45-minute group after school. If they're... not if they wasn't working, but if they had time in the day, then we'd run sessions during school time.

I think with the parents, I think honestly and just sort of the truth, rather than, you know, not pussyfooting around the situation but... we're here to help each other as much as I'm learning from you, you're learning from me. Just to work together. And I think a lot of the parents at this school, School C, they are really helpful and they do want to do the best for them and do the best for their children, so yeah.

Interviewer:

Do you think that they understand what SEAL's about?

Respondent:

I think some are a little bit dubious. When you say SEAL, when... I've had parents come up to me and say 'oh my kid says they're in a SEAL group. What's wrong with their social...?' And like when you tell them what it actually means, then I break it down, you know, just to sort of give them a platform to... not only be included but there's other skills that we learn throughout, other things that they may keep inside.

When you actually sit down with them for 5 minutes, or 10 minutes, and explain, it's just... it's much bigger than that child not being confident to talk in class, or that... it's just a life skill maybe, I see it as a life skill rather than just a general area. So once I actually break it down and explain what we do I think they're much more confident.

Interviewer:

Fantastic.

Respondent:

You know, I think when you get sort of labelled, 'oh this kid's in a SEAL group,' when you put a label on someone I think parents sometimes worry, 'oh, there's something wrong with my child,' but... when you explain how it... actually what it is, then they're much more open, which is...

Interviewer:

That's great. And how are the pupils in your school selected for SEAL small group work?

Respondent:

Again, it's... that's what I like about this school, it's just really... the good teamwork like the conversations. I talk to the TA, the TAs or the teachers, the teachers speak to either me, the X5 X5, to X3 the Learning Mentor. So we just have discussions all the time, see what they need, whether it will be small one-to-one, or actual bigger SEAL groups where there's more involved, so... there's always dialogue between... I'll let the teachers know how the kids are getting on, let X3 know the Learning Mentor, and let X5 know.

So there's always dialogue and if we feel there's... the groups I have, they range from 6 in a group to 8 in a group. Normally it is 6 in a group, but I think... you know, I feel this... if you can handle the group and the group are working well and they're happy to bring more people in, then I'm all for... adding...

Interviewer:

Extending it a little bit.

Respondent:

Yeah, you know, because it's... if they're confident enough with it and they're happy to bring other people in their group then I feel they're building as a... their character is building to... so yeah, no. So just general conversations between us all the time.

And we'll see, you know, and I will always speak to X3 whether... what intervention shall we use? Should it be, again, SEAL groups or... just smaller one-to-one? But always base it around the SEAL thing so they know that... we're always going in the same sort of direction rather than X3 doing one thing and then me... so yeah.

Interviewer:

Great. And those sort of opportunities you have to communicate, are there any kind of scheduled appointments or is it just kind of as and when you see each other you'll fill each other in kind of thing?

Respondent:

When it's sort of the group days I always feed back to say how things are going, who's doing well. But if there's an urgent thing that's come up, then we'll always make time, whether it be 15 minutes before school or we'll set a time after school or at lunchtime. We'll always make a time to have that discussion, rather than let it sort of be... and then 3 weeks later then... we try and take action straightaway rather than leave it be.

Interviewer:

Sure. And you've got these three... small groups of children. How would you describe the composition of each of those groups in terms of... the pupil's year group, the gender mix, their profile of difficulty?

Respondent:

I would say for key stage 1... key stage 1 it's... there's a broad range of needs, etc. We try and even it out sort of, the same number of boys and girls, each group has the same number so there's equal. Yeah, the range can be... especially key stage 1, it's a little bit harder. I try and do more practical stuff in the sense of more talking, more drawing, more... I'll do... cause obviously their... well not obviously, but their writing is not up to, you know, we're practising it so we'll try and incorporate their writing and being more confident to write.

So we'll try and incorporate that, they'll give me the words... I'll maybe have a big whiteboard or flipchart, and we'll use those words so... to [unintelligible 0:15:39.9] story you know, but... for key stage 2, again the... it's such a range that it shouldn't work but it does work, if you know.

I think the groups that we do and how we do it, they're... when it started I think that everyone was a little bit dubious of each other but now it's... they create their own names for the group. It's not just a SEAL group, we've got people calling their groups 'funky monkeys,' it's... yeah, so... I think the kids are... they know what's expected, they know that everyone has different needs, and again so... depending on... or when it started, we sort of... I saw what the general SEAL thing was for the whole school and I saw... I spoke to them individually all the kids, I wanted to know a general feel of how they were feeling. So we apply it, or I applied whatever SEAL session was needed for that. So yeah, sorry to drag on with the question but...

Interviewer:

No that... that's really interesting. So the key stage 1 group is quite a broad range of areas of needs in that group.

Respondent:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Is that 6 pupils in...?

Respondent:

That is, yeah. In key stage 1 I have 6... no 7 in the first group and then I run a small one of 5... 4 children in that class as well but I didn't want to take too big a group so just to give them, I run a small one of 4 children in a... key stage 1 as well, in year 1. And we don't focus so much on doing the activities, but we talk about the things, introduce games, role-plays again, with the smaller group. But with the big group it's... the core focus is on the SEAL book.

Interviewer:

Okay. So would that... that group of 7, it's more in line with that guidance?

Respondent:

Yeah with that guidance, just to give them... with the smaller group it's more of a... I would say a confidence booster, just a... the involvement. Within the group, you know, within... they have their little friends but to join in the rest of their class they find quite hard. To be heard, you know, they're happy to go under the radar, which I think can be just as dangerous as someone being very loud in the class, because you concentrate on that person more than you can do. Not everyone, but it can happen.

So just to give them and to include them... you know in games and then we'll do... sometimes we'll do lunch activities where I'll take that group and take another completely different group of kids and we'll do a game all together, and I make them like the team leader, so it gives them that... they're the boss of the, they're the...

Interviewer:

So would it be fair to say that the group of 7 is maybe more structured in terms of following... is it that yellow and orange booklet?

Respondent:

Yeah that is, yeah, that's more structured, but with the... I would say the smaller group, I follow the thing that we're all doing together but then I'll just sort of break it down into... because we have a shorter time as well. I break it down and so what is needed and what can we do to get our point across?

Interviewer:

Okay, so you'd still use that guidance but maybe honing in on just one bit...

Respondent:

I'll still use it. Yeah, I'll just sort of break it down rather than... cause I normally get about, with the groups, I'd say I get between 30 and 45 minutes, yeah, 30 and 50 minutes depending. But then with the smaller group I get 30 minutes, that's the last part of their... yeah.

Interviewer:

So just to jog my memory, so... sorry, would you mind going through again how many groups there are and...?

Respondent:

Certainly, there's... key stage 1, I have year 1. They have... I have a group of 7 and a group of 5. Then key stage 2, I have year 3, that's X2's. I have year 4, I do work with year 4.

And... although year 4 and year 5 is split between me and X3. So I would say yeah, year 1, year 3... sorry year 2, sorry I'm going crazy.

Interviewer:

So...

Respondent:

Year 2 from key stage 1. Yeah. Year 2 from key stage 1, year 3 from key stage 2, and year 4 from key stage 2. And then me and X3 will share our role with year 5 with the children, and target the children that need that.

Interviewer:

Okay, so that's... is that 5 groups technically?

Respondent:

Five groups, yeah. 5 groups.

Interviewer:

Great. And you're involved in all of those groups but X3 also co-facilitates with the year 5.

Respondent:

Year 5 yeah, with the children that will... again, we'll have our discussions. If it's not working so well, rather than... one of the rules obviously, if you're not following the rules then we have the right to... you'll miss out on the next session. So instead of that child missing out, I'll speak to X3 and say 'X3, maybe can you do a one-to-one intervention so that he realises,' rather than just saying 'you're aside and you're not a part of it today.' He'll have the option to go with X3, do a group, and then he can come back into our session.

Interviewer:

Okay, so X3 kind of... is it that X3... he does one-to-one work to...

Respondent:

X3 is more one-to-one, but he also... he'll do his groups when needed as and when. The problems that arise in our discussion, so...

Interviewer:

Okay, cause I was just... I was just marrying that up with what X2 told me about how there was a group from key stage 1, there's a group in key stage 2, and then there's a third group of children that it's more around the needs of those children.

Respondent:

Yeah, that's... yeah, more year 5, and we also take out children from year 4.

Interviewer:

And when you say 'take out.' Do you mean for the small groups or is that the additional stuff that X3... ?

Respondent:

That's yeah, so I'll have... like sorry to... sounds quite confusing. Year 1, year 3 and year 4 have a set... they're my... that's my main focus... for actual SEAL. Year 4 and year... yeah, year 4 we'll target certain children who need that help, and also children out of year 5 we'll run SEAL things but we'll, you know, but we'll...

Interviewer:

Okay. I think I'm getting my head around it. I know this school's got very sort of... their own ways of...

Respondent:

We're just trying to introduce new things to get the kids more involved so it's... yeah, the main... when it started it was year 2 sorry, year 2, year 3, year 4... and then cause of the difficulties with some of the children in year 4 and year 5, we then have broken off into smaller groups, you know, relating to the SEAL thing but... again, just sort of either... just breaking it down rather than having a full session, we break it down into little slots where they can do, you know activities, etc.

Interviewer:

Okay, so that's... so there's... you've got the year 2s and you've got a larger group of 7, then another group of 5 out of year 2. Then you've got year 3... and how many kids are in that year 3?

Respondent:

Year 3 are... let's have a little think, sorry. There's between 6 and 7 in that group.

Interviewer:

And is that all from X2's class in that group?

Respondent:

That's all from X2's class yep.

Interviewer:

And the year 4 class is... how many roughly?

Respondent:

Again, year 4 again... 6 to 7, no. Year 4 is 7 now. And then year 5 we do... if you take them out, there's about 6 or 7 children again. And then depending obviously on what... if it's one to one or... you have the smaller group stuff that we do.

Interviewer:

And the one-to-one work that X3 does, is that always kind of running alongside the small group sessions that you...?

Respondent:

Yeah, so we'll... again, it goes back to having discussions, this is what we're focusing on, or maybe just an observation from class if the children's not doing something. X3 will go into class or observe, speak with the class teacher and then we'll see what we can do to promote that and just to sort of help that child.

Interviewer:

Great. Thank you. Sorry, I was so confused because I was trying to marry it up with what X2 had said... X2 had... Also like in terms of... X2 had said that there are two boys from his group in year 3 that go to the small group session. Is it that... those are the two boys who are deemed to have difficulties and the other... rest of that group are more like the role models as it were? Or is it...

Respondent:

I will say they... those two children are quite difficult, that come from X2's class. The rest of them have issues or they have needs that we can try and help with SEAL. But they also act as role models so it gives them for... sort of certificates, for merits, those children will always, you know, they'll try and do the right thing but it's just their... the social skills that

they need to really fit in and to be... I think it works well with the children. cause they see that... they see that, you know, everyone has different needs and everyone in that group needs certain thing.

So ... children are not silly, they know what goes on in class so I think that... it's a good combination to have, that they know that these children are not far from them, you know, they're not out of their reach where they can't achieve what these kids have done. So they can see that and model that behaviour, and hopefully they...

Interviewer:

Great, absolutely. And that's kind of... does that kind of... is that the same for all the five groups really that you've got quite a mix really in terms of... profile and type of...?

Respondent:

Yeah, yeah. Again, it's a mix and I wouldn't... I'm not saying, you know, all the children I say are friends with each other but there wasn't no pairings that we thought, oh we'll bring those out. For example there's some brothers in year 4 and together in the playground they're great, but to have them in a small group you have one dominating one, so that's not good for the group. We try and make it a fair... where they all can have their say. I don't want sort of someone in the shadows, we want... everyone's on an equal par, even me.

When someone else is talking they make me follow the rules as well as... I have to just be quiet, you know, so it's... yeah, so... yeah, everyone in the group has their thing but as a whole group and what they need it works really well. Everyone meshes. And to meet people from different cultures and just having a different perspective of things, then I think it works well.

I wouldn't... not different class but we might have someone that's more say middle class and then someone from the... just to see how they operate and when they talk about experiences, it's an eye-opener for some children so... hopefully, I think it is definitely a good mix though.

Interviewer:

Oh that's excellent. I think I asked earlier about how you feel children normally learn social and emotional skills. And you were saying about how in the small groups you try to give the kids some ownership, if you like, over that session. Has there been any particularly successful session that you've delivered?

Respondent:

Successful. I would say from... actually from X2's class, year 3, we were talking about sort of being good to being mean, and also getting on and falling out, another one of the things from SEAL. And some of the children from that group find it hard to express themselves or to say how things are, rather than talking to an adult or talking to someone, they'll just lash out.

So I think maybe during one of X2's assemblies, some of the children that were in the play used our group session, and said about the right things that they should do. And they've made a massive improvement in being able to talk about their feelings and... so to... they mentioned me and they mentioned the rest of their group. So for me that was... it wasn't so much... it was such a small thing to mention a group but they were confident enough to do it and it was off their own back. No one said 'you need to talk about X, you need to talk about the other children in your group.' So yeah, for me that made me proud that they realised it was helping them.

Like I always say to them, 'as much as I'm learning from you, you are learning from me and you're learning from everyone else.' So yeah, that made me proud actually. It was only a small assembly but to know that they understood what it was about, rather than just being taken out of class so... oh we're in a group. They understand what... why we're doing it and what we're doing it for so that made me proud that they all were part of it and they discussed it in the playground, so you could see that no one was guiding them. They spoke within themselves and 'this is what we're going to do for our play,' so...

Interviewer:

Fantastic. So within that particular small group, what do you think it was that... could you sort of pinpoint what it was that you think made it work so well?

Respondent:

I think with the session, I think we're just totally honest with each other. You know, we're... like I said, by just giving them a platform, we're honest and... cause we follow the rules of not laughing at... everyone is comfortable enough to say, whether it be something silly as 'I fell over in the playground today,' or... anything, you know, they're confident enough to have that.

So... I couldn't nail it down. I think that honesty and just being honest with them. I'm not going to tell them that this group is going to make them perfect every day because I'd be telling them a lie. But I will say out of the 5 days or the 7 days a week, if you can apply that 5 or 6 days where you was only applying it one day, it's an improvement. We're not... I'm not perfect, so I don't expect you to be perfect. We can just always try and better ourselves every day. So, I think just being totally honest with them and them being honest with us, I think that's homing in rather than...

Interviewer:

Absolutely and how... yeah.

Respondent:

You can't lie to a child I don't think. They're not stupid they're not... so yeah.

Interviewer:

Absolutely. And so that was a session that was around getting on and falling out. How did you go about planning that session?

Respondent:

Again, it's... at the beginning of every theme... so like it was getting on and falling out, I will look over every session, I think there's normally 6 sessions to every theme, and then I'll plan out, I'll just make notes, I always keep it on a hard-drive in case X3 or someone else is going to try and use that maybe for PSHE. So I'll save it there and then we'll discuss with the kids. I'll do the first session off my own back and then I'll say 'okay, this is what we're going to be doing next week,' and then I'll talk to them about what we're going to do. And then they'll just give me a little idea of what... how we can sort of just tinker it so it'll fit? What they'll enjoy, what... what will benefit them? And then I'll just start that next session and then it'll just go from there really.

So always the feedback is important, to let me know how to further, you know, and how we can... not only put my own stamp on it, but put some of the kids so they'll say 'oh yeah, I had that idea.' So yeah. It's always going back to feedback and how that session has gone.

And if they're enjoying something and they're... we don't get to finish it, I won't just stop it because I feel that... you know, kids remember that. 'Oh why? Why didn't you finish this? Why didn't we do that?' And they're really proud to achieve something and show their final

work, so... if it takes two weeks all round one session, then it will have to be two weeks. So yeah, I just think yeah, just lots of plat... just lots of talking to the kids and that feedback.

Interviewer:

And that helps inform your planning for the subsequent session.

Respondent:

Yeah, and knowing the children... because I'm always out in the playground and I do after-school clubs as well. That relationship with the children is key, so rather than just... this is what I'm doing today and you're going to follow suit, always just, you know, knowing their characters, what they like, what they don't like, just trying to implement that in the... yeah.

Interviewer:

Absolutely. And have there been any sessions that you feel didn't go so well?

Respondent:

One of the sessions, I wouldn't say... not this year, we're going to be coming onto it but... when I started, was about 'being good to be me'. Trying to get them to see what they can achieve, the positives, setting targets for yourself. How can we always better ourselves? How can we... move on and do better things?

I think that was quite a hard one because if you have low confidence or low self-esteem, those issues, I don't think you can change in sort of one session. It takes time; it takes more than a group.

And I feel again, going back to running the family SEAL, if you had children with those difficulties, you know, speaking to the parents and getting them involved, it just sends it across the boards. I know we have their children most of the day, but what about the weekends, what about...? I feel that sometimes you can't do enough in the school hours to provide for those children. I think we need... if we get the message further across, hopefully with this new family SEAL, it's more beneficial to them.

Interviewer:

Definitely. And... would you say therefore that some things are more difficult to teach than others?

Respondent:

I would say with the older children, say year 4, year 5, you could go... cause some of them is sort of your... going to secondary school, preparing them for that. So that wouldn't apply to year 1... or year 2, should I say, or year 3.

But the rest of the sessions, again, it's... because X4 and the Learning Trust were really helpful in saying, 'you can put your own stamp on it and you can do it how you want it.' Then I feel that every... all the things apply to those children, it's just I can pick out bits from whatever I think is needed for that week. So yeah, no... I think every session works but obviously the ones that are talking about moving onto the next stage, if it's age relevant then it's okay but if it's not, then we'll work on a...

Interviewer:

So some themes may be seen more geared at the older children than the younger children.

Respondent:

Yeah, rather than the... you know, the say 'no' to bullying, getting on and falling out, good to be me. That applies from any age. But you know, moving on and to go onto the bigger ranges of going to secondary school, then...

Interviewer:

Is there one called changes?

Respondent:

Changes, yeah.

Interviewer:

I was just trying to remember what the six themes are.

Respondent:

Changes... yeah, I can't... changes, good to be me, say 'no' to bullying, getting on and falling out, going for goals... and I can't think of the...

Interviewer:

New beginnings or something like... let's start.

Respondent:

Yeah, new beginnings, yeah. But it's just yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay. And you've already talked quite a lot about the booklet, the booklet from the Learning Trust that's available. Are there any other resources and materials that are available to you for delivering the SEAL small group sessions?

Respondent:

Not that I've asked for cause I found that book is pretty... it gives you everything that you need... it'll tell you the resources that you need, it'll tell you ev... whether it be ga... if you haven't got ideas on, so having games to begin with, warm-up activities. It's got a lot of information so... I'm pretty confident, and if I ever needed to, I've got X4's email, or I can speak to X3, X3's got lots of games. Or just ideas, so... if I'm ever sort of flagging and think what can I do? There's always someone that I can speak to that will...

Interviewer:

Fantastic. I guess that kind of... that links in with one of the questions I was going to ask a bit later, which is kind of yeah, so to what extent do you receive support from other staff members in school for the delivering the SEAL small group work?

Respondent:

I'd have to say, you know, I've had X5 come in, the SENCO, to watch me. X5 was covering maternity leave so... not that X5 was new to it but X5 wanted to see how I went about it, how the kids responded. So X5 come and watched me, observed me. X3 has done the groups but he's just sat in as well, just to see how the kids are, you know, for his own records and his own information.

So yeah, and I think just again, going back to what we spoke about before, that we're always talking and just sharing information. I don't feel like I'm on my own. And I don't feel that I'm stuck, this is my group and that's it. There's always people and they ask 'and how did things go?' And when we do the groups, you know, X2 or another one of the teachers will say 'ah, Charlie said this today. He was really proud of what he's done in the group,' so you know that...

Interviewer:

It's not seen as being an isolated thing he's not...

Respondent:

And no one frowns upon it. It's not 'ah you've gotta take our children out for half-hour or 45 minutes,' it's... they know it's worthwhile which is, you know, I've spoken to other people in different schools and I don't think they see it as a worthwhile... activity, or worthwhile thing to do. Where this school embraces it and X2 is always at the forefront to sort of push the SEAL work, yeah.

Interviewer:

Great. And again, this question may touch on some of the comments you made earlier but what do you feel are the key skills required for the role of SEAL small group work facilitator?

Respondent:

For me personally or?

Interviewer:

Yeah, and generally, yeah.

Respondent:

The key things I would say is... for me, to be honest with the children. To actually listen to them rather than hearing what they had to say and not sort of responding in the right manner. Just to be there for them. Not only for me, they need to be there for each other so I think just that honesty, that trust, because to... as an adult I know when I was a kid if I spoke to a teacher and I don't really feel that they done enough for me or they... broke what I consider trust. It's hard to get that back and hard to earn that back. So I think honesty and trust between the groups, and knowing their general needs. Again, observing them, just watching them, how they go about their everyday business.

But for the children, again yeah, it's the same. I'd say honesty and trust and... just yeah, working as a team and just always emphasising what is important, why are we doing it. So they have that constant reminder. We have our big rule chart on the wall, they have their individual rules, and we've got our targets what we wanna do. So they know that we're always moving forward, we're never stuck. It's about just promoting, every day is a new day, we're going to better ourselves, so...

Interviewer:

Absolutely. And I mean this question, you've talked a lot about how good the general communication is across school and there's a constant dialogue, constant conversation between different staff members. And I was going to ask, to what extent would you say the messages that pupils are given during your SEAL small group sessions, to what extent are those messages being reinforced and modelled in the mainstream classroom and other contexts across schools?

Respondent:

I think it, yeah... with how it's been modelled I think when we're doing themes, that if we're doing a bullying theme, cause we talk in-depth about what it is we're doing. I think maybe if you were in a classroom of 30 children it's hard for those children to... actually stand out or just to be able to put their point across. They get that... they get all the information cause it's, you know, smaller. They get all that information they need. And if they're finding something hard normally they'll tell me, or if they don't understand something, when they see me in the playground before school or after school they'll always tell me. So I'll be able to speak to a teacher.

That's what I feel... for the children to be able to talk to me and again, going back to the honesty and getting that trust, they'll say 'oh X, I don't really know what this is about' or 'how do I go about doing this?' So I think that, for me being able to talk to the teacher, the teacher

can see what they're trying to achieve, what they're trying to say or trying to get across so again, that constant dialogue is not just sort of a:b conversation, it will be me, you, the pupil, the teacher... anyone that will benefit or anyone that will need to know. So I just think yeah...

Interviewer:

Brilliant so if there are possibly issues that children are having in the mainstream classroom that they may not otherwise have an opportunity to articulate, they can say that to you, you can feed that back to the class teacher, and it's a very useful way of getting the child's voice heard, in that sense.

Respondent:

Definitely, cause I think it's very hard for... I'm not a teacher, but as... to see a teacher, your role is very different to a TA or an LSA. You know, as a teacher you've got to deal with 30 children, whereas like a Learning Support Assistant is dealing with one-to-one, or a TA you have a different relationship. So for them to be able to come to me and say 'this is what is going on, this is how I'm feeling,' and in all the classes they have a feelings box so they can write on a piece of paper, after whatever happens, and we'll always respond to what is going on. Whether it be the teacher... but always if they come to me straightaway, rather than leaving it, like I say, deal with it. They need to know that you're seen to be doing something. So I will speak to a teacher straightaway and see what I can do for them. And yeah, so it's always just constant.

Interviewer:

Great. And... and to what extent that you're aware of does the SEAL small group program fit in with or compliment the whole school SEAL program?

Respondent:

Again it's... you know, we talk about... we always have in assemblies every week, word of the week. Today... this week was 'proud,' you know, what makes you proud, etc.? So we're always bringing that into our group... even if it may not be our theme, like at the moment we are doing... is it good to be me? I can't think, my mind's gone blank but... we'll talk about what is going on around us? It's not just about our group, it's about what's going on and we have to be aware of that.

So we're always bringing what the whole school... it'll always be in line. We might do our own thing but they need to be aware of... it's not just about getting on and falling out, it's about the word of the week today is 'proud'. What... we'll talk for two minutes at the beginning of a session, what makes us proud? What can we do to make people proud of us? So there's always... we're always thinking about the bigger picture rather than just what we're concentrating on. We need to know what is going on around us so... it works well.

Interviewer:

Absolutely. And so then in terms of the work that you do in the small group sessions, do you feel that it's more of what they would get in the mainstream classroom... so more of the same in a sense, or do you think it's something different that you're doing with the kids?

Respondent:

I think it's something... I think that... hopefully the skills that they learn from the group they can apply to the actual classroom. I think when you're in a classroom and, again, you know, you've got 30 people in a classroom, you may have 5 or 6 that are struggling. Things can happen so quick and you're always moving onto the next thing, that they don't get a chance to... when they actually understand it and understand what it's about, it's gone. With a smaller group, the skills that I'm hopefully thinking I'm delivering for them, the... like I say, if

it's slowly, if they're learning, if they're not doing something for once or twice out the whole week, I think it's... you know, it's working.

So I think all the skills that they learn in our sessions, they can apply to... so it won't, after one session or two sessions, it's not going to be... you're not going to see a massive difference. If you give me 6 months with these children, then you can judge on what we do as a group. Hopefully, not that I don't want the children, but hopefully after a full year's worth of work, that... not that I don't want them to be part of it no more, but they'll feel confident enough that they're... you know, one last year when I stopped, one of the children that I know, 'I feel confident, and can I let someone else join the group and take my place?'

Interviewer:

Oh did one of the children actually say that?

Respondent:

Yeah, they wanted to move on to...

Interviewer:

Oh that's really nice, that's really...

Respondent:

...So they saw the benefit of what we was doing, it helped them, and someone else took their place.

Interviewer:

Fantastic.

Respondent:

But obviously when we was doing activities that were... it's all fun, but I always invited him back because you was part of the group. So that you've not... left the group, you're still part of it, but you're more active in class and that, so... yeah so to see that, then you can judge on how that child has progressed rather than...

Interviewer:

I guess that must be the biggest accolade is when you get the feedback from the pupils themselves [unintelligible 0:47:54.1] you know.

Respondent:

Yeah, they feel ready, they feel that they're... it's not they feel, you know, because for the younger children obviously it's hard, they always want to be part if they're enjoying it. But for the older children like, there was a year 5 student going into year 6, I was like we were going to run smaller groups and you know, well... can I give my... not that I don't want to be part of it, but someone else might need it. So that was mature enough of them to realise that... they've learned something from it, yeah.

Interviewer:

Great. I know that... I mean X2 was talking about how can you evaluate the impact of these kinds of interventions? cause it's much... much less straightforward maybe than things like literacy and numeracy where you've got your levels. But I mean X2 was talking about some kind of template that he's hoping to introduce for class teachers, for two... I think it's got the level descriptors for each of the themes and teachers can tick, and basically use their own observations of incidents that... as evidence. And is there anything that springs to your mind in terms of evidence that you know there's been an improvement?

Respondent:

Very hard, like you just said, it's very hard to nail it down. I just... again, it goes back to not only your classroom, being in the playground, seeing how they conduct themselves. Like I said, one of the children in year 3, very useful with his hands, very quick to lash out, so to see him now, three months or four months down the line being able to... he'll still get angry but that's okay because everyone has feelings. To see him all of a sudden he needs to speak to an adult. I don't know how you'd measure that. What can you write down? Oh you... you can't write down every day 'this child has done this'... I think to see, sometimes it's easier just to see the little things. Okay, how did he deal with that one incident? And where's that come from? When you actually go deeper then you realise that SEAL's working, it's... it's very hard. The teach...

Interviewer:

Yeah, they can be quite... sorry, yeah.

Respondent:

The teacher, or that sheet that X2 was talking about, it's very good. Again it's finding time for staff, teachers to always follow through with... they always say give yourself enough time, but again when you're dealing with 30 children or...

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Respondent:

...Or you're doing small group... it is very hard to keep track I think. Obviously always the conversations between us we can see in our improvement if our... if X2 tells me this child ain't really focusing on this, this week... what can I do to... or what can we do to push it?

Something yesterday, one of the LSAs spoke to me and said 'ah, you know, child's not... they're losing attention,' so then we set a new goal for him, a new target for him. So then he has to get that sheet now ticked off. 'If you don't achieve so many things this week then it'll be a forfeit or it will be something that... it's not bad, but you just have to realise it. If you do achieve these things then there'll be a reward at the end of it,' where it'll be like another 5 minutes or 10 minutes of golden time. But just to give... make him aware that you've always got responsibility, whether it be in class, whether it... it's not only at school, you've got to take these things home. It's constant, it's always... it's 7 days a week, every day, not just while you're at school because you see us as the people at the top. It's got to be throughout your... you have to apply these skills everywhere.

Interviewer:

Yeah, yeah. And as you say, as you said earlier, like an ongoing life skill.

Respondent:

Yeah, you know, little things... like manners, or... not so much got to do with SEAL but if you're holding the door open for someone, if someone's holding the door for you, 'thank you.' It's something so small but a child can find so hard to say. 'Oh I don't need to say thank you.' Well when you're older, or any... you know, it's very important.

Interviewer:

[unintelligible 0:52:03.0].

Respondent:

Yeah. So we just try and implement that, not only the SEAL, but life skills to bring that these children need. So yeah.

Interviewer:

Fantastic. Well thanks so much for talking to me X.

Respondent:

No, sorry if I'm... yeah.

Interviewer:

No, it 's been really interesting and just to sum up. What would you say... what do you feel are the key factors that influence the success of SEAL small group work in a school like yours?

Respondent:

I think that the... just the teamwork between, again, ranging from X6 the Head, to the TAs, it's just always constant communication. If I'm left in the dark about an issue, it's no good to me; it's no good to the child. And we are here to help the children, so I think the constant communication between everyone, we can hopefully achieve targets and goals for these children.

So... and that's what I love about this school in that we're always working to help the children, rather than... we'll set something up next term, well... there's six weeks away 'til the next term, what can we do now for the children? There's always interventions, there's always ideas, always new ways of improving and bettering ourself and bettering the children. So definitely communication.

Interviewer:

It seems like things here are very dynamic; nothing sort of just stays stuck where it is. There's always that ongoing process of how do we move things on and...?

Respondent:

Yeah, I never feel, for me... but I never feel like I'm left or if I... if I don't have an idea I don't feel like I've just got to...

Interviewer:

Just get on with it and...

Respondent:

...Get on with it. It's never... never left like I'm doing a half-decent job. I always feel like someone's idea or my own idea is more than good enough and everyone's willing to help you, whether it be before school, after school, lunchtime... out of their own time. Everyone wants to push in the same direction, which is...

Interviewer:

Brilliant. Fantastic. And I know we've... just finally, I know we've talked about a lot of issues. Is there any other information about SEAL small group work that we've not mentioned, that you felt was important to flag up?

Respondent:

No, not at the moment. Like I said, the... the main thing for me and I said before was that the family SEAL workshop, I think... I think SEAL is definitely working in this school, the measure of the children and what they're achieving, it's definitely working but I think that to really push on and let, like I said, letting the adults know, the parents and carers know, how the children are, and what we're doing and why we're doing it, I think that will definitely... you will see, if you come back in a year then you'll see, hopefully, when it's all set up, the improvements by speaking to X6, by speaking to the Assistant Heads. I think you'll see the improvement with the children so... I think once that's set up.

Interviewer:

Brilliant.

Respondent:

Then I think there's no holding... I know the children will still have issues but, like I say, if a kid's being naughty 5 days a week or he's got issues 5 days a week and we change that to 4 days a week... it might be a day and people say 'well that's not really good enough,' but... if that kid is consistent with what he's doing and it's changed, it is an improvement.

Interviewer:

Yeah absolutely.

Respondent:

It is an improvement.

Interviewer:

Yeah, slowly but surely.

Respondent:

You can't be negative and say 'oh it's only four days, why can't he stop all together?' that's... that is that child, that is the traits.

Interviewer:

It's recognising the progress that has been made.

Respondent:

Yeah, we have to applaud what he has achieved, or what they have achieved, rather than be negative and say... you know, I'm all for the...

Interviewer:

Absolutely, well thank you so much for talking to me.

Respondent:

No thank you very much Rachel.

Interviewer:

Thank you for your time.

[Interview ends 0:55:54.5]

Appendix 7: Theme Codes

THEME 1: INTEGRATION OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK INTO THE WHOLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

SUB-THEME: LINKS BETWEEN SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK AND THE WHOLE SCHOOL ETHOS

Category: Strong Links between Seal Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos

Codes:

Positive Staff Attitudes towards SEAL SGW

Consistent / Stable Team of Staff

Pupil Familiarity with SEAL

Pupil Enjoyment of SEAL SGW

SEAL SGW Embedded in the Whole School SEAL Programme

Links between SEAL SGW and other S&ES Interventions in School

Frequent Communication between School Staff

Close Relationships / Teamwork between Staff

Early Intervention

Category: Uncertain/Tenuous Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos

Codes:

Difficulty with Embedding SGW into the Mainstream Curriculum for Older Pupils

Insufficient Preparation Time for the Facilitator

Inappropriate / Inconsistent Location for SEAL SGW sessions

High staff turnover

Pupil Disengagement with SEAL

Perceived Lack of Endorsement from Senior Staff

Difficulties around Allocating Staff to Facilitate SEAL SGW

Learning During SEAL SGW Incongruent with Social and Emotional Learning in Other Contexts within School

SUB-THEME: LINKS BETWEEN SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK AND LEARNING OF S&ES IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM

Category: Strong Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of S&ES in the Mainstream Classroom

Codes:

High Quality Information Sharing between SEAL SGW Facilitator and Class Teacher

Allocated Time/Opportunity for SEAL SGW Facilitator to Communicate with Class Teacher

Shared Planning for the SEAL Programme between Class Teacher and SEAL SGW Facilitator

CT Setting Up Classroom Activities to Reinforce/Acknowledge Learning during SEAL SGW

Category: Uncertain/Tenuous Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of S&ES in the Mainstream Classroom

Codes:

Academic curriculum taking precedence over SEAL in the classroom

Lack of Opportunity / Allocated time for SEAL SGW Facilitator to Communicate with Class Teacher

THEME 2: PROCESSES AND ISSUES REGARDING PUPIL SELECTION

SUB-THEME: PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING PUPILS FOR SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK

Category: Identification of Potential Pupils for SEAL Small Group Work

Codes:

Process of Referring Pupils for SEAL SGW

A Needs-Led Approach to Setting up Small Groups / Flexibility in the Number of Small Groups

Involving Pupils in Decisions about Small Group Composition

Category: Monitoring of Pupils Attending SEAL Small Group Work Sessions

Codes:

Continual Matching of Need to Intervention / Flexibility in Composition of Groups

SUB-THEME: PROFILES OF CHILDREN IN THE SEAL SMALL GROUPS

Category: Characteristics of the SEAL Small Groups

Codes:

Role Model Pupils

Diversity within the SEAL Small Groups

Number and Size of the Small Groups

Getting the Dynamics Right among Pupils within the SEAL Small Groups

Category: Perceived Purpose of SEAL Small Group Work

Codes:

Confidence-Building Intervention

Increasing Pupils' Emotional Vocabulary / Language / Self-Expression

Enhancing Children's Social Skills

Promoting Empathy between Pupils

Means of Aiding Conflict Resolution

THEME 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS DURING SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK

SUB-THEME: CHILD-CENTRED MODELS OF PEDAGOGY

Category: Flexible, Needs-Led Approach to the Delivery of the SEAL SGW Programme

Codes:

Flexibility in SEAL SGW Facilitator's Coverage of the Topics / Themes

Flexibility in SEAL SGW Facilitator's Adherence to the Guidance / Use of Resources

Category: Encouraging Pupils to be Reflective and Take Ownership over their Learning in Small Groups

Codes:

SEAL SGW Fostering Self-Reflection in Pupils

SEAL SGW Enabling Pupils to Learn Collaboratively

Using Pupil Feedback to Inform Planning of SEAL Small Group Sessions

A Facilitative Approach to the Delivery of SEAL Small Group Work

SUB-THEME: SKILLS AND QUALITIES REQUIRED IN THE SEAL SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR

Category: Close Relationship between SEAL SGW Facilitator and Pupils

Codes:

Getting to Know the Children / Taking a Holistic View of Them

Honesty, Trust and Openness between SEAL SGW Facilitator and Pupils

SEAL SGW Facilitator as a Role Model

Additional Qualities & Skills Required in the SEAL SGW Facilitator

Category: Making the SEAL SGW Sessions Purposeful

Codes:

Having Clear Learning Objectives

Establishing Meaningful Boundaries during SEAL Small Group Work

SUB-THEME: VALUE ADDED OF THE SEAL PROGRAMME IN A SMALL GROUP CONTEXT

Category: More Time and Space to Individualise Learning

Codes:

Allowing More Time to Explore the Issues / Cover the Topics

Providing In-Depth Understanding / Clearer Picture of the Pupils' Needs

SEAL SGW as Scaffold

Category: A Safe and Supportive Environment

Codes

More Opportunity for Pupils to Find Their Voice than in Whole-Class Sessions

Discrete Means of Targeted Support

Allowing Pupils to Develop Trusting Relationships

THEME 4: TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR SEAL SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR

SUB-THEME: TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR SEAL SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Codes:

Training provided for SEAL SGW Facilitator

Further Training Required for the SEAL SGW Facilitator

Non-Training Based Support from the Local Authority

SUB-THEME: SUPPORT FOR THE SEAL SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR WITHIN SCHOOL

Codes:

Support for SEAL SGW Facilitator within School

Class Teacher's Role with respect to SEAL SGW Implementation

SUB-THEME: RESOURCES AND MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO THE SEAL SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR

Codes:

Quality and Effectiveness of Resources

Prescriptive Nature of SEAL Materials and Resources

Resources Additional to SEAL Booklet

THEME 5: PROCESSES AND ISSUES AROUND EVALUATING OUTCOMES OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK

SUB-THEME: METHODS OF EVALUATING OUTCOMES OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK

Codes:

Current Methods of Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL SGW

Possible Future Methods of Evaluating SEAL SGW

SUB-THEME: DIFFICULTIES WITH EVALUATING OUTCOMES OF SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK

Codes:

Difficulty of Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL SGW

THEME 6: LINKS BETWEEN SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK AND NON-SCHOOL BASED SETTINGS

SUB-THEME: LINKS BETWEEN SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK AND THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Codes:

Family Involvement with SEAL

Difficulty of Engaging With Parents

Logistical Difficulties with Setting up Family SEAL

SUB-THEME: LINKS BETWEEN SEAL SMALL GROUP WORK AND ADULT LIFE

Codes:

SEAL SGW Promoting Transferrable Life Skills

Appendix 8: Additional Interview Material

4.2 Theme One - Integration of SEAL Small Group Work into the Whole School Curriculum

4.2.1 Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos

4.2.1.1 Strong Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos

Members of school staff spoke of the pupils showing a high level of engagement with SEAL small group work, both in terms of their familiarity with the programme and their active enjoyment of it.

And children, they love it, know what it is and use it. And if you talk to any of them, if you talk to the Student Council, they would tell you pretty much that they run the school through use of the language that they use through SEAL, and then the work that they do in their groups. (HT, School C)

[SEAL is] one of the groups my kids like going out to do ... That's good. Cause some of them, they're not so keen on ... but ... it's one of the ones they like to go out and do and they've got their selves a little name called The Cool Kids so they...have a little team name ... So when [the SEAL small group facilitator] comes to get them he doesn't say can I have my SEAL group, he says can I have the Cool Kids please?...So they like that ... (CT, School A)

I know the children love going out and doing [SEAL small group work]. (SENCo, School D, p.3)

In two of the four participating schools, reference was made to frequent communication between the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and other members of staff regarding the progress of the children attending the SEAL small group sessions. Communication took place as a matter of course, via informal opportunities or through set times:

...we're always talking and just sharing information. I don't feel that I'm stuck, this is my group and that's it. There's always people and they ask 'and how did things go?' And when we do the groups, you know, X [Class Teacher/PSHE Co-ordinator] or another one of the teachers will say 'Ah, X [pupil] said this today. He was really proud of what he's done in the group,' ... (Fac, School C)

I always feed back to [the Learning Mentor] to say how things are going, who's doing well. But if there's an urgent thing that's come up, then we'll always make time, whether it be 15 minutes before school or we'll set a time after school or at lunchtime. We'll always make a time to have that discussion, rather than let it sort of be ... and then 3 weeks later ... we try and take action straightaway rather than leave it be. (Fac, School C)

...after every session, we do feedback forms. So we write every child's name we've had in our group and then we do little bullet points of what child has done something to show us ... [that] something's changing ... we photocopy and give it to all the teachers involved and we give it to our... Child Protection Officer as well, Miss X [the SENCo] ... so she has it on file and so ... she knows what we're doing as well with the children. (Fac, School B)

Another salient feature of these two aforementioned schools was the close relationships and teamwork between staff; it appeared that staff valuing one another in their respective roles also played a part in ensuring that SEAL small group work was well-embedded within the school ethos:

I know that myself and X [the Learning Mentor], we do sort of keep an eye on things ... that dialogue takes place a lot about the actual progress of the children [in the SEAL small groups], rather than the content of the session ... I'm aware that I don't want to tread on his toes ... and I like to think that if he had a problem that he could obviously come and chat to me for advice, and X often does. And vice versa so... that's the team spirit. (CT, School C)

...we all work very well together, so they [the SEAL Small Group Facilitators] can come to me at any point ... we've got a very good team in this school where everyone communicates ... so everyone knows what we're doing. So I feel ... that they could approach anybody and ask for guidance and advice. (ESPCM, School B)

Participants spoke not only of SEAL small group work being incorporated into the overall whole school vision, but also of it being linked to the whole-school SEAL programme specifically - including the word of the week delivered during assembly time – and other interventions in school for promoting social and emotional skills:

I think it's important to point out that we also do Restorative Justice and the two sort of initiatives go quite well together ... we run workshops ... directly after lunchtime, where the Learning Mentor can either troubleshoot, or where children can go and, if there have been problems, discuss them using Restorative Justice. And through that then it would feed into possible inclusion into longer term SEAL small group work. (CT, School C)

SEAL really is... a really important part of ... the school ethos, it is... mentioned in the vision and ... we have initiatives like the word of the week and ... assemblies at

the beginning of the week that highlight the word of the week and it's discussed ... in circle time, we have discrete SEAL lessons, the PSHE curriculum ... we're involved in the UNICEF Right to Respect in schools, so this idea of Right to Responsibility it also feeds into that. (CT, School C)

... we've got our, our whole school Staying On Green behaviour strategy ... we do restorative practice ... and I think SEAL forms part of the kind of emotional wellbeing work that we do with the children ... the same as Circle of Friends, or social skills groups, it's part of that whole kind of holistic way of trying to, to get children to be emotionally well ... (SENCo, School A, p.2)

...you've got all the other little things that branch off from SEAL, like circle time. And I know that circle time's done in class by teachers as well. And all of our children are always encouraged, through the behaviour policy and everything else, it's always spoken as a language as well, that we expect them to use words, and to say how they're feeling. (Fac, School D, p.10)

A senior member of staff from one of the participating schools explained that their particular set of school rules provided a useful framework for linking the material covered during SEAL small group work with the curriculum of the whole-school SEAL programme:

(RES): ... everything relates back to the Standards, which ... [is] like the school rules ... We've got eight Standards ... So, lesson without interrupting or respond to an instruction straight away. Everything is linked back to them ... So that way... those [SEAL] small group sessions are probably linked to the whole school ...

(INT): So ... the [X School] Standards ... are always being worked towards... whether in the whole school or the small groups?

(RES): Yeah ... I would say that that's probably what they talk about ... if you're feeling like this, then how does that affect the other children and how is it breaking one of the Standards ... So the Standards are something that you kind of always come back to ... and fall back on ...

(INT): And the SEAL curriculum ... could be seen as a variation on those eight standards?

(RES): Yes. Definitely. (SMT, School B)

4.2.1.2 Uncertain / Tenuous Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Whole School Ethos

Comments were made about the lack of unqualified endorsement by other staff members, both senior and across the school, of the SEAL small group intervention:

... I haven't had any support to be honest ... if I have an issue or a problem then I could go to certain colleagues ... But it's sort of... everyone fights for their own at the moment. I haven't got a problem with that; it's just the way it is ... (SENCo, School D)

...I don't know to what extent ... teachers ask or comment on what's happened in the [SEAL small group] sessions when the children come back or, you know, share what's gone on with the rest of the class or ... I don't know if that happens at all ... (SMT, School A)

In School A, it appeared that a significant impediment to SEAL small group work being a valued and respected intervention within school had been the lack of an appropriate and consistent location for the sessions to take place:

I've had a couple of sessions that haven't gone well and that's due to not having the room, or that we're being moved from one room to another. Where [the pupils] just felt well ... where are we today ... it kind of broke up the whole session ... they wasn't interested anymore, because ... they'd been thrown off course ... now I've got a room which is ... mine every Tuesdays, I don't have any problems anymore, because they know where they're going ... I know where I'm situated ... whereas before it was, are we gonna be in the studio, are we gonna be in the hut ... are we gonna be in the staff room ... and ...that doesn't make it conducive to learning for them ... it's like doing maths in the playground, it doesn't work ... (Fac, School A)

4.2.2 Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of Social and Emotional Skills in the Mainstream Classroom

4.2.2.1 Strong Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of S&ES in the Mainstream Classroom

A particularly salient feature of strong links between SEAL small group work and social and emotional learning in the classroom seemed to be allocated time and space for the SEAL small group facilitator and class teacher to communicate:

...what we do is after each SEAL [small group] lesson, my Learning Mentor Team then writes a feedback form of anything important came out of that lesson. And then that will go to the SENCo and it will also go to the Class Teacher, so ... the communication is always there. (ESPCM, School B)

Within the aforementioned school, it appeared that the information shared between the SEAL small group facilitator and class teacher was of sufficiently high quality to enable both parties to think of ways in which to further enhance pupils' social and emotional development in the classroom:

...[on the] feedback forms ... we write every child's name we've had in our group and then we do little bullet points of what child has done something to show us, anything, or say something that's, you know, sort of made us like wow, you know, something's changing it, so we quickly write it down and then we photocopy and give it to all the teachers involved ... (Fac, School B)

... I ... [and] X who's my year group partner ... we try and do our best to give [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] feedback when she gives us feedback as well about how they're getting on ... I have a quick chat ... about what they did and how they got on and if there's anything else I need to do to boost them or any extra work we do as a whole class. (CT, School B)

... getting feedback from [the SEAL small group facilitator] and from the lessons, means that I know what they've been doing and often it gives me ideas that I can do it with the rest of the class. (CT, School B)

A further indicator of solid links between the acquisition of social and emotional skills in SEAL small groups and in the classroom was a shared planning framework for the SEAL topics between the facilitator and class teacher:

We all work together cause X [ESPCM/SEAL co-ordinator] does the whole school [plan], so we try to work according to the ones that she does to the school ... and they'd lay it out session by session so ... it's into the half term and the next half-term is another thing, so we do like themes ... And then think about ... the session that we could input per week and how it would fit in ... so ... for example ... we done goals, so they were doing all classroom goals and ... then when we came up here they all had it in their head that we know what a goal is, cause when I was asking questions of do you know what a goal is, and they all knew ... So they knew what we was talking about and it was relating back to classroom work as well ... (Fac, School B)

...we go through the plans together and see how it relates to classroom SEAL as well as group work SEALs, and one-to-ones as well ... (Fac, School B)

...each half term or each term, we have a specific topic. So this term it's going for goals. So the first time that [the children] went in their little group, they came with their own goal. I think one of them said to make ice-cream with my mum. I mean that's an ideal goal, do you know what I mean, to be able to make ice-cream with their mum. Then we can come back and we can discuss it as a class. I've got like class goals as well. So we're trying to relate what our class goals are to their own little group work as well. (CT, School B)

...the class teachers wouldn't have allowed that child to be going out and having that small group intervention without a huge overview of knowing what was going on. Because obviously ... there are several children will be involved in whatever it is that they'll be discussing at that time, and normally that is connected to the half-termly planning for our SEAL and the activities through circle time or whatever it is that will be going on for PSHE in the classes. (HT, School C)

Further comments related to teachers setting up small group activities in the classroom that would provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate the skills being promoted during SEAL small group work:

...when we have our main activities, children working in groups, working in pairs, or working at a table ... those interpersonal skills come out through those ... tabletop activities. And yeah, sometimes there are conflicts between them, even though they're working together ... and sometimes if you're not careful it can escalate. So it's just being aware ... and just hovering around the perimeter when that does occur. But it's just looking out for when those situations do occur, what strategies they can use and hopefully where they've been working with X [SEAL Small Group Facilitator], those little strategies will filter through. (CT1, School D)

It appeared that there was a relative ease with which SEAL small group work could be integrated with the mainstream curriculum for children in the early years. The class teacher from School B, who taught in Reception, explained that the feedback forms filled out by the SEAL Small Group Facilitator were a useful source of evidence for the criteria specified by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile:

...these are the Personal, Social and Emotional Development points ... there's different categories ... And the Dispositions and Attitude is how you kind of look after yourself really. You can dress yourself. You're confident to try new activities, speak in a familiar group ... it's foundation points for them to be able to be successful at school and a lot of the time ... I find out from the SEAL groups ... did they work well in a group? Did they take turns and did they talk to other people and listen to their areas ... they should ... [have] this kind of ... curriculum for the whole primary school, because it is so easy to integrate it with other things that other people are doing, cause I was in year one last year and there was so many different schemes of work and bits. It was quite hard to see how it linked altogether, but with the EYFS and ... what [the SEAL small group facilitator] does in groups, it does, you know dovetail quite nicely. (CT, School B)

4.2.2.2 Uncertain / Tenuous Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Teaching and Learning of S&ES in the Mainstream Classroom

Members of staff referred to the lack of communication between the SEAL small group facilitator and class teacher due to there being insufficient time and opportunity during the school day for both individuals to exchange information:

...I don't think that X [the SEAL small group facilitator] has probably much chance to discuss what's happening in the class with what he's doing in his group ... So in a sense, if I was honest, I'd say they may be in isolation of each other ... the whole class stuff goes on and then X does his bit. Yes they're on the same topic but I can't

imagine, and I know they're supposed to be, but I don't feel that there's a lot of opportunity ... for X to have discussion with the Class Teachers about what's going on in their class and in his group ... because he's got such a full timetable ... he comes in, he does lunch duty, and then ... he's got drama sessions, and then he's got, on a Tuesday when he does SEAL, he's got lunch duty straight into his SEAL groups, and then he goes to play centre after, after he's had his afternoon here so he, you know, he works really, really hard. And it's difficult I think for him... (SENCO, School A)

(INT): How much liaison do you have with X and Y [the class teachers of your SEAL small group pupils] over what you're doing?

(RES): To be honest, really I haven't had any. It's been really minimal ... a lot of it's down to time and trying just to talk to people face to face ... I have to admit the communication hasn't been really, really good, because it all seems to have been a little bit rushed, so that definitely could improve ... there's so much going on during the day and during the working week here ... you sort of prioritise don't you and that goes right down the bottom really. (Fac, School D)

...this school is going through a bit of a change, and it's ... very heavy workload. And there's, to be honest with you, no time at this point to talk to TAs. (CT, School D)

I've not even like seen her, talked to X [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] at all ... so hopefully at some point we can have a conversation and say 'X, how do you feel?' (CT2, School D)

...it's very much early days but I'm constantly going up to X [SEAL Small Group Facilitator] whispering in her ear, 'X, we've got to get together and just think about the focus for the children, what they're actually... what skills are they learning? What strategies are they being taught?' ... So ... we do need to actually sit down and just look at the whole bigger picture if anything... (CT1, School D)

Comments also related to the academic curriculum taking precedence over whole-school SEAL in the classroom, making it difficult for class teachers to reinforce the material being covered by the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and vice-versa:

...within [small group] SEAL, you can get [the pupils] to explain how they felt about certain areas, so the emotional side you're getting them to talk, and to get them to express themselves a lot more, which is something which, they're not doing in class, because in class you're actually being taught to do something in particular, whether its literacy, whether it's science or maths, etcetera. (Fac, School A)

I had a year group who were quite behaviourally challenged... so we did sort of SEAL/restorative justice... a lot of circle time daily ... And then last year's group ... We started off with doing Going For Goals, I remember we did quite a lot on that, and then suddenly revision starts in spring and everything is just literacy, numeracy and science, we don't do geography, history, PHSCE, circle time even, I will do a say 5 minutes' talk every day about something, definitely the word of the week assembly ... [but] for the last sort of year-and-a-half I've been a bit out of the loop with what the SEAL curriculum is. (CT2, School D)

4.3 Theme Two – Processes and Issues Regarding Pupil Selection

4.3.1 Procedures for Selecting Pupils for SEAL Small Group Work

4.3.1.1 Identification of Potential Pupils for SEAL Small Group Work

School staff spoke of the process of referring pupils for the SEAL small group work intervention, including key members of staff involved and systems specific to each individual school which facilitated the process of referral:

Normally when teachers refer [pupils for SEAL small group work] to [the] Inclusion Team or speak to a Learning Mentor, and state their concerns, then we'd arrange an appointment with the teacher. And then we have a form that they fill out to say right, what your concerns are, and then what targets you want us to achieve through having the small groups or the one-to-one sessions. (ESPCM, School B)

X [the Extended Schools and Pastoral Care Manager] ... [is] involved in the Inclusion Team. So what happens is ... it's once every four weeks I think the meetings are, X will send out an email saying "Inclusion Meeting, having you got any issues?" and staff will send us issues. And if it's something to do with, I don't know, anything, then we will talk about it as an Inclusion Team and X will say "Oh, look, well I've got a small group that is doing this, maybe it will be beneficial for that child to do that" and then we'll give feedback to the staff member and the staff member will give feedback to us. And so then X feeds that into her team. So it's a bit of a triangular process ... but that's how the system works... (SMT, School B)

X who was previously an LSA is now the Learning Mentor ... so it's just really an informal sort of dialogue with him, and then just establishing who should be in the groups ... And there's a dialogue between the class teachers as well, and with the playground staff ... (CT, School C)

...we run workshops ... directly after lunchtime, where the Learning Mentor can either troubleshoot, or where children can go and, if there have been problems, discuss them using Restorative Justice. And through that then it would feed into possible inclusion into longer term SEAL small group work ... (CT, School C)

...they're either highlighted by... my EPs or by the SENCO, or through the Learning Mentor, through class teachers. (CT, School C)

I had a discussion with [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] who does the small group sessions ... It was kind of within the first couple of weeks [of the school year] and there were some that had already flagged up, that I'd already gone they need something ... I did teach them for a little bit last year [when] I was kind of covering from class to class so I did know them a little bit ... And also with the pass-over from the last teacher, and the conversations we'd had, I knew ... the ones that ... have issues ... and also [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator had] had experience with them last year so he said well this child did it last year, I don't think they need another year,

but this child did it last year and I think it would be beneficial to do it again ... it's like both of us working ... together. (CT, School A)

... initially X [SEAL Small Group Facilitator] and I sort of think about children that we feel would benefit from a SEAL intervention. And then we go to the class teacher and then seek their opinion, because we might have a different view ... And then we sort of decide ... yes or no, depending whether that's a good choice or not ... (SEnCo, School D)

... X [Assistant Psychologist] she came in. She sat down with myself and [the other Class Teacher], then we had to identify groups who we felt would benefit from the small group... (CT1, School D)

Further comments related to the different methods of determining the needs of pupils being considered for the intervention, such as through observation or conversation with the class teacher:

I kind of sit down with [my Nursery Nurse and Year Group Partner] just a couple of minutes and say, "I've been thinking about this person and this person ... (CT, School B)

...there's a screening sheet as well ... I know [the Learning Mentor] as an LSA did lots of SEAL group intervention work prior to becoming my Learning Mentor ... And he ... had a kind of screening ... just for his own as an LSA, while he was sitting on the class ... looking at the children and I suppose seeing if there was a need [for them] to be targeted ... (HT, School C)

...[the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] ... did really well, went and observed the children in the classes and made an informed decision about who he was going to take and had a discussion around that so and now he's got his children... (SEnCo, School A)

...initially I drew up... a ... pool of six people ... this was down to observation in the playground That then went ... to the Deputy Head ... and the Class Form Teacher. From there it was ... [decided] that they would use some of the children that I had asked for ... but also from their own discussions about classroom behaviour and [who] they felt ... could benefit from it. They came up with ... their list as well, which then, you know I was brought in and asked whether or not this would work. (Fac, School A)

(INT): ... the six kids that you came up with from your own observations, how much did those original six names vary once you'd had the discussions with [other staff]?

(RES): I've got three of them here... So it's half the group ... [who]... I identified as ... being good candidates for SEAL (Fac, School A)

Participating staff members spoke of taking a needs-led approach to setting up SEAL small groups; and in some cases, staff were open to creating new small groups in order to meet the needs of particular individuals:

It's as the small school population dictates really. As the need requires we kind of try and plug that gap, and ... we do know all our children really, really well ... (HT, School C)

... X [LSA/previous SEAL SGW facilitator] [is] supporting one of our statemented children, and I've actually asked her to use some of the time to run maybe a little group for that particular child ... because he's our key target ... we're only talking about two or three children, we are thinking of quite small first for him. And then maybe build it up ... X and I have talked about this a lot and we just feel he does need something ... (SENCo, School D)

4.3.1.2 Monitoring of Pupils Attending SEAL Small Group Work sessions

Staff members in three of the four participating schools explained it was important for them to monitor the progress of the children attending the SEAL small group sessions and to continually assess the extent to which the children's needs were being met by the intervention. Comments, therefore, reflected flexibility in the composition of the small groups due to the dynamic nature of pupils' needs:

... I think that ... the most important thing is just keeping that communication open and just really ensuring that any child who could benefit gets access to it [SEAL small group work]. (CT, School C)

So I have children who've been going for a while but then other children who we think might benefit from a half-a-term's stint (CT, School C)

And I talk to [the SEAL small group facilitator] quite regularly about if we can change the children, if one child's actually got on and they're doing fine and if there's another slot from another kid. And she's very amenable for having extra... if I put this one in as well. (CT, School B)

(INT): And you said you've got these three kids from your class that are in the small group, is it just those three that are in the small group ...?

(RES): Yeah ... But ... I change that every half term... just in case I need to... I mean one of them I... I've actually took him off, cause actually now he's calmed down a little bit and he's back to his normal self as it were ... so I've substituted him with somebody else. (CT, School B)

Sometimes I do wonder, you come in for six weeks, you do the small groups and then we move them on, so it is about following it up afterwards. You can't just run a program for the sake of ticking boxes, you've got to be able to follow them up and check on the children, and even if you break down your time to once every two weeks you may see them, and then once every three weeks eventually, and then you just let go ... it's no good for six weeks ... actually they may need a longer intervention program. So... we assess individual children on the need... (ESPCM, School B)

...then each half term we review. And then some of the Learning Mentors may say, 'well you know what I'm going to go on for another term', that's fine, it's their call. Similarly they may say '... these four or three are absolutely fine', they may pick up another three, or let me do one-to-one with this one because actually the group is too much for the child. So we just ... play it as we go along. (ESPCM, School B)

...normally what I will do is I will talk to X [Learning Mentor / SEAL Small Group Facilitator] and say 'Listen you need to come, I need with help with this or this.' Especially sort of two years ago when they had the extreme [cohort] group, it's changing [the SEAL small groups] as well, it circulates... let's add some more in or take this one away, make another group. You have to have the dialogue. (CT2, School D)

4.3.2 Profiles of Children in the SEAL Small Groups

4.3.2.1 Characteristics of the SEAL Small Groups

The following data extracts relate to the number of SEAL small groups that were currently being implemented within each school at the time of the research, the size of the small groups and the year groups of the pupils in each small group:

[Both groups are] a mixture of both classes... (Fac, School D, p. 5)

...I've got a ... group from year four and a group from year five ... (Fac, School A)

I think any group larger than six, you may have, you know, like it may become a bit more challenging ... (Fac, School A)

...the groups I have, they range from 6 in a group to 8 in a group. Normally it is 6 in a group, but I think ... if you can handle the group and the group are working well and they're happy to bring more people in, then I'm all for ... adding ... (Fac, School C)

(INT): And in terms of the three small groups...

(RES): So [year] 4 and 5 they've got four pupils there ... Reception and year 1 together, and year 2 are on their own...

(INT): So that's six pupils in reception and year 1.

(RES): ... yep, ten from year 2, four from year ... 4 and 5. (ESPCM, School B)

Staff talked about establishing an appropriate dynamic within each of the SEAL small groups so that pupils were able to work together harmoniously and learn effectively from one another:

... there's some brothers in year 4 and together in the playground they're great, but to have them in a small group you have one dominating one, so that's not good for the

group. We try and make it fair ... where they can all have their say. I don't want someone in the shadows ... (Fac, School C)

...there'd be no point in putting two particular children together in year 4 because they just wouldn't do anything, they'd spend the whole time mucking about and wouldn't gain anything from it. So that was kind of like a real important thing to consider. (SEnCo, School A)

...it was ... narrowing down which [children] we felt would really benefit in a group together and looking as well at the dynamic of that group so that they would feel secure in that group, there weren't any children that made them feel more vulnerable by being in a group... (CT, School A)

As well as aiming to ensure that pupils within each SEAL small group were compatible with one another, school staff spoke of trying to make the small groups as diverse as possible so that pupils could learn to respect differences in one another and work alongside others whom they may not otherwise interact with:

... to meet people from different cultures and just having a different perspective of things ... I think it works well ... we might have someone that's more say middle class ... just to see how they operate and when they talk about experiences, it's an eye-opener for some children so... I think it is definitely a good mix... (Fac, School C)

We try to mix the groups ... like say reception, we mix both classes so we don't have all one class in one group ... so they get to know other children ... So maybe reception and year 1, cause they're sort of same age range, we'd put them in together. (Fac, School B)

Members of staff from three of the four participating schools explained that role model pupils had been placed in the SEAL small groups in order to demonstrate effective social and emotional skills to the pupils being targeted by the intervention:

... we have to ensure that there are children who are within those groups who are going to be quite good, positive role models, and model good social skills, good emotional intelligence, so other children are included ... just as helpful friends and peer support for other children. (CT, School C)

I think ... with the groups that we've chosen, we have the kids that ... have got, you know, they can do the social skills. So we have a mixture so we can have role models ... (Fac, School C)

I mean [X is] quite a sensible boy anyway ... the other two are... the dominant ones ... I think they all listen to him and ... I'd like to think that he picked up on that. That maybe they weren't putting as much effort into the group as they could have and that, you know, like he was just sort of giving them a little hint like maybe it's time we

*started paying attention sort of thing, or we should start behaving in the right way.
(Fac, School D)*

*...we had to identify groups who we felt would benefit from the small group work and we thought about their strengths and weaknesses. As well as children who need to develop those social skills, they need role models as well, so we had to think about positive, good role models for those children. And really that's how we formulated it.
(CT1, School D)*

...there's a good mixture. Different backgrounds, different personalities, educational needs as well as social needs as well, those are different. But then we're really catering for the focused children within the group, so for example, if I'm right, we've got W and we've got X who do have needs, and there are other children like Y in there, and I'm sure there's Z, who can complement those children [W and X] and be role models for them. And they [W and X] can look at that group of children and think 'oh I like the way he's respond,' 'I like the way... you know, he's answering the questions,' 'I like the way he's interacting socially'... (CT1, School D)

... we tried small group SEAL before [our current SEAL Small Group Facilitator] came along ... we had two groups going, but ... [the children] were so full of the same kind of issues ... that ... it didn't work, the dynamics were just difficult, you've gotta ... have a good mixture ... of children who are there for different reasons, because all the same it doesn't work. If they're too passive, maybe they wouldn't even speak out, so [this time] we were a mixture of different children and children who are going to be role models for other people, you know good speakers as well as children who are quiet, timid ... (SENCo, School A)

4.3.2.2 Perceived Purpose of SEAL Small Group Work

Many comments were made about the nature of difficulties being experienced by the pupils in the SEAL small groups and therefore the perceived aims and goals of the intervention according to the school staff interviewed. Ten of the fifteen participating members of staff commented that SEAL small group work was a confidence-building intervention. They explained that, in spite of the wide range in attainment levels and behaviours of the pupils in SEAL small groups, the one area of difficulty that many of these children shared was a lack of self-belief:

... most of [the children] ... lack confidence so they work avoid and things like that ... because they don't like to fail and they're scared to try ... so those are the children that, they need their confidence built up, they need to know that they are valued as an individual in this school. (CT, School A)

I think that if you've got a class of 30 children and the reason why an individual may be sent to a small group because they don't actually speak or they haven't got the confidence, the smaller groups will allow... them to have a voice ... rather than a group of 30 where they may not feel the confidence to be able to express their selves ... small groups allows them to have their own voices, to express their own opinions

and views ... I think we enable...[the children] to gain the confidence and recognise ... their self-worth and the things that they're good at more on an individual basis. (ESPCM, School B)

...it's all to do with a lot of confidence. They're scared to try something out new cause ... they think they're going to get it wrong ... but we just say 'just do it, don't worry about getting anything wrong. You're not going to get in trouble ... just do it and then you'll be fine.' (Fac, School B)

...the small group sessions, it is really key for those children who may not have joined in in the class or may have been a bit worried to join in... (CT, School B)

With the boys ... They're quite able academically. But as I said, they're quite sensitive and we just felt that they needed a space to be in, to build up ... aspects of their confidence. So that was the reason we sort of chose them. (SENCo, School D)

...I generally choose ... the middle kids that a lot of people forget. There are always the ones that are really well behaved, the ones that work hard, but those ones are ... might need a little bit more confidence and actually know that they can do these things. So I generally... don't choose those children who are already getting support like maybe for their phonics or small group work for their maths or something like that. I choose someone who's just a bit above that who... like, the invisible children. You know the ones that people can often forget cause they're always lining up nicely and stuff like that. (CT, School B)

Staff members also commented that SEAL small group work provided a forum for pupils to express themselves:

... [SEAL small group work] is a real boost for [the children] ... When they come back they've got so much to say, they've got so much to talk about, that they just can't stop themselves. They've just got to... just blurt it all out really ...they have gone and done something special with another group. They have been able to shine and maybe have their own little time to actually express themselves. Where maybe in a whole class they might feel a little bit wary of talking out loud or ... worried about what other people might think. But when they come back they've got that little ammunition to be able to tell the rest of the class what they've done ... (CT, School B)

...one of the ... dominant boys chose his Tree Man character ... he actually was quite serious and describing ... why he chose his Tree Man. And he was saying, he picked one because... it was [this] little frustrated character, because he felt like even though he was having fun at school and play, he was not having a good time at school ... I asked him... 'What's the issue with school?' And he said it was SATs and exams, league tables and the pressure of getting into the secondary school that he chose ... (Fac, School D)

They've got the space to express themselves... (CT1, School D)

...they would not necessarily talk about those things in any other situations, so it's giving [them] opportunity, the forum, to express things. (CT2, School D)

... if the children may be a bit more reticent in carpet time we've actually targeted those children so that in a small group situation they'll have to use their voice, they'll have to use their words... (HT, School C)

...some of the children from that group find it hard to express themselves or to say how things are, rather than talking to an adult or talking to someone, they'll just lash out. (Fac, School C)

...within SEAL it actually, it's got an area in there about the vocabulary that you're looking for them to use. I have ... prompted them, because ... sometimes, the words that they describe, or how they feel, or what they're thinking, may be a long routed explanation to get down to the one word that you're looking for. And it could be for example, distressed. You know, they would go through the different scenarios of feeling distressed, in sort of saying, well the way I would feel, would be distressed because, I was upset, because, you know, someone's died in the family and I'm learning to cope with that and I felt these various emotions, I get angry because ... within SEAL you can get them to explain how they felt about certain areas, so the emotional side you're getting them to talk, and to get them to express themselves a lot more... (Fac, School A)

Many respondents commented on the value of SEAL small group work in enhancing children's interpersonal skills including their ability to interact appropriately with others and to build, maintain and restore relationships:

I've got... a couple who are quiet, they're shy. So ... I just try to do ... activities again to get all these children, trying to get out their shyness and interact and stuff ... they're just all, just very quiet or ... they're just not interacting and so... that's why we sort of try and do these group works to get them to ... play with the other children, not even from their class, to get to know others in school as well ... (Fac, School B)

... SEAL is actually going to reflect in the curriculum and in the playground and in basically what they can take away from it, is a form of manners, courtesy and respect. Where ... they will sort of look at other people, [and] have ... manners to say ... thank you, no thank you. Be able to pass a compliment, and having courtesy, you know to sort of listen to other people and respect other people's views instead of talking over. And then to respect people for their opinions, you know for who they are, regardless of whether you like them or not ... It's how to resolve that and move on. So those are the sort of things that I'm really trying to knuckle down with them ... (Fac, School A)

... there's a little boy in year 2 who's pending Statement, probably ADHD, lacks focus, concentration, calls out ... he calls out all the time, doesn't think about the ... the statements that he can make in conversation to other children before he's put his foot right in it ... (HT, School C)

... they always say 'treat others as you'd like to be treated yourself,' and 'don't say anything that you wouldn't like said to yourself, to anybody else.' So... particularly the small group work has targeted our children that do find... those two areas... of our vision particularly hard to engage with. (HT, School C)

Some staff members spoke of the SEAL small group intervention as a means of helping children to resolve conflict and restore existing friendships which had been damaged:

So we've got small group work for both the girls and boys... early part of last term, we had issues with the girls. They fell out and it became a big thing... and parents were involved. So letters went out. Whereas the girls were really good friends prior to the incident, the incident really circled around the internet and them accessing it, and calling each other... unsavoury names. Parents got to hear about that because some children were upset ... and then that came to school. Miss X [the Executive Head] got involved so... it was a process of sorting it out... those group of girls are now friends, but... you can still see there's still tension there so that's how those groups of girls were selected for that actual small group work... the boys were chosen really on a similar note as well. (CT1, School D)

Staff members also commented that SEAL small group work provided an opportunity for pupils to empathise with one another:

...within small groups ...we hope it gives [the children] a bit more of a chance ... to use empathy ... (SENCO, School A)

4.4 Theme Three – Methods of Teaching and Learning used during the SEAL Small Group Work programme

4.4.1 Child-Centred Models of Pedagogy

4.4.1.1 Flexible / Needs-Led Approach to the Delivery of the SEAL Small Group Programme

In spite of there being a set structure to the guidance for the SEAL small group programme, which comprised seven themes or scheme of work to be covered throughout the year, many comments were made in relation to the facilitator tailoring the suggested activities and resources to meet the needs of the individual children within each small group:

... I'll meet with the learning mentors once a week and we assess how the sessions are going, or if there are anything that we need to change or adapt, or resources that we may need. So I mean we're constantly reviewing to make sure we're meeting the needs of the kids. (ESPCM, School B)

... [the SEAL resources] are quite prescriptive, and I'm sure when you talk to [the Learning Mentor] later, you can ... see how rigidly he sticks to it, or whether or not ... he uses it as a reaction to something that might have happened at the playground and he might just pick something out. (CT, School C)

Obviously [the SEAL Small Group Facilitators are] able to pick [the resources] up and utilise them because I've had no comeback from either of them whatsoever, so ... I suppose they must be user-friendly. I know that it generates ... it inspires them with their own teaching methods to be able to go off and think of other things on a tangent, and for a long time [they] used to say 'Is it all right if I do this as well?' And I'd say 'Yeah of course you can, because that goes hand-in-hand with what we're supposed to do,' so, no issues there. (HT, School C)

...there are gonna be times when they're gonna be challenging. When they're gonna make life a little bit difficult with regard to you delivering what you want to get out of it. So therefore, you might have to drastically make changes straightaway. You know it's sort of adlibbing and improvising to get the session going again, but also to bring them back on track. So, sometimes that actually works better than actually following what they've actually written down in [the SEAL book]. (Fac, School A)

We do plans for SEAL, the plans could be chucked out the window after the second week and we have to completely change them because we need to get to know the children... (ESPCM, School B, p.15)

... I still follow the core of the SEAL pack in terms of what the objectives are, like today it could be like about 'able to discuss their feelings' for example. So I still make sure I reach that objective, but it's mostly the activities that I sort of ... I'm more flexible with and I adapt them. Because they're not suitable for everything ... it's like they're not ... one size fits all. (Fac, School D)

SEAL Small Group Facilitators explained that maintaining some degree of flexibility in adherence to the guidance enabled them to engage more with the pupils and ensure smooth-running sessions:

And if they're enjoying something and ... we don't get to finish it, I won't just stop it because I feel that ... kids remember that. 'Oh why? Why didn't you finish this? Why didn't we do that?' And they're really proud to achieve something and show their final work, so ... if it takes two weeks all round one session, then it will have to be two weeks. (Fac, School C)

... my line manager who is the lead mentor ... by getting his input ... it's enabled me to actually carry out the sessions in a competent way but also ... as he would put it, quote, unquote, tailor make it to the way you feel comfortable delivering because some things are gonna be written in which you're gonna feel, well, they're not gonna understand that if I say it like that, like if you break it down and sort of make it a little bit more accessible for them, you know, where it's easy access rather than them having to challenge themselves on, over every question, you get more out of them... (Fac, School A)

(INT): You were saying with the house activity you didn't think the scissors and paper and glue was as appropriate, and actually drawing the pictures was better.
(RES): Yeah, because ... I know that group of boys ... and I know that they're all really good drawers and they love to sketch. I couldn't see them doing the whole gluing and cutting sort of thing. They'd be bored within five minutes and then that'll impact on the group, because then their behaviour becomes challenging. (Fac, School D)

Staff members in one of the participating schools commented that in spite of following a plan for the SEAL programme they would be prepared to deviate from the SEAL topic or theme itself should the need to do so arise:

...you can't ever stop a theme if that makes sense ... So if something comes up then ... its profile is raised again... and so we will go back to a SEAL thing that we've done before and say to the children "remember we did this?" ... I don't think the children think about the themes as blocks ... because it kind of fits in ... So if... lots of the kids are having problems in the playground then you wouldn't do Going for Goals for your SEAL for your classroom, you would do, you know Bullying or whatever it ends up being. And the same with the small group stuff. If we find that there's something that's not right we say to X [SEAL Small Group Facilitator] "Look, this is coming up"... Because I think you have to ... it's kind of like letting the children lead ... you have to respond to what...they need basically. And if that's what they need then that's what we do. (SMT, School B)

4.4.1.2 Encouraging Pupils to take Ownership over their Learning in SEAL Small Groups

The SEAL small group facilitators in all four of the participating schools talked about fostering a capacity for self-reflection in the pupils being targeted, both within the SEAL small groups and when applying their learning in other contexts:

One of my boys, X, he ... said to me today, he chose a Tree Man that was swinging. And the way he described it, he said he was swinging in the right direction because he felt last week he wasn't behaving appropriately, but he sort of... pushed himself forward because he felt that he really put a lot of effort in today, and he did. He was really well behaved today, and he came up with some really good ideas. (Fac, School D)

[SEAL small group work] really helps support children formulating strategies that they can use in situations where... they've not been able to do that before ... it involves them thinking about different ways they can help themselves... (CT1, School D)

... I think the composition [of the SEAL small groups] is great, because it allows other children to see how others behave and whether or not that's acceptable behaviour or not and then they look at themselves and some children do analyse what's going on. (Fac, School A)

I think it's good to [have] ... children together into small groups and find out how they're all feeling and why they're feeling like that. And just see if we can sort something out together and maybe by interacting with other children, sort of they will realise that, hang on a minute I'm doing something here that I shouldn't be ... (Fac, School B)

... during one of X's [Class Teacher's] assemblies, some of the children that were in the play used our group session, and said about the right things that they should do ... they mentioned me and they mentioned the rest of their group ... it was such a small thing to mention a group but they were confident enough to do it and it was off their own back. No one said 'you need to talk about [me], you need to talk about the other children in your group.' So yeah, for me that made me proud that they realised it was helping them ... to know that they understood what it was about, rather than just being taken out of class so ... oh we're in a group. They understand ... why we're doing it and what we're doing it for... (Fac, School C)

Facilitators also made reference to adopting a facilitative model to the delivery of the SEAL small group programme; in this way, their aim was to elicit pupils' own views and experiences instead of providing them with answers:

... with regard to how I've been approaching it, it's about getting ... the children or young people to discuss amongst themselves and getting them to debate and figure out no that's not right actually, or yes that is right, to whatever the topic, or ... the key issue that ... we're focusing on, on that particular day. (Fac, School A)

...if they can see you're enjoying the discussion, and you can sort of instigate it and let them continue it ... it allows you to step back and ... have an overview of what's going on. And that's what you can do, that's what I do, is just take that seat back and let them discuss, and then if I feel that they're going off course, bring them back in and then give them that ... direction to talk about it again, and allow them to ... move on. (Fac, School A)

... I think it's all inside [the children] already, they just need support of bringing it up, and sharing it with others and actually showing what kind of person they are from inside really ... (Fac, School B)

Members of staff other than the facilitator likewise advocated for a facilitative approach to delivering the SEAL small group work programme:

...like I try and do in my class, facilitate the discussion rather than directing it, "And we're gonna do this..." Just kind of give [the children] ... the theme to work towards, but give them the opportunity to explore it for themselves and talk to each other, rather than being a teacher and teaching them something. So it's kind of giving them the opportunities to facilitate the discussion and let them develop and learn for themselves really while they're being taught, cause you can't teach SEAL can you? In a sense really. (CT, School B)

... I think [the facilitators of SEAL small group work] need to ... be able to ... lead and guide, but at the same time know when to back off and let the children maybe ... take the group forward ... (SENCo, School D)

Facilitators also referred to promoting pupils' collaborative learning during the SEAL small group sessions:

... they were able to describe and come up with solutions and ideas about what they would do being stuck on a desert island, what things they would take, and ... it was a chance to see them all working together, not only as a group of six, but then to split them up into two smaller groups and then getting them to feed their ideas ... it showed that they could actually understand ... and then break it down into sort of a way in which everyone could understand within the group ... (Fac, School A)

... I always say to [the pupils in SEAL small groups], 'As much as I'm learning from you, you are learning from me and you're learning from everyone else.' (Fac, School C)

4.4.2 Skills and Qualities Required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator

4.4.2.1 Close Relationship between SEAL SGW Facilitator and Pupils

Many comments related to the honesty, trust and openness which characterised the relationship between the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and the pupils attending the small group sessions:

I say 'it's not you attacking me, I'm here to help you and you're here to help me.' So I think the general respect for each other... (Fac, School C)

... I think just being totally honest with them and them being honest with us ... You can't lie to a child I don't think. They're not stupid ... (Fac, School C)

I think it's nice for the children ... to have a closer interaction with teachers cause obviously when you've got thirty in the class, like I do my absolute best to make sure that all the kids know that I'm there for them, but it's nice for them to have ... another adult that they can feel that they can trust and go and talk to ... (CT, School A)

... [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator needs] to be able to deal with children potentially saying some quite difficult things, so somebody who's quite happy, or feels comfortable doing that is important ... (SMT, School A)

... I think it's about being [there] all the time and [the children] knowing that they can also come back and discuss things with me on a one-to-one basis as well. So, it's something which they can come back and reflect on ... and it's nice in a sense where as the SEAL facilitator, they can talk to me about issues that they've got in more confidence, than maybe going to a class teacher, because we're talking about things which are reflecting everything in day-to-day life. Whether it's a bereavement. Whether it's, you know the splitting up of parents. Whether it's being bullied by brothers or sisters. You know we've covered a lot of topics and I get a lot of honesty and I can tell when they're telling me porkies from now, from when they're being very honest and genuine with me ... (Fac, School A, p.13)

... most of the children here in school ... they know me, so ... that sort of boundary between us is comfortable, because the children are not sort of scared or anything of me, of ... who I'm going with, why of I going with you as a group. They're like happy to come and sit in our group work and do it ... (Fac, School B, p.2)

Staff members spoke of the facilitator taking a holistic view of the children in the SEAL small groups and having a sound knowledge of their needs and interests:

I'm always out in the playground and I do after-school clubs as well. That relationship with the children is key ... knowing their characters, what they like, what they don't like, just trying to implement that in the [SEAL small group sessions] ... (Fac, School C)

X [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] ... he'll go out of his way to find things out, and to find out, for example, what kinds of things [the children are] going to do in a class, what your children are interested in, what your latest topic is. I've seen him do this... he had some drama sessions with my children actually in the nursery and was finding out what their topic was at the time, so... yeah, he was definitely really good at that. (SMT School A)

I do make sure that if a child is attending a SEAL group we find out from the SENCO what issues there is going on in the family, and if there's an IEP, do you know, if they need to use the scissors or fine motor skills, then we'll try to incorporate part of the sessions as well. (ESPCM, School B)

...[the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] is a Play Worker in play centre and at lunch time cause he organises games in playground. And then he teaches drama, or he does drama in the groups ... so, he works with the different peer groups on stuff they do in their classroom like the topic-based stuff ... (SENCO, School A)

... I can raise concerns if there is something that's going on that I think, well that doesn't seem right. Why is this child being like this today? ...and then [the Class Teacher] can tell me, 'Oh well this has happened today.' And then I can look back and reflect ... and say, 'Oh now I can understand why this child was behaving in this particular way. Or why they were a bit withdrawn or why they were very chatty' or, you know. (Fac, School A, p.12)

I think knowing the children ... and it's definitely why I think that [the Learning Mentor] team was chosen to run [SEAL small group work] because they're the behavioural team. Lots of the issues ... regardless of [whether] its behaviour or not, they end up dealing with it anyway so they know the children really well ... they're in class in the morning and then doing their groups in the afternoons so ... they definitely have a whole school role, and they know the kids. (SMT, School B)

...what's really important is knowing the children you're working with and thinking about what it is that those group of children need to develop in ... otherwise it's defeating the objective... (CT1, School D)

Other comments related to the SEAL Small Group Facilitators being role models for the children in the groups:

I think that [the SEAL SGW facilitators] have to really model the key SEAL strands. I mean they have to be empathetic, they have to ... have quite acute social skills and ... the ability to be calm, to listen, to be fair ... (CT, School C)

When someone else is talking they make me follow the rules as well as ... I have to just be quiet ... (F, School C)

You've gotta have empathy with the children ... so you are a role model for those children, so you're respectful and polite, and you show empathy to them and then you would expect them to be able to give back from you. Cause that's what it's all about. This is me... this is how I want you to be. Just I'm a role model. Look at what I do. Look at what I did. (SENCO, School A)

Additional qualities required in the SEAL Small Group Facilitator included patience, calmness and the ability to listen:

Patience...calm... (HT, School C)

To actually listen to [the children] rather than hearing what they have to say and not sort of responding in the right manner. (Fac, School C)

Being a very good listener. (SMT, School A)

...to be a really good listener... (CT, School B)

Patience is one. (Fac, School D)

4.4.2.2 Making the SEAL SGW Sessions Purposeful

School staff remarked that it was important for the facilitator to have clear learning objectives and maintain the pace of the SEAL small group sessions:

...we've got our targets what we wanna do. So they know that we're always moving forward, we're never stuck. ... (F, School C)

...somebody that is able to deliver something, and be quite structured, because children can move things. And yes you need to go with them to a certain degree but you've got to remember that those children are there for a specific reason so you have to remain focused and not let them take it off somewhere else. (CT, School C)

I'm actually learning a lot about ... how we as educators can interact with [the pupils] to get the best out of them. And sometimes, it ... does mean being a bit firmer with them to actually get them to ... understand the importance of doing something rather than making everything ... being a game because ... they've got to ... get something from it as well otherwise you know it's like them having ... an additional session in the playground. (Fac, School A)

... I ... let them discuss [an issue] and then if I feel that they're going off course, bring them back in and then give them that ... direction to talk about it again ... (Fac, School A)

I think you have to be very clear about the aims of sessions if you're planning in work ... the children need to know where it's going and why they're doing it, so you need to be really clear about 'right, we're here to do this. And we've chosen you for this reason.' (SMT, School A)

...we can be fun but we don't want to actually go against the Standards, so [the SEAL small group sessions] reinforce the Standards. (ESPCM, School B)

Facilitators and other staff also spoke of the need to establish meaningful boundaries and clear expectations within the SEAL small groups:

We set our group rules, our SEAL session rules so ... about respecting each other, listening to each other, taking turns. So everyone has a copy of the group rules, so ... that group can sort of take control. (Fac, School C)

One of the rules that we have is what happens in a group, stays in a group. (Fac, School C)

... we follow the rules of not laughing at [other people] ... everyone is comfortable enough to say, whether it be something silly as 'I fell over in the playground today,' or ... anything, you know, they're confident enough to have that. (Fac, School C)

[The children] know hopefully in those groups, no-one's gonna laugh at them, no-one's gonna be ... unkind to them, cause that's not the rules of, of the group. So they can ... be themselves, and ... trust the group ... (SENCO, School A)

... I'm not a disciplinarian, and ... the relationship that I've got with most of the children in this school is based around me sort of listening, and being non-judgemental, so then when they come to SEAL they sort of tend to push the boundaries a little bit, because they're not sure how to behave in this different environment ... So ... I have to... politely remind them that it's not the time and the place to behave that way. (Fac, School D)

4.4.3 Value Added of the SEAL Programme in a Small Group Context

4.4.3.1 More Time and Space to Individualise Learning

Staff commented that within small groups there was more time to explore issues and cover the topics of the SEAL programme in further depth:

...when a child is upset or when there's a conflict between two children, you try to help them resolve the issue ... so I see [SEAL small group work] as an extension of

what takes place in a classroom, but you've just got the space to do so and more time to spend on that. (CT1, School D)

... I think when we're doing themes, that if we're doing a bullying theme ... we talk in-depth about what it is we're doing ... they get all the information cause it's ... smaller. They get all that information they need. (Fac, School C)

I think when you're in a classroom and, again, you know, you've got 30 people in a classroom, you may have 5 or 6 that are struggling. Things can happen so quick and you're always moving onto the next thing, that they don't get a chance to ... when they actually understand it and understand what it's about, it's gone. (Fac, School C)

...they've got more time to explore their feelings rather than in a [whole class] group ... you might not be chosen if you put your hand up, you might be worrying about something, but because the lessons move at such a fast pace you can't always explore that feeling, that emotional feeling at that time and moment in the lesson. But, you know, but with small group work you're encouraged to. (CT1, School D)

I think [SEAL small group work is] good, because ... I think children ... don't always have ... the time to sort of talk things through, and to be in a situation where you have like about 45 minutes where you can discuss things and hear other people's views and work on an idea, I think that's good ... (SENCo, School D)

...with the SEAL group, because it's a small environment, that time is specifically for ... those four or six children, and you work with ... because obviously the children have been selected ... for a reason. And so it's quite focused, it's quite personalised and I think that is the difference between the groups and the whole school. The whole school is more general and that's more personalised ... also you can ... play with whatever crops up because things crop up randomly and ... you've actually got the time to discuss it and develop it, or say 'Okay, we haven't got the time now but we can talk about it next week.' And they know that that discussion will follow through the next week, because they know that's their time and space for it. Whereas in a class ... in a general class ... it's much harder to deal with it in that way, so I think it's quite focused. (SENCo, School D)

It was noted that the small group context allowed the facilitator more time and space to unpick the nature of the difficulties being experienced by the pupils and therefore to develop more specific means of supporting their learning:

I think there's more scope within a small group to drill down to actual specific issues within the children who are there... (CT, School C)

... [SEAL small group work] does give ... I think for myself, an understanding of what level these children are at, and what sort of support they will require ... (Fac, School A)

....with regard to behaviour, some [pupils] who are messing about ... it's actually looking at them and saying there's a reason why this is happening and it's because they have an issue or a difficulty in ... their learning behaviour or in their learning pattern or ... how they absorb information. So it's about taking time as well. (Fac, School A)

... if the group was any bigger maybe you wouldn't be able to sort of identify the individual needs and say, you know, and say ok you know well we can actually help this one by offering a little bit extra. (Fac, School A)

... I think we look closely at children ... who are isolated. Why are they isolated? Why are they not friends? As well as trying to understand that some children actually prefer to be like that. But is it, do they prefer to be like that, or is it because they've got used to being like that? Because they don't socialise, you know. So we try to organise... social skills groups ... [and] SEAL is a part of that... (SENCo, School A)

And we've identified the needs of certain children from the SEAL [small group work], you know with like behaviour. For example, with reading, those who are lacking the confidence, self-esteem and bringing that out. So, you know who needs to be, you know sort of encouraged regularly to bring the best out of them. Those that need to be calmed down a bit, because you know they've got so much energy. Then it's where to channel that energy. (Fac, School A)

... [in the SEAL small groups] we're reinforcing what the whole school is promoting in the sense of the ['I can'] statements. However, we're able to identify on an individual basis ... needs that the children may [have]... and then do the more creative activities with them, or adapt the activities from week to week ... so we change the activities and make them more fun based and creative ... We link with the teacher what they're doing but we individualise it. (ESPCM, School B)

I suppose [SEAL small group work is] an opportunity for it being more specified support, targeted. (HT, School C)

I think sometimes children are very good at masking problems that we think we've solved with them, when actually they're still there. So ... I suppose taking a bit of time, listening, and ... just being there with your children, knowing your children. But it's taking time. And the trouble is ... when you've got 30 other children in the class ... You don't have time... (SMT, School A)

...it is just having that opportunity to be listened to a little bit more closely and a little bit more in depth. (CT, School C)

Members of staff remarked that the small group setting allowed the facilitator more time to scaffold tasks and prompt pupils in their thinking:

So it is very much scaffolded support for [those pupils] emotionally and looking at things from other people's point of views ... the thing is with, you know, have us be 'proud' but you can talk about what makes you feel proud and it all breaks it down into feelings, and we've got all the support work going on with feelings cards and everything else within the small groups. (HT, School C)

It's something that would have been picked up on as the whole school circle time PSHE, but for that child they need it in more intensity outside, and broken down, it's the scaffolding isn't it of working together with, you know, 3, 4 other people, to be able to put it into practice? (CT, School C)

... they were able to describe and come up with solutions and ideas about what they would do being stuck on a desert island, what things they would take, and ... it was a

chance to see them all working together, not only as a group of six, but then to split them up into two smaller groups and then getting them to feed their ideas and ... then breaking that down again where they went away and they thought about it individually on what they would want ... And then... they...could write up about it as well...which...shows they had to think, have a discussion, and then record the information. (Fac, School A)

I don't mind them using words that they see on the wall to assist them in things that we're doing, but if they're gonna use a word I want them to know what that word means and if they use a word that the kids think, hang on a second. Alright, well explain what that word means. So actually see that they've understood what they've said and they're not just saying what they think might sound good ... And that's why I said, "Tell me exactly how you feel about the thing, not something that you've read somewhere, because then that... You're telling me what someone else has written. I wanna know your experience, what you felt from it." So, it's like sometimes you have to continue backtracking until you get them to get the message and get them to understand what you want from them. (Fac, School A)

4.4.3.2 A Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

Comments related to small groups being a less intimidating forum than whole classes, and therefore one in which pupils felt comfortable to talk more frequently and find their voice:

...they have more opportunity to talk obviously in a smaller group. And so you can get more really good dialogue going in a shorter space of time and ... children feel much more at ease in a small group rather than a whole-class situation where there's ... whole circle time, it's fantastic and you can have some great sessions, but it's a real skill to draw out children in ... when there are 30 of them and some children do find it difficult to really share and express themselves. And small groups give those children that opportunity. (CT, School C)

...we talk in-depth about what it is we're doing. I think maybe if you were in a classroom of 30 children it's hard for those children to ... actually stand out or just to be able to put their point across. (Fac, School C)

...it has worked well where you find that some of the children that ... wouldn't be forthcoming, who are very quiet in class I'm actually getting them to speak up a lot more. (Fac, School A)

When [the children] come back they've got so much to say, they've got so much to talk about, that they just can't stop themselves. They've just got to ... blurt it all out really ... they have gone and done something special with another group. They have been able to shine and maybe have their own little time to actually express themselves. Where maybe in a whole class they might feel a little bit wary of talking out loud or ... worried about what other people might think. But when they come back they've got that little ammunition to be able to tell the rest of the class what they've done ... (CT, School B)

I think that if you've got a class of 30 children and the reason why an individual may be sent to a small group because they don't actually speak or they haven't got the confidence, the smaller groups will allow ... them to have a voice ... rather than a group of 30 where they may not feel the confidence to be able to express their selves. So yeah, definitely the small groups allows them to have their own voices, to express their own opinions and views. (ESPCM, School B)

That whole like pack mentality in a class, especially when the children are older, I think it's hard to be quite open ... in a big group, whereas in a small group ... you're more likely to talk ... (SMT, School A)

4.5 Theme Four – Training and Support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator

4.5.1 Training and Support for the SEAL Small Group Facilitator from the Local Authority

The other two facilitators commented that they had received some introductory training from the local authority's Learning Mentor Co-ordinator who was responsible for rolling out SEAL small group work across the borough:

...he helped me to start up ... He delivered the first couple of sessions ... and just went through the pack with me ... we sat down briefly, he took me through the materials and then he delivered and I helped out a little bit and participated. (Fac, School D)

Members of staff spoke of the value of sharing and disseminating good practice. They expressed a wish to liaise more with other schools implementing SEAL small group work and commented that this would serve as a useful form of training for SEAL Small Group Facilitators in the future:

...it'd be great if [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] ... could go to another school that's really implemented it, you know, full on ... I suppose to get a sense of ... what the school feels like. So when you walk in ... I think it is quite a... a feeling, isn't it? ... I think it's a feeling that you have if everyone is sort of following through... the SEAL in class, the whole school, in assembly, the small groups and the family SEAL. If all of those are sort of being implemented it must have quite a substantial impact ... I suppose it's the ethos, but that kind of feeling. It'd be good if you could visit that, I wouldn't mind visiting one as well, just to sort of see where it could really go if it was full on. (SENCo, School D)

I think it would be good, or useful perhaps, if [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator] could go and see SEAL taught somewhere else, by somebody else who's been doing it for a long time. It's always useful to go somewhere else and see it happening. Obviously training days or any kind of course is always helpful. But I think really

going and seeing it in action is probably the best thing that you can do. So going to another school. (SMT, School A)

... Maybe more activity ideas, sort of to ... out of the box, to see what other people think and to get more ideas from others ... Sort of just ... using other people's heads and stuff, just talking to other people and seeing what they do, and maybe see if we can incorporate in our plans as well ... Other schools, you see what they're doing and how it sort of relates to our school is what I'd say ... Maybe if they ... can find any ideas from me, it would be good for them as well... (Fac, School B)

In terms of non-training based forms of support provided by outside professionals, one of the two facilitators who had received training from the Learning Mentor Co-ordinator co-facilitated one of her SEAL small groups with an Assistant Psychologist from the borough's Educational Psychology Service:

... I'm going to be with X, the other EP [Assistant Psychologist] on a Tuesday, and she's got year 6 boys ... So that's the other group at the moment. (Fac, School D)

4.5.2 Support for SEAL Small Group Facilitator within School

Many comments were made regarding forms of support available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator within school. It appeared that internal support systems had a compensatory function for facilitators who had received little or no training for delivering SEAL small group work from the local authority:

As for the SEAL, there isn't much training out there. So we go by the guidelines that are in the books, and ... I oversee, go in their lessons, observe them from time to time and ... we give some guidance and what we could change or maybe not working ... (ESPCM, School B)

Eleven of the fifteen participating members of staff interviewed provided information regarding who in school supported the facilitator, the nature of the support that was provided and the frequency with which this support was accessed:

X [the other SEAL SGW facilitator has] been doing a SEAL way before me like, she's been doing it since last year, so she's got more experience so if I'm stuck or anything she will help me, and she'll just say, 'Oh... last year we done something like this, maybe you could, you know change it a bit and do something so... We do sort of you know feed off each [other] ... (Fac, School B)

I've organised [SEAL small group facilitator's] space and his groups. . and now he's got his children, he's got his space, and he's got his timetable. (SENCo, School A, p.3)

I always say [to the LSA/SEAL SGW facilitator] any resources that are needed, please give me a shout. (CT, School C)

... I can speak to [the Learning Mentor], [he's] got lots of games. Or just ideas, so... if I'm ever sort of flagging and think what can I do? There's always someone that I can speak to ... (Fac, School C)

Just last term we had a session where [the SEAL Small Group Facilitator and I] sat down and we talked through the children, and the progress they were making ... I suppose I should, we should sit down a bit more regularly, and discuss how the progress has been ... just go through the children and discuss what's happening with them, is it still relevant for them to be there and that, that kind of thing ... (SENCo, School A)

... my line manager who is the lead mentor ... by getting his input ... it's enabled me to actually carry out the sessions in a competent way but also ... as he would put it, quote, unquote, tailor make it to the way you feel comfortable delivering... (Fac, School A)

(RES): ... If I'm not sure ... I know there's somebody I could go and get that information from...

(INT): And who do you feel those people usually are?

(RES): X (the SENCo). X a lot. And then there's a few of the TAs as well that work really closely with the children, they have a lot of interaction with the kids during the day, especially when the teacher's just teaching ... And management as well ... (Fac, School D)

X is [the SEAL small group work facilitator's] line manager. And he's one of our Learning Mentors so he's got a good basis of SEAL. Then there's another mentor in the school who he can go to and Miss X [SENCo/Deputy Head] ... she co-ordinates that kind of group work so he's got three people that he can go to if he needs support ... He's got a good group I think with him. (CT, School A)

Class teachers spoke of taking an active role in supporting the facilitator's work during the SEAL small group sessions including providing resources for the facilitator, assisting with pupil selection and sharing the achievements of pupils in small groups with the rest of the class:

I always say [to the SEAL SGW facilitator] any resources that are needed, please give me a shout. (CT, School C)

...in conjunction with the Learning Mentor and other LSAs who have had training on elements of small group SEAL, we sort of think very carefully about how we're going to choose children for the small groups, and then ensure that they're run consistently ... I'm PSHE coordinator and obviously SEAL comes under that (CT, School C)

I've been able to liaise with X [the SEAL small group work facilitator], so... initially, it was us thinking carefully about groups of children who do need the small group work and what their areas of needs were. And then I've been just speaking to X during moments of the school time, asking how the children are getting on and just ensuring that it's taking place really. And also just observing those groups of children in the classroom... (CT1, School D)

4.5.3 Resources and Materials Available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator

Staff members commented on the nature and quality of the resources and materials available to the SEAL Small Group Facilitator. In this particular local authority, facilitators were provided with a customised booklet developed by the borough's Primary Behaviour Consultant that was based on the National Strategies booklet and contained schemes of work and session plans for each theme or unit of the SEAL small group programme:

... And X [the Primary Behaviour Consultant] took on SEAL ... And then we actually... got some guidance on how to run small SEAL groups which was a great resource, it was okay, hold on a minute, there's actually books on this... it was the national strategy books that we use ... so we was able to get a lot more information. (ESPCM, School B)

...the resources are sort of good quality, I mean we ... [are] very aware that ... there needs to be other resources on top of possibly the SEAL, but at the moment it's working fine. It's got enough structure to give [the LSA/SEAL small group work facilitator] confidence ... (CT, School C)

(INT): And what are your views about the quality and effectiveness of the resources and materials that are available to your facilitators...?

(RES): Obviously they're able to pick them up and utilise them because I've had no comeback from either of them whatsoever, so I suppose they must be user-friendly. I know that it generates ... it inspires them with their own teaching methods to be able to go off and think of other things on a tangent... (HT, School C)

... I found that book ... gives you everything that you need... it'll tell you the resources that you need ... if you haven't got ideas on, so having games to begin with, warm-up activities. It's got a lot of information so ... I'm pretty confident ... (Fac, School C)

... I'm finding [SEAL small group work] a lot easier to deliver, because there's a routine to it ... the structure is ... introduction, and then you do a check in where you try to get them to compliment and then from there you've got your ... warm-up, your ice-breaker to get them all working together and then you go in to discuss the main activity with them so that they understand what they're going to be doing and then might have a warm-down at the end ... (Fac, School A)

... I found [the SEAL booklet] very useful, I found it as a good tool... (Fac, School A)

I must say the SEAL resources in the past have been rubbish in the sense of if you go onto the Internet, things like that, there's hardly any SEAL resources. You got the national strategy which is all great in their booklet but what is the next move? We've had that for many years, what's the next lot? And I've been looking on the internet and... we made a lot of resources over the years but I want to see if we can get some in... there's a lot more resources that we can use out there ... So the resources are getting better ... But then, should be even better than they are now. (ESPCM, School B)

... SEAL is quite prescriptive in the lesson plans... (CT, School C)

... apart from the SEAL book, the only materials that I have got is PowerPoint presentations ... I've actually been online, looked at what other schools or what other SEAL tutors or facilitators have been using ... (Fac, School A)

...there [have] been no real issues with the resources but I think ... they're there to be adapted and to be changed as necessary. (CT, School C)

4.6 Theme Five – Processes and Issues around Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL Small Group Work

Another smaller yet significant theme to emerge from the data analysis was evaluation of the outcomes of SEAL small group work. None of the participating four schools had established tools in place for measuring the impact of the SEAL small group intervention; with staff assessing pupils' social and emotional development through observations and feedback from other staff and the children themselves. The difficulty of assessing social and emotional skills was widely acknowledged.

4.6.1 Methods of Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL Small Group Work

Members of school staff spoke of both existing and possible future methods for evaluating the outcomes of SEAL. In terms of existing means for gauging the impact of SEAL small group work on targeted pupils, staff commented that they relied on their own observations and feedback from colleagues in order to assess progress:

...whatever we were worried about or concerned about, I believe the only way we can see if [the SEAL small group work intervention is] successful is if you see a change in the child. So the behaviour is improving, the child becomes more confident ... and more open in the classroom to do things, I don't know how else you could do that ... for me I think if I can see a change in the child then that's got to indicate that something is successful. (SESCO, School A)

Staff spoke of the value of using feedback from the pupils themselves in order to make judgements about their children's social and emotional development:

...the children are asked ... how they feel about school and how they feel about their ... their friendship groups ... and that's their verbal response isn't it? That's how you tell. And you do ... they are given opportunities throughout the year to be able to tell us ... we have the boxes in the class ... feedback classes, like 'Are you worried about anything?' So it's ... talking, using their words. (HT, School C)

Across all the participating schools it seemed from staff comments that there was little in the way of more formalised methods of assessing SEAL, both at a whole school and a small group level. One member of staff explained that he had liaised with the local authority's SEAL co-ordinator who had developed a provisional assessment framework for school staff to pilot:

...what we have is ... very, very loose ... this has been introduced this year on the recommendation of a SEAL meeting I had, so it's just level descriptors ... that relate back to the 'I can' statements of the lesson plans that we use. So ... nursery, reception, this is for 'Good to Be Me.' Year 1, you could do it writing each individual child and ticking ... I don't want to make it too onerous for teachers, so they're ... just highlighting six children in their class ... of varying abilities, and then that just gives sort of a benchmark ... and they all relate back to the planning ... these [level descriptors] were from the Borough, and they're really... the most useable option that were given to me. So it's a work in progress, and... I'm meeting someone again later on this term, and that's an issue again that hopefully they might have come up with something else. (CT, School C)

One class teacher, in commenting on the relative ease of incorporating SEAL small group work into reception-aged pupils' social and emotional learning in the mainstream classroom (see Theme 1), referred to the benefits of using the assessment framework contained within the early years curriculum:

...the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile ... it's a really good way of assessment ... because it's on running ... It's not like we're gonna do a test at the end of term. It's constantly going on ... And that works really well with SEAL, because that changes day-to-day. You can't just test where you are on SEAL at the end of term, cause I mean you change day-by-day as well, so kids one day are doing one thing and the next day they're doing another ... so it's a good fluid way of working really. (CT, School B)

Another class teacher referred to an inventory which the SEAL small group facilitator had asked her to fill out by way of formative assessment of the pupils' progress:

... [the SEAL small group work facilitator] brought a form in that we have to fill in, it's like a questionnaire on each of the boys ... It's a social competence inventory, so it's really about the ... young child's behaviour in different contexts, for example if he's able to interpret, decode another child's feelings. If she's happy, angry or sad ... Invites shy children to participate in play. Tries to intervene in peers' quarrels/conflicts. So it's things like that, and then it's just giving them a grade between 'does apply' or 'doesn't apply', and it just shows you... how to really grade the children in the different areas ... I've got a feeling that maybe it's done here, now, maybe during the middle, and maybe towards the end, and see what the different areas brings up, to see if they've moved on from a particular grade into the other... (CT1, School D)

In terms of school staff's ideas about potential future tools for measuring children's social and emotional development, reference was made to forms of assessment that were child-centred and formative:

... we are trying to develop something for emotional wellbeing as tracking. You know, where they come in at and where they go off at and how you're doing along the way. (HT, School C)

(RES): ...we don't have to assess SEAL. However ... we're gonna start doing the pupil self assessment under each section. So under each topic ... there'll be a list of questions, like the I can, and they'll say where they're at ... I'm gonna test it on small groups, for the next term, to see how easy it is and what needs adapting cause teachers don't need more paperwork. So let's see how easy it is and then we'll adapt it.

(INT): And how often would that be intended to take place?

(RES): ...half termly because you do a self assessment under each topic, and then the learning mentors [SEAL small group facilitators] can ... focus more on the small groups on what they need to achieve. (ESPCM, School B)

... I know they do the scaling how you feel things ... where you are now and where you are at the end of it ... it might be nice to sort of, I don't know, ask the children in maybe a bit more detail how they felt about it. Maybe about a month or so after leaving the group to see if any of those things that they learned from each other, they're applying ... some children would be able to sort of vocalise those, I am sure. (SENCo, School D)

4.6.2 Difficulties with Evaluating Outcomes of SEAL Small Group Work

Many of the comments made regarding both existing and possible means of assessing social and emotional skills in children also referred to the inherent difficulty of measuring social and emotional skills. From a theoretical and practical point of view respectively, staff talked about the difficulty of quantifying emotions and the need for sufficient time and space during the school day in order to track pupils' social and emotional development accurately:

...it's very hard to nail it down ... it goes back to not only your classroom, being in the playground, seeing how they conduct themselves. Like I said, one of the children in year 3 ... very quick to lash out, so to see him now, three months or four months down the line being able to ... speak to an adult. I don't know how you'd measure that. What can you write down? ... you can't write down every day 'this child has done this' ... (Fac, School C)

... that sheet that X [Class Teacher/PSHE co-ordinator] was talking about, it's very good. Again it's finding time for staff, teachers to always follow through ... they always say give yourself enough time, but again when you're dealing with 30 children ... Or you're doing small group... it is very hard to keep track I think. (Fac, School C)

I think it's quite difficult to evaluate something like SEAL, because it's quite difficult to evaluate emotions... I don't really know how you'd do it. I suppose you'd need to... spend a lot of time talking to children, looking at behaviour and emotional responses across the school. (SMT, School A)

It's difficult. Emotion ... how you feel ... to sort of judge that is hard. (SENCo, School D)

4.7 Theme Six – Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Non-School Based Settings

4.7.1 Links between SEAL Small Group Work and the Home Environment

Staff members in School C explained that they wanted to build on the positive impact of their implementing SEAL by involving parents and carers as far as possible in the programme:

We do an enormous amount as a school, fantastic pastoral care and restorative justice, etc. etc. But that's only ... going to have a certain impact ... we need to try and educate the parents at some point and family SEAL is something that we're ... thinking of ... the ethos behind it is fantastic and it would be great if parents could come on board because they have so much impact into the emotional well being of children ... (CT, School C)

The class teacher, who was also the school's PSHE coordinator, shared his ideas about what steps would be involved in instigating the Family SEAL programme:

...it's really getting families, or getting parents and carers in so that they're aware of sort of the themes of SEAL. So, for example, if it was Good to Be Me, the theme that the children were learning, they would come in and we would sort of do some sort of presentation and raise awareness on that. (CT, School C)

The other three participating schools commented that Family SEAL was very much in the emerging phases of being implemented:

I think a little bit more work could be done with the families, in the sense of around each topic and I'm working on that this term. (ESPCM, School B)

Staff discussed the difficulties with implementing Family SEAL, such as the struggle to meet with parents regularly in school:

... family SEAL is something that we're ... thinking of ... it's just a really difficult one to implement ... it would be great if parents could come on board ... But yeah, it's a tricky one to try and do ... it's just getting them in, getting them in regularly... (CT, School C)

Other obstacles for staff to overcome when engaging with families included translating the principles of the SEAL programme into user-friendly terms and allaying anxieties that parents and carers might have about their children being part of the small groups:

...I know when we had parents' week last year and I was advertising that we were going to have a family SEAL group ... I thought no-one is gonna understand what that means, so I wrote a little bit at the bottom, kind of explaining what family SEAL was cause otherwise I don't think parents would understand if the children went home and said they were being SEAL-ed ... and then whenever you say 'Oh it's the social and emotional aspects of learning', ok, well what does that mean then? ... It's a bit of a mouthful really isn't it? (SENCo, School A)

I think when you get sort of labelled, 'Oh this kid's in a SEAL group,' when you put a label on someone I think parents sometimes worry, 'Oh, there's something wrong with my child,' but... when you explain ... actually what it is, then they're much more open... (Fac, School C)

I think to market it to parents is difficult. I mean ... we have got really good communication with the parents and they do come in a lot but I think as soon as you start giving details about what they might be coming in for, I think there's sort of alarm bells that ring ... coming in to talk about feelings ... I think people are quite defensive ... So I'm pretty sure we could guarantee some parents, but they might arguably be the parents that are quite emotionally sort of articulate and aware anyway. (CT, School C)

4.7.2 Links between SEAL Small Group Work and Adult Life

Nearly half of the staff members interviewed talked about equipping pupils with life skills through SEAL small group work:

... a child could grow up in isolation ... and find difficulty socialising at a later date ... I think, social, socialising, being social, gaining friends, maintaining friends, friendships, is really, really hard. As an adult it's hard. And I think that ... if ... as an adult you find it difficult it's maybe because you didn't have the opportunities when you were younger to develop your social skills. But as a school we need to try to develop the social skills of our children and ... I think SEAL is a part of that ... (SENCO, School A)

... [SEAL small group work is] much bigger than that child not being confident to talk in class ... I see it as a life skill... (Fac, School C)

...child X did actually join in, but reluctantly ... and the whole reason was, is cause she didn't want to sit in a particular chair. Now, I've gotta get them to understand that you're not always going to get what you want in life. Sometimes you might have to sit somewhere different ... They're not gonna be able to jump on a bus and sit on their favourite seat all the time. You have to sit wherever you can get a seat. And it's the same whether it's going to be in the playground. They might not get what they want and they're gonna have to learn how to move on. So ... I'm trying to teach them the life skills... (Fac, School A)

It's a transferrable skill that they can bring from here, because they know how to say something nice to someone ... be respectful and have courtesy. And I think those are the three things that a child needs to take them around the world ... Okay, it's great to have a good education, but if you can actually communicate how you're feeling or... understand how someone ... is feeling ... there's no greater sense of achievement ... (Fac, School A)

I think [SEAL small group work] plays quite an important part in the curriculum in the school. It has some really good uses; it's enabling our children to equip themselves with tools that they can use for life. Not just for when you're at school, I think they can use them wherever the environment that they're in. (Fac, School D)

One class teacher spoke of the importance of prioritising social and emotional skills over academic performance in order to help prepare pupils for their careers after school:

For me ... it's more important to be emotionally literate than to be a mathematician ... if you're not ready to socially interact with anyone else, then it doesn't matter if you are brilliant ... because this is just the way society works. There's very few jobs where you sit alone and, you know, you work for 50 years ... and ... especially where these children live, it's important for your life to have skills like this. (CT2, School D)