

The Centre for Emotional Health



OXFORD SCHOOLS PROJECT
YEAR I REPORT

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# OXFORD SCHOOLS PROJECT YEAR I REPORT

A whole-school approach to social and emotional wellbeing is one which pervades all aspects school life, not just learning and teaching (NICE, 2008, 2009; Public Health England, 2015).

The Family Links whole-school approach develops emotional health and wellbeing across the whole school community of pupils, staff, senior leadership, governors, parents and carers. Family Links offers parallel programmes for staff, parents and children through providing practical, interactive workshops and resources for staff, as well as training to deliver parenting programmes. This encourages and supports enhanced relationships between school and home, providing the foundations for good emotional health and for learning. Our whole school approach addresses all of the recommendations in the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools guidance (EEF, 2019).

With the support of a charitable foundation we have been working intensively with three primary schools in Oxford since September 2018. Working closely with senior leadership teams we built on existing strengths and responded to areas for development in the three schools, supporting each of them to embed an emotionally healthy school and learning community. The scope of the current project is two years finishing in July 2020.

This report outlines the findings from Year I of the project, looking at staff and parent data returned from the three primary schools between September 2018 and July 2019. Evaluation in Year I has focused on the adult capabilities developed in staff, parents and carers. This report will begin by discussing the evaluation in relation to school staff, before looking at the evaluation of the parent groups. Table I provides an overview of the data collected from each school.

Table 1: Overview of data collection

	Staff			Parents		
School	Pre/post measures	Senior Leadership concerns	Staff   Gro		Pre/post measures	Parent Focus Group
School I	Yes	Yes	Y	es	Yes	Yes
School 2	Yes	Yes	Ye	es	Yes	No
School 3	Yes	No	N	0	No	No

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

#### Staff

- After a year of working in partnership with Family Links, 55% of staff showed an improvement in their mental wellbeing and 69% of staff showed an improvement in their social-emotional competence\*.
- Focus groups highlighted that the workshops successfully facilitated a space for staff to strengthen and acquire new skills, learning practical strategies that were seen to have a tangible impact on interactions with pupils.
- Positive changes were seen in relation to staff awareness around the importance of their own wellbeing and how this translates to their practice.
- Staff observed positive changes to pupils' emotional health, with children more able to reflect on and describe their emotions in challenging situations

#### **Parents**

- After attending a Family Links parent group, 81% of parents reported an improvement in their mental wellbeing\* and 75% showed an improvement in parenting confidence\*.
- 69% of parents reported an improvement in their engagement with the school\*.
- 75% of parents reported a decrease in the amount of anger and shouting at home and 63% of parents said the quality of their family relationships had improved.
- 100% of parents said they would recommend Family Links parent groups to other parents.
- The focus group highlighted the importance of the parent groups in providing a safe space for parents to share and connect with others.
- All parents said the group exceeded their expectations.
- The group facilitation skills of the class teachers were praised and seen to improve both the parents' and teachers' understanding of the children.

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<sup>\*</sup> Statistically significant result

#### SCHOOL STAFF EVALUATION

#### **METHOD**

# **Evaluation Design**

At the start of the school year, the senior leadership team identified three main concerns as a school that the Family Links partnership could support with over the coming year. The seriousness of each concern was then rated on a 10-point Likert scale, from 1 (not very serious) to 10 (serious concern). Progress was then reassessed at the end of the school year.

The impact of the Family Links staff workshops was assessed using a mixed methods design, using pre/post measures to assess changes in three key areas over the course of the year:

- 1.1 Staff mental wellbeing
- 1.2 Staff social-emotional competence
- 1.3 Staff perceptions of relationships and school culture

To further understand and explore staff experiences, focus groups were held with a mixture of teachers and teaching assistants in two of the three schools at the end of the school year. Discussions were guided by a schedule that included questions on staff experiences of the workshops, the perceived impact of the workshops on practice and at the wider school level.

End of year feedback was also collected as part of the questionnaire measures.

Table 2: Complete datasets returned by measure

School	WEMWBS <sup>1</sup>	SECTRS <sup>2</sup>	End of year feedback
School I	23	21	25
School 2	34	32	42
School 3	10	9	9
TOTAL	67	62	76

Measures

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm I}$  Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Social-Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale

Questionnaires were used to assess staff outcomes, a detailed description of each measurement tool can be found below.

Table 3: Staff outcomes assessed by pre/post questionnaires

Outcome	Questionnaire
I.I Staff mental wellbeing	WEMWBS (Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)
I.2 Staff social-emotional competence	SECTRS (Social-emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale)
1.3 Staff perceptions of relationships and school culture	Self-report questionnaire

- I.I Staff mental wellbeing was assessed using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007). Scores can range from 14 to 70, with higher scores indicating more positive mental wellbeing. Research suggests the British norm is 49.9 (Health Survey for England, 2016), although this varies slightly across demographic and social groups. A study of primary school teachers participating in a mindfulness intervention found that the average score for teachers was 44.5 before the interventions (Craft et al., 2015). The WEMWBS is designed to assess mental wellbeing and not to identify mental health problems; therefore, there are no clinical cut off points categorising "poor" mental health. An increase in score between pre and post group measures indicates staff mental wellbeing has improved. Guidance for using WEMWBS to measure impact by Putz et al. (2012) suggests an increase of between 3 and 8 points demonstrates a meaningful improvement in mental wellbeing.
- I.2 Staff social-emotional competence was assessed using an adapted version of the Social-emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale (SECTRS; Tom, 2012), where higher scores indicate higher levels of social-emotional competence. The maximum score is 192 and the minimum score is 32.

Self-report questionnaires were used to assess 1.3 Staff perceptions of relationships and school culture. Staff rated the quality of their relationships across the school on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good). Staff were also shown a list of positive and negative words and asked to select which ones they felt best represented the current school culture.

In addition to the measures above, staff were asked to complete **end of year feedback** relating to their experiences of the Family Links workshops. These covered staff perceptions of emotionally healthily classrooms and whether they would recommend the workshops to other schools.

# Data Analysis

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted for both the WEMWBS and SECTRS results to test whether the data were normally distributed, the results and corresponding statistical analysis used are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of Shapiro-Wilk tests and corresponding statistical analysis

Measure	Complete datasets	P value <sup>3</sup>	Normal distribution?	Statistical test
WEMWBS	67	p=.	Yes	Dependent samples t-test
SECTRS	62	p<.01	No	Paired Wilcoxon Signed Rank test

The WEMWBS data were normally distributed and therefore a parametric test (dependent samples t-test) was used to analyse the change in means between pre and post measures. The SECTRS data were not normally distributed and therefore a non-parametric test (paired Wilcoxon signed-rank) was used to analyse the difference in mean ranks between pre and post measures. Effect size (r) was also calculated, with values to be interpreted as follows: r=.10 small, r=.30 medium, r=.50 large. For all analyses, a 95% confidence interval was used to determine statistical significance.

Staff focus group discussions were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were read and re-read to identify repeated patterns of meaning that were relevant to the evaluation. Codes were used to capture distinct concepts and then these were used to identify themes and sub-themes. This iterative process was undertaken by the Research Lead at Family Links and a Teach First Intern.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Figures are rounded to 2 decimal places.

# **RESULTS**

# 1.1 Staff mental wellbeing

- 55% of staff showed an improvement in their mental wellbeing, however the increase in staff wellbeing scores between the start and end of the year did not reach statistical significance (t=-1.48, p>.05, n=67).
- Before the group, 39% of staff had a mental wellbeing score that was below the British norm, whereas after the group, only 31% had a score below the British norm.

Table 5: WEMWBS pre and post scores

Mean Pre Score <sup>4</sup>	Mean Post Score	Mean Score Change	% of staff showing a score increase
50.6	51.7	+1.1	55%

As noted previously, Putz et al. (2012) suggest a meaningful improvement in mental wellbeing can be demonstrated by a score increase of between 3 and 8 points. While none of the roles reached this threshold, senior leaders came close with a mean score change of +2.2 (Table 6).

Table 6: WEMWBS pre and post scores by staff role

Role	Pre Score	Post Score	Score Change
Senior Leader	52.4	54.7	+2.2
Middle Leader	52.4	49.6	-2.9
Teacher	47.4	49.4	+2.0
Teaching Assistant	53.4	54.4	+1.0
Unknown	49.8	50.8	+0.9

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> British norm = 49.9

# 1.2 Staff social-emotional competence

- There was a medium sized, statistically significant increase in staff SECTRS scores between the start and the end of the school year (z=4.26, p<.01, r=-0.37), showing that staff were reporting a significant improvement in their social-emotional competence.
- 69% of staff showed an improvement in their social-emotional competence score.
- Staff scores showed a mean increase across five of the seven SECTRS subscales (Figure I). The largest increases were in the *positive school culture* and *social awareness* subscales, with the largest decreases in the *teacher-student relationships* and the *self regulation* subscales.

Table 7: SECTRS pre and post scores

Mean Pre Score	Mean Post Score	Mean Score Change	% of staff showing a score increase
125.3	133.6	+8.3	69%

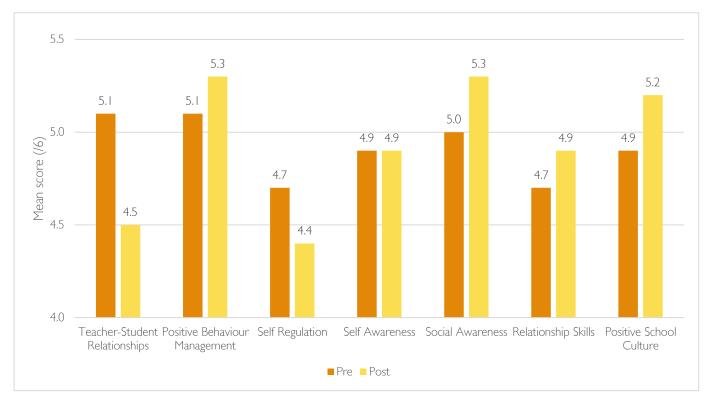


Figure 1: SECTRS subscale results

# 1.3 Staff perceptions of relationships and school culture

All three schools showed an improvement in their ratings of the perceived quality of relationships. The mean pre/post rating for each school can be seen in Figure 2 (where I = very poor, IO = very good) and a distribution of the responses for each school can be seen in Appendix I.

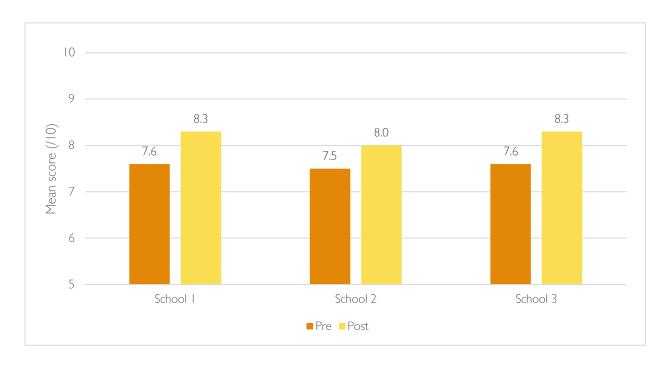


Figure 2: Staff pre and post relationship ratings

For all three schools, across both the pre and post results, the most frequently selected positive words used to describe the school's culture were *supportive*, *positive* relationships and safe. The most frequently selected negative word was *stressed*, while *cliquey* was the second most selected for Schools 1 and 2.

The words with the biggest increase and decrease in how often they were selected are shown in Tables 8 and 9 below. The tables also show the percentage of staff selecting each word across both the pre and post measures. The complete results can be found in Appendix II.

Table 8: Proportion of staff selecting positive descriptors

School	Positive descriptor	Change	Pre	Post
	Compassionate	+20%	52%	72%
School I	Purposeful	-14%	70%	56%
School 2	Community	+17%	40%	58%
	Compassionate	-13%	53%	40%
School 3	Purposeful	+21%	33%	55%
	Community	-21%	67%	45%

Table 9: Proportion of staff selecting negative descriptors

School	Negative descriptor	Change	Pre	Post
6.1	Unavailable & Unappreciative	+4%	0%	4%
School I	Disengaged & Unfair	-4%	4%	0%
School 2	Stressed	+  %	32%	43%
	Cliquey	-5%	13%	8%
School 3	Discontented	+9%	0%	9%
	Stressed	-12%	67%	55%

# End of year feedback

School I	<ul> <li>"Everyone is happy and keen to support each other and show respect and understanding. I never feel judged, but valued and appreciated. Love them all!"</li> <li>"The staff have positive relationships with each other. The majority of staff are proud to be part of the school community."</li> <li>"Inclusive and welcoming workplace where people genuinely look out for each other and give time and attention to other issues with compassion and sensitivity."</li> <li>"I feel valued and supported. It's like having a close knit family."</li> <li>"Some teachers have a lot to deal with which is stressful and lacking in resources. The school as a whole is supportive."</li> <li>"Some staff members are cliquey and it makes the environment uncomfortable. Others can be rude and disrespectful to their team members, causing tension."</li> </ul>
School 2	<ul> <li>"It's a stressful time of year but staff are supportive"</li> <li>"Generally very positive. Stressed is more just amongst some of the staff as there is a lot going on both in terms of behaviour management and things which need doing"</li> <li>"The boundaries and expectations are reinforced fairly and kindly, children are celebrated for their successes (however small) and the most vulnerable children are given a tremendous amount of care and support. Our team is very supportive of one another"</li> <li>"People are very motivated and all working with purpose. However lots of tasks happening at the same time, I have noticed staff being more stressed"</li> <li>"The school has an excellent emotional intelligence but necessarily everyone is stretched thin"</li> <li>"It's report writing and assessments so teachers have a lot on. On top of many in school events e.g. sports days etc. Generally it is supportive, open and positive."</li> </ul>
School 3	<ul><li>"I enjoyed the sessions immensely."</li><li>"School have been amazing this year Staff have been so supportive."</li></ul>

When asked what an emotionally healthy classroom looks like, staff responses centred around 4 central themes;

- 1. Communication (including talking, listening and expressing emotions in a healthy way)
- 2. Calm (environment, interactions and student and staff feelings)
- 3. Happy (environment and students)
- 4. Safety and security (in the environment, interactions and student feelings)

94% of staff who responded said they would recommend Family Links training to other schools. Comments included:

Comments included:	
School I	<ul> <li>"A great training to reinforce positive practice and support each other."</li> <li>"It makes you become more self reflective and aware of what you currently do / need to do in order to create an emotionally healthy classroom environment."</li> <li>"The training promotes healthy discussion. It encourages self awareness and reflection. It gives simple but effective methods for the tool box. The manuals are user friendly, comprehensive and give realistic examples."</li> <li>"Beneficial for overall emotional literacy, positive behaviour management and one's own emotional health."</li> <li>"It gave an insight as to why children express themselves the way they do and how their home lives and how we as staff react can have a big impact."</li> <li>"I've loved these sessions!! Thank you!"</li> <li>"Thank you for supporting us in making our school an emotionally healthy place and for reminding us to look after ourselves and others."</li> </ul>
School 2	<ul> <li>"Family Links gives a clear and secure framework to support good emotional health school wide"</li> <li>"The trainer fostered a real sense of our shared values it was really helpful to have a gentle reminder of what underpins our work with children"</li> <li>"It has made me reflect on my own practice a lot. Thinking about the reasons behind behaviour before the actions and pre-empting it so that behaviours aren't shown at times"</li> <li>"Keeps what is important in sharp focus"</li> <li>"It makes you reflect on your practice, how you feel and how others feel. Reminds you to look deeper."</li> <li>"It helps you gain perspective in times of conflict and how to ensure your (the teacher/adult's) wellbeing is kept"</li> <li>"It's very helpful to understand emotions, how important they are, how they can effect on behaviour. It also can help to understand our own emotions and how that effect children in school"</li> <li>"Lots of great ideas for circle time and encouraging positive attitudes"</li> </ul>
School 3	<ul> <li>"Really helpful."</li> <li>"Helped gain confidence with parents."</li> </ul>

No staff responded to say they wouldn't recommend the training but three staff answered unsure, noting the reasons as:

- "I missed the first part... but the parts I've attended have been helpful. I've heard staff talking positively about activities in the training."
- "For myself I feel that some of the training was stuff that I was already aware of, although it was good to have discussions with colleagues."

# Staff Focus Groups

#### School I

Analysis of the focus group discussion resulted in three themes, each with a number of subthemes (Table 9). The first theme related to staff experience of the workshops, while the others concerned the impact of the workshops on staff practice and wellbeing, and the quality of interactions across the school community. Staff quotes have been included to illustrate the themes.

Table 10: School 1 focus group themes

Themes	Sub-themes		
Experiences	A supportive, engaging space	Information	
Staff practice and wellbeing	Reflective practice	Nurturing oneself	
Dalatianalaina	Wider-school cu	ture and support	
Relationships	Staff-pupil relationships	Staff-parent relationships	

# I. Experiences

The workshops were experienced as a supportive space, providing staff with useful strategies and ideas. Staff liked the format and found revisiting core concepts during each workshop helpful for both recall and broader refocusing of practice.

"I think what really helps is we have to hold so much information. If you think every staff meeting is new input. So just having even those magnets helped, just having these simple things that you can refer back to, some top tips in your brain. I know it's hard to summarise and to make everything sort of little sound bites and succinct, but it is helpful I think because we are so overloaded."

"And those four constructs, it was good to keep going back to them and back to them, because even though we know them but they all subside [...] in the throes of a term when everything's being thrown at you. So just to revisit them I found personally really helpful."

The Teaching Puzzle was also viewed as a useful resource, although a number of staff mentioned not having enough time to read and utilise the content. When asked about areas for development, staff wanted further training on parental engagement with the option to further reflect on this topic mid-way through the year (i.e. January inset).

# 2. Staff practice and wellbeing

The workshops were seen to provide a space to pause, refocus and reflect on both practice and individual needs, with several staff mentioning that the sessions helped to strengthen and reaffirm their existing principles and working practices.

"I think it's helped me being more reflective. I think last year I was with a really challenging class and it was like let's just get through the year, and there wasn't much time to look back on what I was doing. Whereas this year having these sessions and second year of teaching, really thinking what kind of classroom do I want to have? Am I achieving that? How can I do that?"

"I think also it was quite enabling or empowering in terms of weaknesses of how you approach a weakness. Rather than seeing it as that big, 'Urgh, I can't do it', more it's just something to work on, isn't it, as you go through the year."

"Sometimes you go on a course and you come away thinking, 'Oh my God, I'm not doing any of those things'. But actually coming away you do think, 'Well this is good and this is good, and this is what I can refine a bit more'."

In taking part in the workshops, a number of staff also reflected on the importance of prioritising their wellbeing and observed how this interacts with their practice.

"But I think the children actually appreciate it more if you've had a good night's sleep than if you finished your to-do list. They're a lot more patient, more happy"

"I think sometimes we need to remember as well that what's good about having these pauses and having this kind of focus is that working harder and working more isn't always the answer. It's that classic of working smarter."

"I think its awareness of children's emotional needs and also your input into it as well, because sometimes you don't do that. You have a full day on here, you go home, you're a wife, you're a mother, you're ironing your husband's clothes, and it is ten o'clock and you're hoovering the floor."

Recognising and being realistic about what can be achieved in the school environment was clearly an important theme to staff. This encompassed recognition of personal power and responsibility, and staff contextualising their relationships with pupils.

"...you don't know what they were experiencing at home this morning, and so if they are rebelling against you they're not necessarily rebelling against you, they're rebelling against or they're acting in response to something that's been happening before. So we're not always going to feel like we've done well that day, that doesn't mean we've done something wrong. It might be that actually we are not in control of those elements that are upsetting that child."

"We have them for six hours a day and it's a lot, but actually there's another threequarters of the day where they're not with us."

### 3. Relationships

Staff enjoyed the workshops as a space to reinforce and facilitate support between colleagues, finding value in sharing vulnerabilities and challenges in a safe space. A number of staff also acknowledged how the workshops reinforced the already strong sense of support felt within the school.

"I think when we were listening to everyone you kind of realise that everyone is sometimes vulnerable as staff, sometimes they're going through the same struggle. ... sharing all of that as a whole group helped me."

"I think for this school it worked quite well because it is almost a 'we're all in this together' type school anyway, but [the workshops] reinforced that and bolstered that feeling. Especially when you can see it days and maybe weeks after, immediately after the session."

"Yeah, I think that's important actually about staff relationships, because you do go into some schools, and I've been in some schools where it's like, 'This person is amazing, they can do no wrong'. ... I think it's so important that we all know that we're normal human beings."

"Because I think we are quite good at — and the course has reinforced this — if someone comes in and says this was a really difficult lesson ... we genuinely do say, "Oh my goodness it can't be helped". ... There genuinely doesn't feel like there's a judgement made on that, which is so great."

Taking part in the workshops was seen to increase staff confidence in their interactions with pupils.

- "...it's given us the skills to maybe interact with children or connect more with children that you maybe wouldn't have done. ... I certainly feel that after this I was able to connect more so with children that potentially I didn't feel that comfortable."
- "...it comes back to the affirmation of the fact what we're doing is correct, and it's something we should develop more, which I think gives you a certain amount of confidence when you then to go interact with a child'

Some staff also commented on the impact of the parent groups on their interactions with parents.

"I've certainly seen a change in the way that some of the parents in my class that have been going to that group, that their interactions with their children have changed, which means the difficulties that I was maybe having have either lessened or improved. Definitely. So I think that's a very positive thing that's come about this."

#### School 2

Analysis of the focus group discussion resulted in 2 themes, each with a number of sub-themes (Table 9). The first related to staff experiences of the workshops, while the other concerned use of a shared approach and how this has wide-reaching benefits individually and collectively. Staff quotes have been included to illustrate the themes.

Table 11: School 2 focus group themes

Themes	Sub-themes		
Experiences	Time to refocus and refresh	Modelling	
Experiences	Staff-pupil interactions		
A Shared Approach	Empowerment and inclusivity	Shared language	
A Shared Approach	Consistency Pupil emotional health		

# I. Experiences

The workshops were seen as an opportunity to refresh skills while also providing staff with useful techniques and ideas. Staff found revisiting core concepts during each workshop helpful for both their confidence and reinforcement of their current practice.

- "...just in general having that, that bank of sort of, again it's that language, it's that toolkit that... you're not going into a situation completely blind and it gives you those really practical things that you can put into use every time"
- "...because you're keeping it simple and you're using it all of the time actually, yeah, it does make you feel like, I'm okay, I can do this, we all can do it."
- "It's almost, not necessarily brand new things that you're learning, it's just refreshing and reminding you how good it is."
- "I think it's really good for people who are new but it's also good for people just to remind them to get back in, like if you haven't used personal power for a long time... whereas obviously choices and consequences is more regular; but it's more of a refresh I think."

There was also an appreciation of the modelling demonstrated by the facilitators, with staff as recipients of the techniques recognising their utility and potential within the classroom.

"You feel why it works because you're like, oh okay, yeah. Like I'm doing this and I feel better. I completely get why it then works with the kids, you know."

"I liked having, like choosing the attention grabbers, and you have the little work breaks and the games and ... Yeah, it reminds you what it's like to be a child doesn't it"

The strategies and knowledge acquired during the workshops was cited as having a tangible effect on staff interactions with pupils.

"So in my circle time I did have one child like laying in, like that, just looking at the ceiling but I ignored him for a good fifteen minutes and the talking object went past him twice and they just passed it over him and the third time he sat up and joined in because he was so bored. And I was like, oh my goodness, like that was so good."

"...one of the ones I found most useful was that sort of reminder of that, that actually behaviour is just an expression of the need and encouraging us to think about that deeper need and why are they doing that behaviour? I thought that's really powerful and ...really changes how you deal with the behaviour. So ...that sort of changed how I talked to the students,"

When asked about areas for development, staff wanted to see more circle time in practice and to be able to access summaries of the sessions via the online portal to assist recall later in the year.

# 2. A Shared Approach

A number of staff reflected on how having a shared approach had empowered and enabled individuals in their working practice, while also promoting inclusivity for staff of any rank or role.

"I remember when I started..., before I sort of learnt this language and stuff there was a couple of incidents where I had with the kids where they were just like, yeah, whatever, you're just a TA. But now, you know, I've been using choices and consequences for a long time and it... helps set up those boundaries and they know that actually it doesn't matter that I'm not the class teacher"

"And I think it gives TAs like somewhere to go doesn't it? Because I know being new you don't always know what to say if they're not following instructions and they might not always... do the thing that you've asked them to do, but then it means that I can go in and say, well actually, [the TA] has just asked you to... it, yeah, helps with that consistency doesn't it"

"...that consistency is really good and it means that a lot more people can deal with those sorts of behaviours and can hopefully sort those situations out rather than just always passing it up the chain."

"From the office point of view, I was talking to some people last week when we did the last one, and that was circle time and feelings and stuff wasn't it? And they were saying it's interesting for them because they are not in the classroom generally ...it's good for them to hear that language as well and also sort of have a bigger insight into what that's really like."

The workshops helped embed and consolidate a shared language which improved relationships between staff and subsequently filtered through to parents.

"...in terms of relationships between colleagues it means that you can, when one person is dealing with a situation and a new adult comes in, you are ...already speaking that same language. So it means that you can work more effectively as a team because ...the other adult comes in and just backs you up with that same language, and that makes it a lot easier to deal with situations ...and that's really powerful I think."

"And a few parents do sort of, not because they know what it is but do sort of start to use the language that we mirror at the end of the day and at the beginning of the day a bit, a little bit more than a few years ago I'd say."

"...some of the things we hear back from the parents is the fact that obviously the children obviously go home and they talk about the language. Because the people who have been on our course, when they start using the language, they've seen that's joining up a little bit and that one might have said, you sound like the teachers, Mum, or something like that."

An important theme was the consistency of how the approach and language was applied across the school, with staff feeling that this was reassuring for both themselves and the pupils.

"I think that's really positive in that the children are getting a consistent message right from when they are four to when they are eleven and it's also being backed up by those parents who came along to a parenting course. And it feels safer for them because they know that the reactions are hopefully the same"

"I think it certainly gives you sort of that back up doesn't it because then you know that you're saying the right thing. Because actually it's everybody saying the same messages."

"I think there seems a lot more consistency in using the language and the rewards. ... I think the children are using the language more."

"I think we've always used the language but I think it's always good to be reminded of the importance of it. Because wherever you go you always hear like choices and consequences are everything, personal power, through the school."

Since taking part in the workshops, staff also recognised that pupils were increasingly able to reflect and describe their emotions and take ownership of decisions.

"So [the children] will talk, I was feeling a bit like this. I was feeling cold and prickly; or I was feeling...so I think, particularly the older ones are a little more able to name how they're feeling and actually put that label to it and begin to talk a bit... they're a bit more reflective and are able to come back and say, well, I was actually really angry about this; and talk a little bit more about it rather than close down and carry it on."

"And it also makes [the children] think about their own choices at that point because you are passing everything back to them; what they've just done or, you know, what they are doing. So actually it gives them the chance to think about their emotions and how they're going to deal with it"

# Senior Leadership Concerns

**School I:** All three of the concerns identified by senior leadership were rated as less serious at the end of the school year.

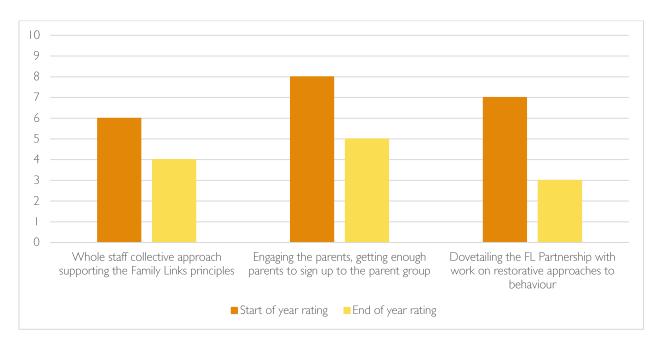


Figure 3: School I senior leadership concerns

School 2: Two of the three main concerns identified were rated as a less serious concern at the end of the school year. For the concern with no score change, the leadership team noted that while staff felt much more equipped to support staff wellbeing and resilience since receiving the Family Links workshops, it still remained an ongoing priority for the school.

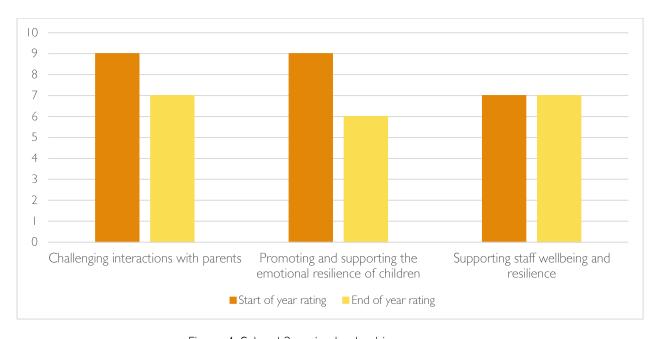


Figure 4: School 2 senior leadership concerns

**School 3:** The three main concerns identified by senior leadership at the beginning of the school year can be seen in Figure 1 below. Unfortunately, progress against these concerns was not able to be reassessed at the end of the school year.

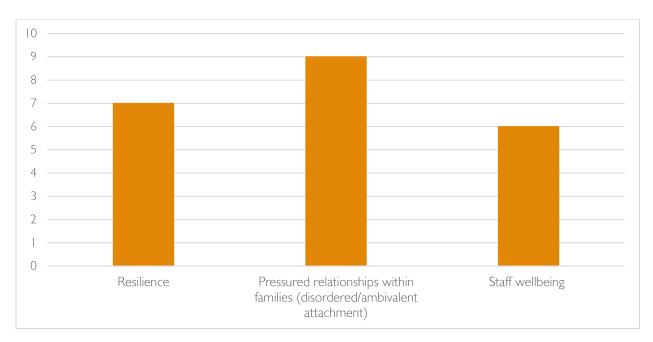


Figure 5: School 3 senior leadership concerns

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The results show an improvement in all three staff outcomes, demonstrating improvements in staff mental wellbeing (1.1), social-emotional competence (1.2) and perceptions of relationships and school culture (1.3).

Of the outcomes analysed using statistical analysis (1.1, 1.2) the improvements seen in staff responses to the SECTRS reached statistical significance. This shows staff were reporting a significant improvement in their social-emotional competence by the end of the school year. Staff showed an average improvement across five of the seven subscales, with the largest improvements seen in the *positive school culture* and *social awareness* subscales. The two subscales which showed a decrease in scores were the *teacher-student relationships* and *self regulation* subscales. The disaggregated subscale results for each school support this trend. Reasons for a decline may include late end of year data collection effects (i.e. higher stress levels towards the end of the year resulting in decreased self regulation, in turn affecting the quality of teacher-student relationships) or it may be an unintended consequence of the workshops and the resulting positive change in whole-school culture (i.e. with improvements in social awareness and relationship skills comes a more accurate post measure assessment of the quality of teacher-student relationships and staff self-assessment of their ability to self regulate).

While the improvements for outcome I.I did not reach the threshold for statistical significance, there are a number of potential reasons for this. For example, the majority of staff wellbeing scores were above the British norm at baseline, meaning that statistically significant improvements in this outcome would have been harder to achieve. Additionally, any improvements made over the course of the year may have been masked by the effect of late data collection for the end of year measures. The WEMWBS questionnaire asks staff to answer based on their experiences over the past two weeks, therefore if staff were feeling more stressed in the last weeks of term the results may have been lower than expected. A number of staff mentioned increased levels of stress in the end of year comments which would endorse this assumption.

The focus groups highlighted that the workshops successfully facilitated a space for staff to strengthen and acquire new skills, learning practical strategies that were seen to have a tangible impact on interactions with pupils. Positive changes were seen in relation to staff awareness around the importance of their own wellbeing and how this translated into their practice. Furthermore, staff said they felt empowered and enabled by the approach, finding reassurance and validation in the use of a language shared by all. The workshops were seen to enhance feelings of support amongst colleagues and contributed to improved confidence in interactions with pupils. Finally, positive changes were also seen in pupils' emotional health, with children more able to reflect on and describe their emotions in challenging situations.

For the two schools where senior leadership concerns were reassessed at the end of the year, the Family Links workshops were seen to successfully support progress against these concerns. However, there was recognition that work on these areas would need to continue into Year 2 with continued investment from senior leadership and support from Family Links.

# PARENT GROUP EVALUATION

### **METHOD**

# **Evaluation Design**

The impact of the Family Links 10-week Nurturing Programme parent groups was evaluated using a mixed methods design, using pre/post measures to assess changes in four key outcomes:

- 2.1 Parental mental wellbeing
- 2.2 Parental self-efficacy
- 2.3 Parental engagement
- 2.4 Parental perception of family relationships and family temperature

To further understand and explore parents' experiences a focus group was held with a mixture of parents from the groups run by School I. Discussions were guided by a schedule that included questions about their experiences of the group and its perceived impact on family relationships and family life. End of year feedback was collected as part of the questionnaire measures.

Table 12: Complete datasets returned by measure

School	Group	WEMWBS	BPSES <sup>5</sup>	PEQ <sup>6</sup>	EOPF <sup>7</sup>
School I	Parent Group I	5	5	5	5
SCHOOLI	Parent Group 2	2	2	2	4
School 2	Parent Group I	6	6	5	6
	Parent Group 2	3	3	3	3
School 3	Parent Group 1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		16	16	15	18

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Brief Parental Self Efficacy Scale

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Parental Engagement Questionnaire

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> End of Programme Feedback

#### Measures

Questionnaires were used to assess parent outcomes (Table 13), a detailed description of each measurement tool can be found below.

Table 13: Parent outcomes assessed by pre/post questionnaires

Outcome	Questionnaire
2.1 Parental mental wellbeing	WEMWBS (Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)
2.2 Parental self-efficacy	BPSES (Brief Parental Self Efficacy Scale)
2.3 Parental engagement	PEQ (Parental Engagement Questionnaire)
2.4 Parental perception of family relationships and family temperature	Self-report questionnaire

- 2.1 Parental mental wellbeing was assessed using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007). Scores can range from 14 to 70, with higher scores indicating more positive mental wellbeing. Research suggests the British norm is 49.9 (Health Survey for England, 2016), although this varies slightly across demographic and social groups. The WEMWBS is designed to assess mental wellbeing and not to identify mental health problems; therefore, there are no clinical cut off points categorising "poor" mental health. An increase in score between pre and post group measures indicates the parent's mental wellbeing has improved. Guidance about using WEMWBS to measure impact by Putz et al. (2012) suggests that an increase of between 3 and 8 points demonstrates a meaningful improvement in mental wellbeing.
- 2.2 Parenting self-efficacy was assessed using the Brief Parental Self Efficacy Scale (BPSES; Woolgar et al., 2013), a five item scale that assesses parents' beliefs that they can effectively perform or manage tasks related to parenting. The scale is recommended by the Child Outcomes Research Consortium for use in the evaluation of parent training. Self-efficacy, derived from Bandura's social learning theory, is belief in one's ability, and is considered to be an important determinant of behaviour change (Bandura, 1977). Improved parental self-efficacy is one of the expected outcomes articulated in the Nurturing Programme Theory of Change and is based around the idea that parents act as the mediators for change in improving both child and family outcomes.
- **2.3 Parental engagement** was assessed using a 20 item questionnaire developed by Family Links (PEQ). This consists of statements relating to parents' perception of and involvement with various

aspects of school life, with parents rating each statement in relation to their current experience on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Self-report questionnaires were used to assess outcome 2.4 Parental perception of family relationships and family temperature. Parents were asked to rate the quality of their family relationships on a Likert scale ranging from I (very unsatisfied) to IO (very satisfied). Parents were also asked to rate the emotional temperature within their family across 3 domains; cold (critical, distant), warm (kind, nurturing) and hot (angry, shouting) each on a Likert scale ranging from I (not at all) to IO (very often).

In addition to the pre/post measures outlined above, parents also completed an **end of programme feedback** questionnaires. This consists of five statements relating to the programme content with parents indicating how much they agree with each statement by selecting a response on a 5-point Likert scale, from I (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Parents were also asked whether they would recommend the Family Links parent group to other parents.

### Data Analysis

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted for the WEMWBS, BPSES and PEQ to test whether the data were normally distributed, the results and corresponding statistical analysis used are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Results of Shapiro-Wilk test and corresponding statistical analysis

Measure	Complete datasets	P value <sup>8</sup>	Normal distribution?	Statistical test
WEMWBS	16	p=.21	Yes	Dependent samples t-test
BPSES	16	p<.01	No	Paired Wilcoxon Signed Rank test
PEQ	15	p=.28	Yes	Dependent samples t-test

The WEMWBS and PEQ data were normally distributed and therefore a parametric test (dependent samples t-test) was used to analyse the change in means between pre and post measures. Effect size (Cohen's d) was also calculated and reported as this quantifies the magnitude of changes between the pre and post measures. Values of Cohen's d are to be interpreted as follows: d=.20 small, d=.50 medium, d=.80 large.

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 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 8}$  Figures are rounded to 2 decimal places.

The BPSES data were not normally distributed and therefore a non-parametric test (paired Wilcoxon signed-rank) was used to analyse the difference in mean ranks between pre and post measures. Effect size (r) was also calculated, with values to be interpreted as follows: r=.10 small, r=.30 medium, r=.50 large. For all analyses, a 95% confidence interval was used to determine statistical significance.

The parent focus group discussion was audio recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were read and re-read to identify repeated patterns of meaning that were relevant to the evaluation. Codes were used to capture distinct concepts and then these were used to identify themes and sub-themes. This iterative process was undertaken by the Research Lead at Family Links and a Teach First Intern.

#### **RESULTS**

# 2.1 Parental mental wellbeing

- There was a statistically significant increase in parents' wellbeing scores between the start and end of the group, and the magnitude of the change was a medium to large effect (t=-2.55, p<.05, d=-0.64), showing that parents were reporting a significant improvement in their mental wellbeing.
- 81% of parents who completed the programme showed an improvement in their mental wellbeing.
- Before the group 50% of parents had a score below the British norm, whereas after the group, only 38% of parents had a score below the British norm.

Table 15: WEMWBS pre and post scores

Mean Pre Score <sup>9</sup>	Mean Post Score	Mean Score Change	% of parents showing a score increase
44.2	50.4	+6.2	81%

# 2.2 Parental self-efficacy

- There was a large and statistically significant increase in parents' self-efficacy scores between the start and end of the group, (z=2.71, p<.01, r=-0.48), showing that parents were reporting a significant improvement in their parenting confidence.
- 75% of parents who completed the programme showed an improvement in their parenting confidence.

Table 16: BPSES pre and post scores

Mean Pre Score	Mean Post Score	Mean Score Change	% of parents showing a score increase
18.1	21.3	+3.2	75%

-

<sup>9</sup> British norm = 49.9

### 2.3 Parental engagement

- There was a medium sized, statistically significant increase in parental engagement scores between the start and end of the group (t=-2.24, p<.05, d=-0.58), showing that parents were reporting a significant improvement in their engagement with the school.
- 69% of parents who completed the programme reported an improvement in their engagement with the school.

Table 17: PEQ pre and post scores

Mean Pre Score	Mean Post Score	Mean Score Change	% of parents showing a score increase
79.8	83.4	+3.8	69%

## 2.4 Parental perception of family relationships and temperature

63% of parents showed an improvement in their perception of the quality of their family relationships. Before attending the group, 31% of parents rated the quality of their family relationships as either an 8, 9 or 10 out of 10 (where I = very unsatisfied and I0 = very satisfied), after the group this increased to 56%. The distribution of responses can be seen in in Figure 6 below.

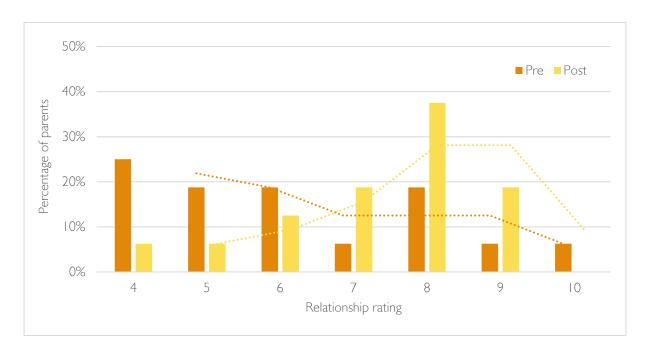


Figure 6: Proportion of parents by pre and post relationship rating

Parents showed an average score decrease across the cold and hot family climate scales, with 56% of parents reporting a decrease in a critical and distant family atmosphere and 75% of parents reporting a decrease in the amount of anger and shouting at home. The average warm family climate score increased, with 44% of parents reporting a more kind and nurturing environment at home.

Table 18: Pre and post family relationship and temperature scores

	Mean Pre Score	Mean Post Score	Mean Score Change	% Change	% of parents showing an improvement
Family Relationships	6.2	7.3	1.1	+18%	63%
Cold Family Climate	4.4	3.4	-1.1	-26%	56%
Warm Family Climate	7.5	7.9	0.4	+6%	44%
Hot Family Climate	5.6	4.4	-1.2	-21%	75%

# End of programme feedback

The proportion of parents rating each statement as either a 4 or 5 out of 5 (where 5 = strongly agree) is shown in Figure 7 below.

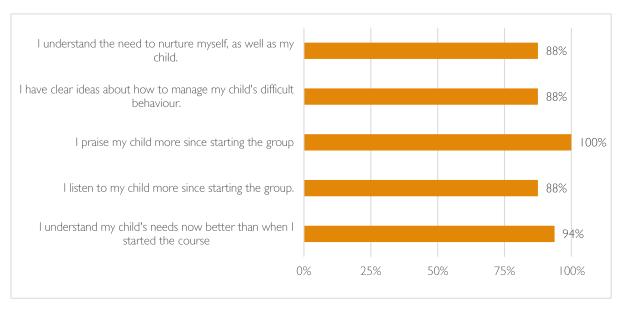


Figure 7: Proportion of parents rating each statement as either a 4 or 5 out of 5

Below are some quotes from parents taken from the end of programme feedback questionnaires:

- "Supportive group members and knowledgeable group leaders."
- "Thank you it's been so positive. Brilliant guidance and relationship and atmosphere setting by [the facilitators]."
- "I really enjoyed the course and think it is a brilliant programme. The implementation of it is down to the actual course leaders [who] were excellent."
- "Everyone should do it! You'll take away many things to use."
- "Thank you for the opportunity and a special thank you to our amazing teachers [who led the parent group], without them I wouldn't know where I'd be!"

100% of parents said they would recommend Family Links parent groups to other parents. Comments included:

- "Very informative and full of useful tools I can use at home."
- "Absolutely. So valuable. Has helped me shift in a mental attitude towards my family life and how we can all be happier."
- "I think this would benefit all parents. I am so thankful to have been a part of this programme, it's helped me so much. I was feeling like giving up before the group, now I have a lot of hope and confidence."
- "I've done parent courses before this has been my fave. I like that the children learn the same in school."

# Parent Focus Group

Analysis of the focus group discussion resulted in 2 themes, each with a number of sub-themes (Table 19). The first related to parents' experiences of the groups, while the other concerned the impact of the groups on family relationships. Parent quotes have been included to illustrate the themes.

Table 19: Parent focus group themes

Themes	Sub-themes		
Experiences	Sharing and connecting	Information	
Experiences	A safe, supportive space		
Relationships	Enacting and sustaining change	Nurturing oneself	

## 1. Experiences

Parents found the groups to be open, friendly and non-patronising. Interactions with other parents were said to be positive, with the groups providing an opportunity for support as well as an opportunity to socialise and meet others.

"I really enjoyed coming to the group every week, and especially the family feedback was sort of almost getting rid of the burden you've carried around through the week."

"Because it became a very nice sort of social thing to do as well and it just... I think we all looked forward to it every week didn't we?"

Sharing experiences seemed to be particularly important, allowing space for parents to be vulnerable and recognise that they were not alone in their experiences.

"Well, one of the most helpful things for me was just knowing that you're not alone, that lots of people have struggled with... Not really struggled, but could do with a bit of extra help or a bit of, you know, extra ideas about how to manage children and manage the family and all of those things really."

"In fact I think we all felt quite comfortable, because sometimes, a couple of times people became a bit emotional about something and we felt quite comfortable around each other to do that, which was good."

"...it's a very welcome evening and if you talk to the other parents too we almost felt, oh, time to relax, which is weird, but it felt like we could go in and, although there's an attentiveness you need, there is kind of a warm sharing that made it a good space."

The facilitators were acknowledged as playing an essential role in creating a safe, supportive environment and enabling parents' positive experiences. Their role as class teachers was viewed as a positive attribute that contributed towards a shared sense of working in partnership.

"Even though in our group [the facilitators] were like the class teachers of our children ... that helped rather than being in the way. ... I think if anything it helped [them] as well to sort of see our children maybe a bit differently in class. It felt like working together rather than having sort of two separate things."

Parents found the information provided during the sessions useful and the simplicity of the strategies helpful when putting them into practice during everyday life. However there were parents who felt unable at times to practise activities in between sessions.

"I think what worked best were really simple things like the kindness chart or generally praising more, pausing, empathy card, those sorts of things I think. Just because my life's so busy I think that simple, easy things that worked well."

While parents acknowledged that it was not practical to have longer sessions, many said they would have liked more time each week. Several also expressed a desire for a follow-up session or regular catch-ups after the group had finished. Some parents also talked about the challenges of having children approaching adolescence and the desire to have more strategies relating to this age group.

### 2. Relationships

Several parents felt that attending the group had improved their relationship with their children and empowered them to more effectively deal with difficult issues at home. A number of parents also felt it had facilitated a positive change for them personally, improving their confidence and awareness of their family's needs.

"It definitely had an overall positive impact in the way I kind of dealt with difficult issues in my family. I think I became a bit more sort of relaxed hopefully and a bit more able to cope with difficult challenges."

"Well one thing actually ... that has had a bit of an impact and also something I want to do more, time to play. And we took those games home a couple of times and made a little bit more effort to actually play games with the kids, and that seems a really good bonding time. ... I think that's helped our relationship a little bit"

"...there's an awareness that has been raised between myself and my partner of a direction that we might go, and we've started trying to travel along that, but I think it's a bit of a dripping of a tap effect"

There was recognition that lasting changes to relationships may take time to manifest and become stable, but that attending the group had contributed positively towards family life. Keeping the momentum going after the groups had finished was raised as a concern by a number of parents.

"I also felt like it was easier while the course was going on, because it's kind of like every week it reinforces and it was really useful for that time and now that the course has finished it kind of reverts back, not 100% maybe but it does revert back a little bit to how it was."

"I think it's been really changeable and sometimes [its] worked and our relationship is changing and then we're always all back to how it was before and I get maybe even more frustrated with it."

"...it's only just a couple of weeks, but I mean I think we're just communicating better. Most days it's getting better, but there are always throwbacks."

Parents also appreciated the importance of nurturing oneself and how this in turn can impact family relationships and experiences.

"I mean it's definitely helped me as well with the sort of nurturing and things that I feel I can be a better mum if I look after myself as well, which I mean you sort of know but if you actually have to tell the group every week how you looked after yourself"

A few parents stated they would like their partner to attend to ensure a consistent approach within the family or that they would like to attend the programme again to consolidate their learning.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The results show an improvement in all four parental outcomes, with all of the outcomes analysed using statistical analysis (2.1 parental wellbeing; 2.2 parental self-efficacy; 2.3 parental engagement) showing statistically significant improvements.

Notably, the mean pre WEMWBS scores for parents were significantly below the British norm (44.2) whereas after the group, the mean score was above the British norm (50.4). Three quarters of parents who completed the programme reported significant improvements in their parenting confidence and over two thirds reported an improvement in their engagement with the school. Additionally, 75% of parents reported a decrease in the amount of anger and shouting at home after attending the group.

Feedback from parents at the end of the programme suggest that they found the strategies taught during the programme helpful and qualitative feedback suggests parents thoroughly enjoyed the course, particularly the supportive atmosphere and the facilitation skills of the Parent Group Leaders.

The focus group highlighted the importance of the groups in providing a safe space for parents to share and connect with others. Parents felt they were not alone in their experiences and felt comfortable enough to be vulnerable and engage with the content in a meaningful way. Positive changes were seen in both the confidence and awareness of the parents, although keeping the momentum of the programme going after the end of the group was a concern. All of the parents said that the groups exceeded their expectations and the positive regard for the facilitators was evident throughout.

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# APPENDIX I

The trend towards higher post scores can be seen in the dotted lines for each set of data:

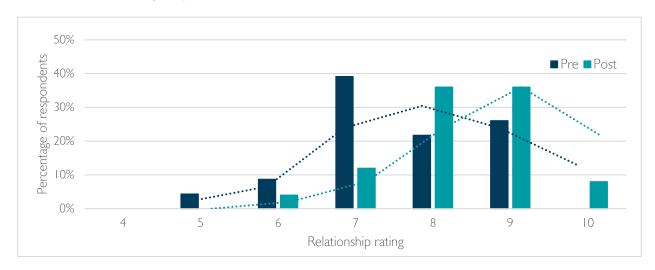


Figure 8: School | pre/post score distributions for staff perceptions of relationships

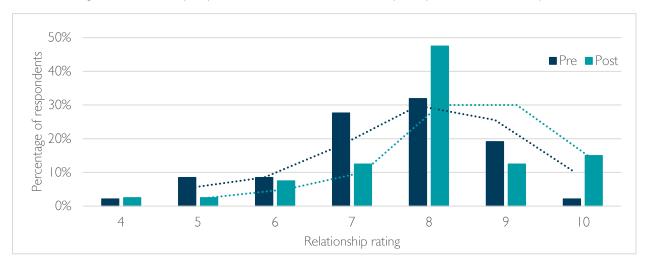


Figure 9: School 2 pre/post score distributions for staff perceptions of relationships

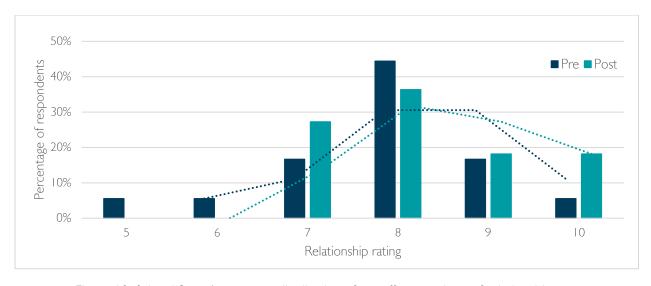


Figure 10: School 3 pre/post score distributions for staff perceptions of relationships

# APPENDIX II

# School I

The percentage of staff selecting each word across both time points and their relative increase or decrease is shown in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Proportion of staff in School | selecting school culture descriptors

Positive descriptor	Pre	Post	Change
Compassionate	52%	72%	+20%
Positive relationships	74%	88%	+ 4%
Valuing Everyone	52%	64%	+12%
Creative	70%	76%	+6%
Collaborative	43%	48%	+5%
Listening to all voices	43%	44%	+1%
Motivated	65%	64%	-1%
Community	74%	72%	-2%
Supportive	96%	92%	-4%
Safe	83%	76%	-7%
Open	52%	44%	-8%
Purposeful	70%	56%	-14%

Negative descriptor	Pre	Post	Change
Unavailable	0%	4%	+4%
Unappreciative	0%	4%	+4%
Cliquey	9%	12%	+3%
Stressed	13%	16%	+3%
Fearful	0%	0%	0%
Toxic	0%	0%	0%
Discontented	0%	0%	0%
Distrusting	0%	0%	0%
Critical	0%	0%	0%
Tokenistic	0%	0%	0%
Disengaged	4%	0%	-4%
Unfair	4%	0%	-4%

# School 2

The percentage of staff selecting each word across both time points and their relative increase or decrease is shown in Table 21 below.

Table 21: Proportion of staff in School 2 selecting school culture descriptors

Positive descriptor	Pre	Post	Change
Community	40%	58%	+17%
Listening to all voices	43%	55%	+12%
Motivated	55%	68%	+12%
Creative	38%	45%	+7%
Open	32%	38%	+6%
Collaborative	49%	55%	+6%
Valuing Everyone	49%	53%	+4%
Purposeful	60%	63%	+3%
Positive relationships	74%	78%	+3%
Safe	64%	65%	+1%
Supportive	91%	90%	-1%
Compassionate	53%	40%	-13%

Negative descriptor	Pre	Post	Change
Stressed	32%	43%	+  %
Unavailable	2%	8%	+5%
Unappreciative	0%	3%	+3%
Fearful	0%	3%	+3%
Disengaged	0%	0%	0%
Toxic	0%	0%	0%
Unfair	0%	0%	0%
Discontented	0%	0%	0%
Distrusting	0%	0%	0%
Critical	0%	0%	0%
Tokenistic	4%	0%	-4%
Cliquey	13%	8%	-5%

# School 3

The percentage of staff selecting each word across both time points and their relative increase or decrease is shown in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Proportion of staff in School 3 selecting school culture descriptors

Positive descriptor	Pre	Post	Change
Purposeful	33%	55%	+21%
Listening to all voices	50%	64%	+14%
Motivated	44%	55%	+10%
Creative	56%	64%	+8%
Collaborative	56%	64%	+8%
Supportive	83%	91%	+8%
Compassionate	56%	55%	-1%
Safe	78%	73%	-5%
Open	44%	36%	-8%
Valuing Everyone	72%	64%	-9%
Positive relationships	72%	64%	-9%
Community	67%	45%	-21%

Negative descriptor	Pre	Post	Change
Discontented	0%	9%	+9%
Unavailable	0%	0%	0%
Unappreciative	0%	0%	0%
Fearful	0%	0%	0%
Disengaged	0%	0%	0%
Toxic	0%	0%	0%
Distrusting	0%	0%	0%
Tokenistic	0%	0%	0%
Cliquey	0%	0%	0%
Unfair	6%	0%	-6%
Critical	6%	0%	-6%
Stressed	67%	55%	-12%