**1 What problem were you looking to solve?**

During staff meetings, teachers observed that we could be doing more to support our children with emotional regulation. Staff had noticed a higher frequency of physical outbursts and were concerned for pupils' future welfare, as studies have shown that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills can have a significant impact on life chances (Goodman, 2015).

We were keen to be more proactive in our approach and equip our pupils with SEL strategies which would help them to de-escalate in stressful situations and support their development in the long-term.

We decided to focus our efforts around the recommendations 1 and 2 from the EEF’s ‘Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools’ guidance report, which encourages schools to “teach SEL skills explicitly” and “integrate and model SEL skills through everyday teaching”.

Our aim was to improve our children’s SEL skills, by focussing on the CASEL core competencies, which include self-awareness and self-regulation. We would achieve this by teaching them about zones of regulation, encouraging them to take ownership of their self-regulation skills and giving them the language to talk about their emotions.

**2 What were the anticipated barriers/challenges?**

We anticipated that members of staff might be reluctant to make significant changes to their practice; we needed to invest time to reassess as a team. To support this, we planned a schedule of CPD, including input from a Speech and Language Therapist, a twilight series throughout the year, and regular coaching conversations to help build a collective understanding of the new approach and the benefits it could yield for our pupils.

A questionnaire was circulated to gauge the level of training and support that staff would need to successfully implement these changes in their classrooms. The responses also informed who would form part of the Teaching Assistant Development Team who, once appointed, visited other schools to see how SEL self-regulation approaches had been implemented in similar contexts.

**3 What did you do?**

We introduced the use of ‘emotional dials’ to help children recognise which ‘zone’ they were in, and adults could encourage the children to use strategies to transition between the zones.

Training on how to scaffold emotional regulation was delivered to all staff, who also received mentoring throughout the year to ensure fidelity to the new approach. Low stakes, peer observations were conducted on a cycle – all focused on having a dialogue about practice. Sessions were recorded for personal feedback.

External professionals worked with children exhibiting physically challenging behaviour to support them with de-escalation.

**4 How are you monitoring the success of this intervention?**

During weekly meetings, staff share observations about how use of the emotion dials is supporting their pupils to regulate effectively. Comments are recorded in a centralised log which documents the success progress of individual children.

We are proactively seeking feedback from the wider school community – asking parents whether they think their children have made progress with their SEL skills. We keep a record of physical outbursts that occur in school time and monitor their frequency to determine the effectiveness of our intervention in helping children who struggle to self-regulate.

**Suggested reading:**

- CASEL SEL Framework
- Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools eef.li/primary-sel/

**Reflection questions:**

- How are SEL self-regulation strategies modelled in your school?
- How are you explicit about which SEL skills to teach at which phase?
- EEF SEL audit tool