Catalysing Social and Emotional Learning in Schools in England

A policy and practice review

By Anamaria Granada, Joe Hallgarten, & Aoife Hasset

![The Centre for Education & Youth logo]

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'Society should ensure that all children and young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood.'

This report was written by The Centre for Education and Youth. CfEY is a 'think and action-tank'. We believe society should ensure all children and young people receive the support they need to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We provide the evidence and support policy makers and practitioners need to support young people.

We use our timely and rigorous research to get under the skin of issues affecting young people in order to shape the public debate, advise the sector and campaign on topical issues. We have a particular interest in issues affecting marginalised young people.

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Joe Hallgarten is the Chief Executive at The Centre for Education and Youth. Since starting his career teaching for five years in urban primary schools, Joe has over twenty years' experience leading and influencing education change as an educator, programme leader, researcher and policy analyst. This has included senior leadership roles at the Institute for Public Policy Research, Creative Partnerships, The RSA (where he was also interim global director) and Creativity, Culture and Education. Joe has also worked for the Department for Education, London 2012, and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. In the three years prior to joining CfEY, he had two roles: as principal consultant with the Education Development Trust (focussing on global education programmes, especially in sub-Saharan Africa); and as a teacher (including a curriculum leadership role with a Multi Academy Trust in London). Joe has authored many reports and spoken across the world on a wide range of education issues, including teacher development, curriculum reform, innovation in school systems, and creative learning. He has also designed, led and offered strategic support for a wide range of education programmes. This has included contributions to professional development for teachers, school and system leaders.

Anamaria Granada is a Research Associate at The Centre For Education and Youth. Anamaria has a BA in Literary Studies and a Master of Science in Social Psychology. She has experience conducting quantitative and qualitative research. She is also a Qualified Teacher and has previously worked in primary and secondary schools. Her experience in education both in Latin America and the UK has driven her to focus on cultural and social research and research for policymaking. Prior to joining the team at CfEY, Anamaria obtained a Public Policy Analysis certificate from the LSE and worked as a French and Spanish teacher for Teach First. Anamaria's research is currently focused on children's mental health and wellbeing and how intersectional contexts influence post-16 outcomes.

Aoife Hassett is a research catalyst at The Centre for Education and Youth. She has over ten years' experience as a primary class teacher, both in the UK and internationally, and holds a Master's in Education Policy from the Institute of Education. Aoife's professional and academic history has equipped her with in-depth working knowledge of child development, curriculum, assessment practices and educational infrastructures. Having led PSHE, and overseen the introduction of the new Relationship and Sex Ed Guidance 2022, Aoife has a particular interest in the development of social and emotional skills in children and young people. Aoife's research to date has had a social justice theme, focusing on equitable outcomes for students, particularly those from disadvantaged groups.

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Foreword

At Impetus, we care about supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in school, work and life. We know that these young people are 40% less likely to attain GCSE maths and English by age 19. And we know that passing these crucial exams gives them a greater chance of going on to higher education and finding and keeping a job – giving them the opportunity to lead the lives they want. That's why we've supported charities working to raise attainment, and policy efforts which enable this, for over a decade.

But we know that it's not the whole story. Before a young person is ready to succeed at school, they must be ready to learn. The academic attainment gap between young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their better-off peers is mirrored by a social and emotional skills gap. There is strong evidence that improving social and emotional skills in young people can lead to gains in academic performance, and that the skills are a vital foundation for success in academic arenas.

That is why, this year, Impetus invested in three new social and emotional learning charities, Jon Egging Trust, Khulisa and Kids Inspire, building on our existing support of Football Beyond Borders and West London Zone.

To guide our work, we used The Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) definition of social and emotional learning, where it stands as: *"The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."*

But social and emotional learning is complex and nuanced, and efforts to close this gap must be too. So we were delighted to commission The Centre for Education and Youth to produce a "state of the nation" report on what social and emotional learning is, what's happening in practice and where we can go next.

We hope this report will provide a foundation to build consensus on what good practice looks like, so we can embed social and emotional learning in a way that works in our education system, and make sure that all young people, regardless of their background, can have the same life chances.

If you're reading this report, we'd love for you to be part of the conversation. Do reach out at policy@impetus.org.uk if you'd like to be.

Steve Haines
Director of Public Affairs at Impetus

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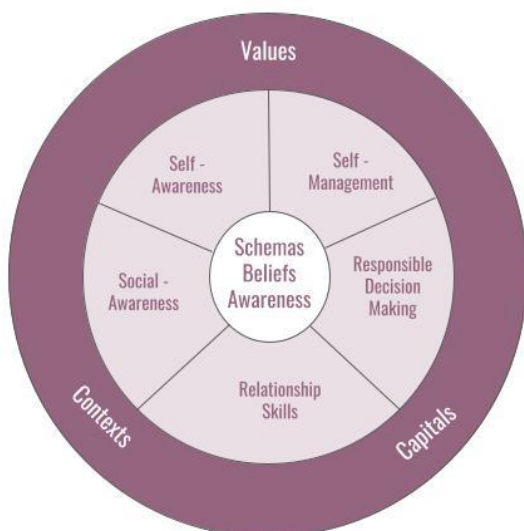
Executive Summary

This review examines the current state of social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools in England. It aims to understand how policy can create enabling environments to ensure that SEL thrives across our school system, especially benefiting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We focussed on the 5-16 age range, and in upstream approaches that promote social and emotional skills, rather than clinical interventions that supported pupils with an identified mental health need. We complemented our literature review with interviews with experts and leading practitioners.

Broadening our definitions[1]

Although there is no single consensus on the definition of SEL or its underpinning competencies, a growing number of researchers and practitioners in England have moved towards a widely-used definition proposed by the Chicago based Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) where SEL stands for:

"The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."

This definition also includes five social and emotional skills (SES). We draw on two recent contributions to propose a more rounded definition. Our model of SEL places the neurological and cognitive processes underlying SES at the centre of the CASEL wheel, based on the 'neuroperson' framework. In turn, SES are embedded in a socially meaningful environment, which operates according to specific values, contexts and capitals.

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[1] All references are included in the main report.

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The influence of SEL on attainment and other outcomes

The quality of people's social and emotional skills has obvious, intrinsic value for overall wellbeing and happiness. Our review explored the instrumental value of SES. The evidence suggests that SES explain at least some variation in a range of long-term health and employment outcomes. Developing SES has also been shown to buffer the impact of adverse life experiences. It can therefore protect against poor mental health by, for example, providing young people with the tools to manage aggression, anxiety and trauma, among others.

Although there is some debate regarding the causal mechanism by which SES impacts academic attainment, the evidence overall shows that having strong SES enables students to create the foundations to become successful learners, and leads to gains in academic performance. The Education Endowment Foundation's recent review suggests that successful SEL interventions in schools may drive, on average, up to four months of further progress in academic outcomes. The academic attainment gap between socio-economically disadvantaged pupils and their better off peers is mirrored, and potentially partially driven by, an SES disadvantage gap. Adverse childhood experiences, including poverty, neglect and abuse, are related to lower social emotional competency. Thus, proponents of SEL suggest that addressing SES deficits could bring particular benefits to children and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, resulting in a reduction in the attainment gap and reduced inequality in later life.

The role of schools

All schools are social environments with cultures, norms and social systems that inevitably play a role in developing SES. As a universal service, schools can and do make a difference to SES, both by complementing pupils' early childhood and at-home experiences, and in more remedial approaches, by compensating for what might be lacking at home or addressing the consequences of weaker SES.

Recent research has cast stronger empirical light on the impact of schools. A global meta-analysis of follow-up effects of 82 SEL interventions found significant long-term impact. Research on 'teacher effects' have shown that, as with academic outcomes, there is considerable variation in different teachers' abilities to improve pupils' SES. There is, however, considerable variability in the quality of programme implementation and evaluation, with a paucity of longitudinal research. Not enough is known about how school-based approaches and interventions impact on particular groups of pupils, including those who are socio-economically disadvantaged or with special education needs or disabilities.

While there are differences in emphases, good practice in schools incorporates both caught and taught approaches. The 'caught' approach places greater emphasis on promoting SEL indirectly by building a positive school ethos and culture Social and Emotional Skills (SES) can also be 'taught' through explicit instruction, such as discrete lessons, or embedded within other subject disciplines. Effective schools work to develop a school-wide ethos but also dedicate specific time on activities that are SAFE (sequenced, active, focussed and explicit); and working with external providers who offer targeted interventions.

Our review provides case studies of five different charities that are working to promote social and emotional growth. Impetus has partnered with these organisations to help them deliver meaningful, benchmark beating, sustained outcomes for young people.

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Lessons from recent policies and practices

Aligning with the broader *Every Child Matters* agenda, New Labour's Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme worked in all schools in England, with mixed results, and was cut by the coalition government in 2010. Since then, policies and resources have prioritised a more academic focus, demonstrating a belief that SES should be 'caught' rather than 'taught'. This contradicts evidence that adult modelling or school culture approaches alone are not sufficient to ensure an equitable and beneficial degree of SES development. A recent review of UK SEL practices found that England in particular suffered from: a narrow focus on behavioural skills over wider SES, low awareness of SEL policies amongst teachers, and variations in quality of approaches.

Although there has been a lack of SEL-specific government attention, a growing societal interest in young people's mental health and wellbeing, driven partly by a rise in cases of wellbeing-related medical diagnoses, has provoked recent policy responses. These include recent Department for Education (DfE) reviews and guidance on promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, and the introduction of mental health leads in all schools. This review identifies a number of schools, MATs and local authorities that are continuing to focus on SEL as a central and unique element of their mission. The last decade has also witnessed a growth in the number of social enterprises and charities that aim, among broader goals, to improve young people's social and emotional wellbeing by working in, through or outside of school time.

The influence of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Unlike academic attainment, it is impossible to access data to understand how pupils' social and emotional skills have changed year on year. However, there is an emerging view that the pandemic might have had a more significant negative impact on young people's SES than on their academic performance, which represents profound implications for how schools prioritise time and resources. Children's mental health services report evidence of a growing crisis and demand for services since the start of the pandemic. Moreover, findings from a range of reports, including Ofsted, have consistently shown an increase in school leaders' concerns about behavioural and wellbeing outcomes for many students beyond those diagnosed with mental health needs. Leaders have also reported increasing disparities in pupils' social and emotional progress since the return from lockdown. More than two fifths of both primary and secondary schools surveyed in 2020 mentioned pupils' emotional and mental health as their main concern and challenge for the coming years. This review discusses how schools have responded during and since the pandemic, and why developing strong SEL systems is important to ensure a preventative, upstream approach.

A number of recent reports, including from the Education Policy Institute and the Commission for Young Lives, have stressed the urgency of transforming the mental health and wellbeing landscape for young people. The government has increased funding and staffing for mental health support in schools, but has been criticised for minimising post-covid 'catch-up' budgets and prioritising academic 'catch-up' over broader outcomes, including SES.

Schools are facing a storm of pressures, especially on finances, staff recruitment and retention. In this context, whether or how they might 'up their SEL game' remains to be seen. The role of Multi Academy Trusts in adopting whole-trust approaches to SEL could become increasingly important.

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Conclusion

In a post-pandemic England, SEL might face a 'double-squeeze', priority-wise. First, the inevitable and increased pressure to improve academic outcomes and narrow academic gaps. Second, the increases in young people's mental health referrals might force schools to focus resources on acute cases, leaving less space and resources for more universal, preventative whole-school SEL-approaches.

SEL is a complex 'wicked issue'. It interacts not only with the school system but with health services and a broader set of services for children and families. Its outcomes are contested, both in terms of whether it should be prioritised and how the skills it seeks to develop should be defined and measured. And, as the OECD's recent survey shows, the way these skills develop in young people is far from linear. In this review we suggest CASEL's ten indicators of system-wide approaches to SEL as a starting point for developing a more systematic approach at national, local and school levels.

1. **Explicit SEL instruction**
2. **SEL integrated with academic instruction**
3. **Youth voice and engagement**
4. **Supportive school and classroom climates**
5. **Focus on adult SEL**
6. **Supportive discipline**
7. **A continuum of integrated support**
8. **Authentic family partnerships**
9. **Aligned community partnerships**
10. **Systems for continuous development**

Our rapid application of systems thinking around SEL leads to the following questions:
- To what extent is there a shared vision for inclusive, high quality teaching of SEL, and how might this vision be best built?
- Where might be the beginnings of a coalition of system stakeholders with a common interest in SEL, ready to create a collective will for change?
- How might the structural changes in our education system - from increases in academisation to changes to SEND and social care, to the creation of senior mental health leads - enable a more effective delivery architecture for SEL?
- How might existing or new data measurement systems better drive decision-making and motivate improvement?
- How can teachers and leaders better understand and be motivated to lead improvements in SEL across schools?
- How can we improve the evidence base upon which SEL-related decisions are made?

Our analysis of the landscape and the systems suggests a need to bring coherence to the SEL agenda; a coherence that:
- goes beyond the necessary current concentration on pupils with poor emotional health towards more preventative, all-children approaches;
- enables genuine partnership working between schools and external organisations, built on improved mutual understanding of needs and expertise; and
- supports the levelling up of SES, so that efforts are targeted at disadvantaged pupils with a clear focus on contributing to improved attainment outcomes.

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Recommendations

For community and coalition building

1. Funders with an interest in SEL, as well as supporting the growth of individual programmes, should create a national SEL network to share best practice and foster a consensus around SEL amongst schools, external providers, policymakers and academics.

2. This SEL network should be charged with creating a new definition of SEL and its components, that builds consensus around a measurable framework, recognises the crucial nature of SEL in our education system, and positions SEL as complementary to, not a replacement of academic support.

3. Government, in partnership with local and national funders should invest in local or regional SEL partnerships that, working with schools, local services and external providers, take a long-term, whole-locality approach to the development of SEL.

For school and teacher development

4. Schools should use CASEL's ten features of the systemic approach to SEL to inform equity-centred changes to their SEL strategies.

5. Government, the new Institute of Teaching, and the accredited providers of the early career framework and the NPQs should explore how improved understanding and teaching of SEL can be woven into the 'golden thread' of teacher and school leader development.

6. Ofsted should carry out a full analysis of its 'personal development' inspection to understand how it influences schools' approaches to SEL and narrow outcomes.

For data, evidence and further research

7. All SEL programmes should take more rigorous, formative long-term approaches to understanding their impact, where possible and conduct relevant evaluation of the impact on specific groups of children.

8. England should create data that is more comprehensive and comparative by nationally rolling out the '#BeeWell' survey currently being trialled in Greater Manchester and participating in the next OECD survey of social and emotional skills.

9. Researchers and research funders should investigate pandemic 'bright spots' to examine why and how some children thrived, socially and emotionally, during the pandemic, or bounced back more rapidly since the return to school, and how schools might learn from changes in school practices during and since the pandemic.

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Introduction

"Social and emotional skills are the bedrock of students' wellbeing and academic achievement. Yet the question arises of whether we can make them visible, comparable, and therefore amenable to deliberate policy action."
Andreas Schleicher (OECD, 2021, p.3)

This rapid review examines the current state of social and emotional learning (SEL) in England. We aim to better understand the value of SEL and how policy can create enabling environments to ensure that high-quality SEL thrives across our school system, especially benefiting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
Although it is well established that the first five years of a child's life are critical for social and emotional development, this report considers social and emotional learning through an education lens, and therefore the scope of the review is on schools, interventions and programmes that largely target the 5-16 age range.

Similarly, although mental health and wellbeing are dimensions of social and emotional learning, this review excludes interventions that sit within a medical and mental health scope, such as those led by CAMHS. Our interest lies in upstream, holistic, preventative work on interventions that promotes healthy life outcomes, and healthy social and emotional functioning, in children and young people.

Our approach to this review consisted of:
- Desk research that synthesised academic and grey literature on SEL, focussing mainly on the most recent (post-2015) literature from the US and UK
- Expert interviews with six leaders in the SEL field; and
- Case study interviews with five leaders from Impetus' portfolio of programmes

Section 1 summarises the definitions of SEL, building on the CASEL framework to propose a more rounded definition.

Section 2 explores the 'predictive power' of social and emotional skills in determining life outcomes and some of the issues with this evidence base.

Section 3 discusses how schools develop SEL and analyses the evidence on whether school-based programmes make a difference and their conditions for success.

Section 4 offers case studies of four programmes whose goals are SEL-related.

Section 5 provides a history of how the SEL landscape for 5-16 year olds has evolved in schools in England, concentrating mainly on the 1997 to 2019 period.

Section 6 offers insights on how the pandemic may have affected young peoples' SES and how it might influence ongoing changes to schools' approaches to SEL.

Section 7 summarises a systemic approach to SEL in schools and suggests nine recommendations for policy and practice.

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1. What is Social and Emotional learning?

1.1 Current Definitions

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the life-long process of developing social, emotional and behavioural skills (SES), which allow individuals to manage their internal emotional states, and navigate the social world (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissbeir & Gullota, 2015). As with most areas of human skill development, the first five years of life are critical for developing SES, when self-regulation and self-awareness are first developed (Cornell et al., 2017). This is followed by continuous but slower development during and beyond the school years (Cohen, Clothier, Onunak & Poppe, 2005). It is commonly understood that individual social and emotional skills contribute to our wellbeing, behaviours, interactions and experiences of society.

Research on SEL has a long-standing, multidisciplinary presence in fields including developmental and cognitive psychology, evolutionary biology, and education. The multidimensional nature of SEL and its connection to diverse executive functions across these domains has complicated the task of creating a clear, agreed definition. Although there is no single consensus on the definition of SEL or its underpinning competencies, a growing number of researchers and practitioners in England have moved from Goleman's model of emotional intelligence (1995)[2] to the more rounded definition offered by the Chicago based Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

CASEL defines SEL as:
"The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, 2020)

CASEL groups social and emotional skills into five categories, as summarised below and in the CASEL wheel (Figure 1):

- **Self-awareness:** To know and understand oneself
- **Self-management**: To regulate, manage and motivate one's actions and emotions
- **Social awareness:** To understand those around us
- **Relationship skills:** To interact with others in a positive and effective way
- **Responsible decision-making:** To make decisions and take actions as a member of society with rights and responsibilities

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[2] Goleman's model identified self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills as the five key areas of social skills underpinning emotional intelligence.

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Figure 1 CASEL framework for SEL

Although CASEL further defines these five skills, there is again no consensus on their meaning or what progression within each skill might look like. Many SEL-focused programmes deliberately focus on a subset of these skills. This creates considerable barriers to attempts to compare programmes, evaluate effectiveness and pin down concrete examples of best practices (Gedikoglu, 2021; Wigelsworth et al., 2020).

The OECD's assessment framework for their survey of young people's social and emotional skills, carried out across ten cities in non-EU OECD countries, defines SES as "individual capacities that can be manifested in consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviours" (OECD, 2021, p.3). The framework is built around the 'Big Five' personality traits, commonly used in psychological assessments of wellbeing.[3] In the model, each personality trait is broken down into three separate skills, with two additional skills included that fall outside of the 'Big Five' (see Table 1 and Appendix 1). It appears that the OECD and CASEL's work exist in separate intellectual worlds, barely recognising each other's existence. To our best knowledge, work to link the five SES in the CASEL framework to the seventeen skills in the OECD framework has not yet been carried out.

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[3] The Big Five personality traits are: Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism and Openness

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Table 1 Summary of the OECD's SES assessment framework (OECD, 2021)

Domains	Skills
Open Mindedness (openness to experience)	• Curiosity • Tolerance • Creativity
Task Performance (conscientiousness)	• Responsibility • Self-control • Persistence
Engaging with Others (extraversion)	• Sociability • Assertiveness • Energy
Collaboration (agreeableness)	• Empathy • Trust • Cooperation
Emotional Regulation (emotional stability)	• Stress resistance • Optimism • Emotional control
Additional Indices	• Achievement motivation • Self-efficacy

1.2 Evolving definitions: beyond individual competencies

Two essential critiques of the CASEL framework have recently emerged in the UK. The Centre for Youth Impact (2022) focuses on the mental foundations of SEL, whilst Nesta and the University of Bath's report expands on the underlying purposes of SEL. Taken together, there is a synergy between their conclusions that can be drawn upon to inform a new working model for the development of SEL in England; one that deepens, rather than replaces the CASEL framework.

Mental foundations of SEL[4]

The Centre for Youth Impact argues that our understanding of SEL needs updating through a renewed and tailored understanding of neuroscience (McNeil & Stuart, 2022). Crucially, as their work focuses on the youth sector rather than in-school programmes, their perspective is informed by the science of formal and informal learning, using Peck and Smith's (2020) 'neuroperson' framework.

The term 'neuroperson' is used to "emphasise how socio-emotional skills can be defined and understood in terms of three different kinds of information storage and processing systems that are centred in three different areas of the brain" (McNeil & Stuart, 2022, p.10) (Figure 2). This is grounded in "more specific descriptions of young people's mental skills and the neurobiological systems that support them" and is made up of a three-part model of skills including beliefs, schemas and awareness (McNeil & Stuart, 2022, p. 5) (Table 2).

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[4] This report draws heavily from an open source working paper by QTurn (Peck, Smith & Smith, 2019). Any content appearing in the working paper may also appear here in identical or slightly altered form. The working paper is accessible at: www.qturngroup.com/MPCn

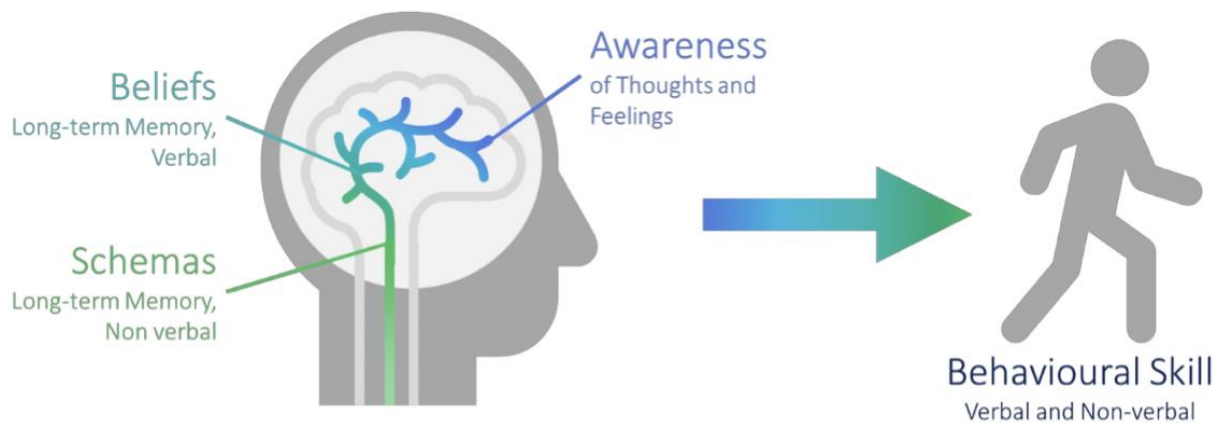*'Society should ensure that all children and young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood.'*

Figure 2 Three-part Social Emotional Mental Skills (Peck & Smith, 2020)

Table 2 Schemas, beliefs and awareness (summarised from Peck & Smith, 2020)

SE mental skill	Definition	Implications for SEL practice
Schemas	• Refers to non-verbal, long-term memories • Holds a strong, subconscious influence over emotions and behaviours • Schemas are informed by patterns of attachment from early life – they are difficult to change	• Helps to understand current emotional/ behavioural effects of past experiences • Provides a blueprint of emotional reactions to outside stressors
Beliefs	• They are verbal, symbolic representations of self and the world • Informed by and modifiable through direct interaction and reflection	• Can help to address more general identity issues • The things people believe about themselves and the world
Awareness	• Foundation to executive functions that operate on thoughts and feelings • It relates to a conscious control of activated schemas and beliefs	• Helps to address intentional agency • Refers to how people consciously interact in the world, based on their unconscious schemas and beliefs

The neuroperson framework shifts SEL mechanisms and cognitive processes to inform the development of strategies that young people can learn and use to "become intentional authors of their own development and identities" (McNeil & Stuart, 2022, p. 4). For practitioners, the neuroperson framework is useful, as it identifies where different emotional and cognitive responses come from, and highlights how approaches to each must vary. Each of the five skills in the CASEL framework is formed through the development (and interplay between) schemas, beliefs and awareness. Thus the 'teaching' of SES skills must attempt to change one or more of these core mental processes, in differential ways (Table 2).

The underlying purpose of SEL

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Donnelly et al. (2020) argue that the use of the CASEL framework places too much emphasis on those individual social and emotional competencies that are understood to be favourable for success within the labour market, such as self-management and decision-making. They suggest that, as a result, SEL programmes seek to prioritise the production of citizens conducive to a healthy economy rather than individual or community wellbeing. They argue that "the drawback to a perspective that only sees SES as competencies [...] is in missing the moral-ethical dimension to SES, which relates to how the young person sees themselves as part of the immediate [and wider] social world around them" (p.9). A broadening of the definition of SEL to acknowledge "both the individual and collective gains which social and emotional skill building provides" (p. 7), manifests through three perspectives: competencies (which are already covered in the CASEL framework), values and capitals (Table 3).[5]

Table 3 Summary of Donnelly et al.'s three perspectives (2020)

Perspective	Origins	Implications for SEL practice
Competencies	● Theory is grounded in psychology ● Three aspects: behavioural, emotional and cognitive ● Skills and competencies can be understood interchangeably	● SES can be nurtured and developed ● Allows for individual mastery of SES ● Allows for evaluation of SES development in an individual
Values	● Underpinned by objective moral and subjective ethical codes set by context ● Allows SES to be viewed as fixed principles of morality or ethics	● Allows for the development of a common moral or ethical code ● Allows for evaluation of individual behaviours/SES against a common moral or ethical code
Capitals	● The term is drawn from sociological literature ● Capitals can be material or symbolic items of economic, social or cultural value that enrich people's ability to interact with their context ● Links SES to personal identity and resources of an individual	● Capitals inform an individual experience of society ● Allows for the identification of gaps in SES for disadvantaged groups ● Allows for social-emotional norms of marginalised groups to be drawn upon in the development of SEL programmes

Building on these three perspectives, we propose a refinement of the CASEL framework that might inform evolving approaches to developing SEL in England. We use the neuroperson framework to *zoom in* to understand the cognitive processes and mechanisms that underpin the development of SES in individuals. Understanding these mechanisms allows for the development of more precise SEL interventions that are calibrated around the specific social and emotional competencies we wish to influence, as provided by the CASEL framework.

We also *zoom out*, using Donnely et al.'s broader lens to understand the development of SES not as happening in a vacuum, but within a complex web of social environments. While different contexts are included in the CASEL framework, Donnely et al.'s perspectives on capital and values allow us to consider issues around cultural

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[5] As with the neuroperson framework, these perspectives build on rather than replace the five key SES. These skills are underpinned by (and take a role in shaping) capitals and values.

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transferability of SEL programmes and pedagogies, ensuring that SES interventions are sensitive to context and the social and emotional norms of marginalised groups. This is critical to the pursuit of the development of inclusive and targeted SEL programmes that can serve to close attainment gaps for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are cyclical relationships between all aspects of this framework.
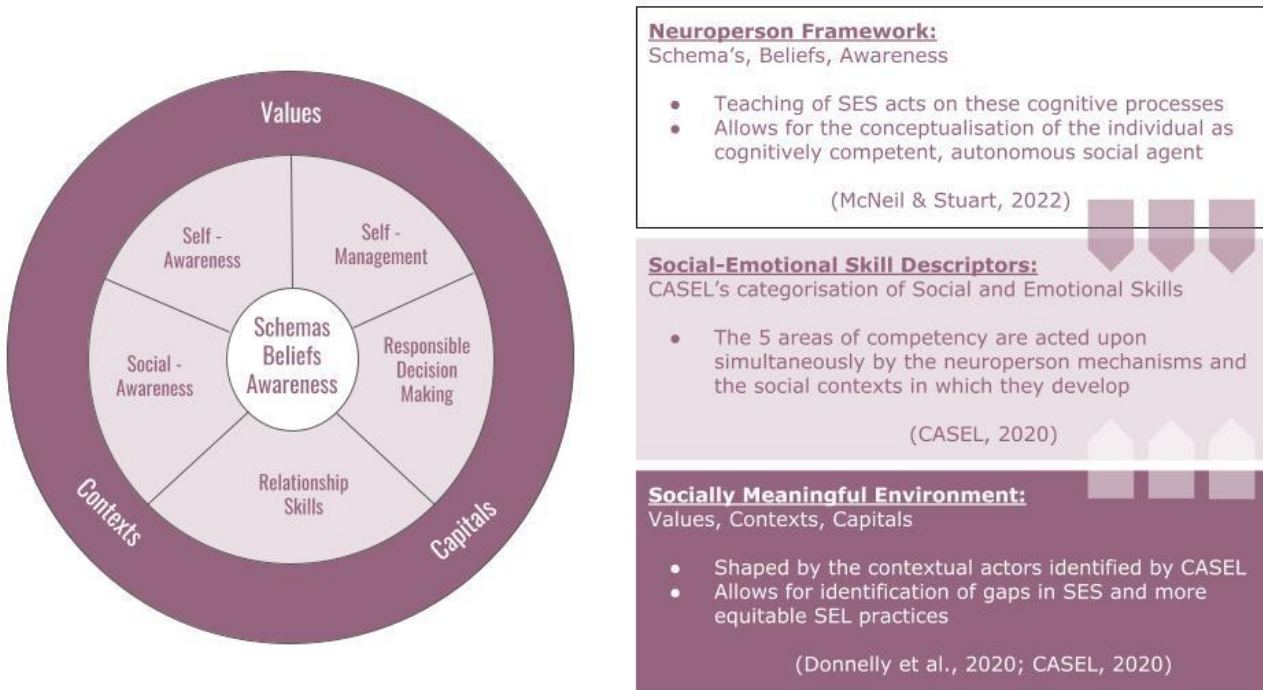

Figure 3 CfEY's proposed model of SEL

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2. Predictive power: Do Social and Emotional Skills matter?

"Some concerns with social mobility focus on the wrong end, they focus only on getting young people into top universities and high flying jobs. But for many disadvantaged young people, they get excluded from school and opportunities early on because they haven't got their social emotional skills. We need to go back and not just think of how to give people skills to get into Oxbridge but build that right through schooling." Jean Gross

The quality of people's social and emotional skills has obvious, intrinsic value for immediate wellbeing and happiness. As the OECD argues, SES also play a central role in how individuals "adjust to their environment and how much they achieve in their lives" and "adapt, be resourceful and take personal and collective responsibility" (OECD, 2018, p. 4). This section explores the evidence of their instrumental value, including academic attainment and mental health and wellbeing, as well as their predictive power in determining later life outcomes such as employment and health. The evidence suggests that SES explains at least some variation in a range of important outcomes and can act as a protective factor against adverse outcomes, highlighting the value of SEL for both the individual and society at large (Centre for Education and Youth & STiR, 2020; Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni & Downes, 2018).

2.1 Summarising the evidence

Given the nature of SES in terms of its influence on individuals' ability to manage their emotions and cultivate positive relationships, it is unsurprising that individuals with high SES tend to have high wellbeing outcomes (Feinstein, 2015; Cohen et al., 2005). Several studies have observed a positive impact on academic performance by developing SES (Panaiotou, Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2019; Durlak et al., 2011). The OECD's Education and Social Progress project in 11 countries, including the United Kingdom, used longitudinal analysis to show a clear connection between SES and life satisfaction (OECD, 2015). Developing SES has also been shown to buffer the impact of adverse life experiences. It can therefore protect against poor mental health by, for example, helping young people manage aggression, anxiety and trauma (Panayiotou et al., 2019; Paulus, Ohmann & Popow, 2016).

The literature on SES and mental health recognises that these concepts are so closely associated that they could be conflated. However, strong social and emotional skills and poor mental health are not opposite ends of the same spectrum and should not be conceptualised as such. An individual can have poor social and emotional skills, such as struggling with self-regulation, without suffering from a diagnosable mental health disorder. In turn, an individual may have strong social and emotional skills but suffer from anxiety or depression. Crucially, mental health disorders and even poor wellbeing are not singularly caused by deficits in social and emotional competencies.

Academic attainment, disadvantage and SEL

There is strong evidence that improved SES leads to gains in academic performance (Panayiotou et al., 2019). Through a meta-analysis of 213 American SEL interventions in schools, Durlak et al. (2011) found an 11-percentile gain in academic performance in a subset of 70 programmes (p. 417). Higher social and emotional functioning has also been found to be significantly related to graduating from high school and completing a

university degree (Jones, Greenberg & Crowley, 2015). The Education Endowment Foundation's (2021) recent review suggests that successful SEL interventions in schools may drive, on average, four months of further progress in academic outcomes, with effects being higher for literacy (+4 months) than mathematics (+3 months). However, this finding is 'low security' due to the poor overall quality of programme evaluations.

There is some debate, however, regarding the causal mechanism by which SES impacts academic attainment. For example, studies find a positive relationship between social skills and reading comprehension (McKown, Russo-Ponsaran, Allen, Johnson & Warren-Khot, 2016). SES may impact literacy skills directly, which in turn allows young people to access the curriculum more broadly and make overall improvements in their attainment. Conversely, Panayiotou et al. (2019) suggest that SES impacts attainment by protecting individuals from poor mental health, which would otherwise reduce their ability to learn. Overall, the evidence shows that having strong SES enables students to build relationships with teachers and peers, maintain concentration, manage their emotions, navigate challenges and bounce back from failure. Thus, SES are not only related to attainment but a vital foundation for success in academic arenas.

The academic attainment gap between socio-economically disadvantaged pupils and their better off peers is mirrored, and potentially partially driven by, an SES disadvantage gap (Wigelsworth et al., 2020). Adverse childhood experiences, including poverty, neglect and abuse, are related to lower social-emotional competency (Knutson, de Garmo & Reid, 2004). Moreover, pupils who live in poverty are less school-ready by social development markers which are predictive of poor progress in Maths and Literacy (McCoy, Connors, Morris, Yoshikawa & Friedman-Krauss, 2015). The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) on social and emotional competencies find that, while children from families in the highest fifth of household income have a 5% chance of having emotional issues, this increases to 20% for those in the lowest fifth of household income (Fitzsimons, Goodman, Kelly & Smith, 2017). This includes children who have been permanently in poverty between the ages of 5 and 11 and children whose families who have transitioned into poverty while they were within this age bracket.

Thus, proponents of SEL suggest that addressing SES deficits could bring particular benefits to children and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, resulting in a reduction in the attainment gap and reduced inequality in later life (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021; Feinstein, 2015). This argument is predicated on the evidence base strongly suggesting a relationship between SES and an array of later life outcomes including, but not limited to, employment, increased productivity, health and lower criminality (Donnelly et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2015).

The discussion surrounding disadvantage and SEL development is mirrored in the OECD's 2021 survey on Social and Emotional Skills. As a comprehensive and rigorous attempt to assess "the conditions and practices that foster or hinder the development of social and emotional skills for 10- and 15-year-old students'' (OECD, 2021, p.4), it has found some commonalities in the socio-demographic distribution of SES.
The results include:
- a dip in all skills as children become adolescents
- some clear gender patterns in particular skills
- children from more advantaged backgrounds scoring more highly across all skills.
It also concluded that these SES are strong predictors of academic outcomes, even when the student's background is controlled for.

Later life outcomes

Social and emotional competence positively correlates with employment by age 25, and is a stronger predictor of workplace success than IQ or academic test scores (Jones et al., 2015). Stronger SES is also associated with a reduced likelihood of living in public housing, receiving public benefits, involvement with the police or being in a detention facility before adulthood, and being arrested for a severe offence by age 25 (Jones et al. 2015). Conversely, maladaptive social and emotional functioning is associated with health problems in adulthood, including substance abuse, obesity, risk-taking behaviour and violence (Jones et al., 2015), and later mental health difficulties (Greenberg, Domitrovich & Bumbarger, 2001). Cohen et al. (2005) suggest that SES, specifically the ability to build and maintain relationships, enable individuals to become "productive citizens" in terms of their ability to hold employment and create a functional social or family life, which in turn leads to greater overall life satisfaction (p.4).

Beyond the positive impact on individuals, investment in SEL broadly translates into positive impacts for society. In the US, Belfield, Klapp, Levin and Zander (2015) recently demonstrated the long-term economic benefits of promoting SES, calculating an extended positive 'return on investment' of 11 to 1, in the US context. UK evidence also suggests an economic benefit in early SEL intervention as approximately £17bn is spent addressing the consequences of maladaptive social-emotional functioning, through a range of remedial and crisis interventions later in life (Feinstein, 2015).

2.2   Issues with the evidence

Given the predictive power of SES for academic and broader life outcomes and the potential for SEL to address inequalities in these outcomes, some suggest that the push for schools to deliver SEL is underpinned by a preventative philosophy with both moral and economic justifications (Gedikoglu, 2021). However, there are some challenges with unpicking the nature and direction of causal mechanisms. These might explain why school-based SEL provision is often deprioritised in favour of academic-focused interventions.

First, "fuzzy" definitions and unclear boundaries between different social and emotional skills create difficulties in identifying which skills hold predictive power. It is possible that a select few skills, rather than SES overall, are responsible for a significant degree of variation in outcomes (Donnelly et al., 2020, p. 7).

Second, there has been a long-standing debate regarding the direction of causality between SES and outcomes. The 'ready to learn' hypothesis suggests that emotional self-regulation leads to higher attainment as an individual is more able to engage in education. However, it is also plausible that an opposite association may hold; high attainment leads to raised self-respect and a sense of control (Wigelsworth et al., 2020). However, recent evidence provides some greater confidence in the consistency of the direction of these relationships suggesting that SES cause other outcomes rather than the other way around, with effect sizes that are often small (Panayiotou et al., 2019; Wigelsworth et al., 2020).

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3. Malleability: Can social and emotional skills be learnt within and through schools?

"SEL is a developmental process; it's something that's happening every day, whether we want to do it intentionally or whether it happens by accident through adult modelling." Heather Schwartz

Two factors beyond the school gates have a crucial influence on children's SES. First, the pre-school years are vital. In the first two years, infants experience the most significant neurological growth in terms of social-emotional development, expressing emotions and adapting behaviour responses to context (Malik & Marwaha, 2022). Through attachment patterns, children develop internal working models which form the basis of emotional and social development and regulation, and how relationships are formed for the future (Mortimer, 2017). Second, the influence of parenting practices and family climate in developing SES is strong and possibly more influential than the school environment (Miller, Wanless & Weissberg, 2018). This is caused by the cultural and social capital that young people acquire from experiences in the home and family environment, rooted in family dynamics, culture and heritage. Grusec (2011) argues that this influence is more vital for establishing early socialisation patterns than anything schools do.

There are ongoing debates on whether schools should prioritise SES to help enhance academic outcomes, how much time schools should dedicate to SEL-focused learning, and the role and expertise teachers need. However, the overwhelming consensus is that schools, whether by accident or design, play a role in developing their students' SES. All schools are social environments with cultures, norms and behaviour systems that inevitably play a role in developing SES (OECD, 2018; van Poortvliet et al., 2021). As a universal service, free and compulsory for all children, schools can and do make a difference to SES, both in complementing pupils' early childhood and at-home experiences and in more remedial approaches –compensating for what might be lacking at home or addressing the consequences of weaker SES.

This section, therefore, focuses not on the 'whether' but on the 'how'; first, we synthesise discussions on the processes and approaches schools use to develop SEL. Then, we analyse the evidence on whether school-based approaches and interventions make a difference and what we know about conditions for success. Finally, we explore some of the dilemmas that schools face when making difficult choices about how best to improve SES.

3.1 Processes and approaches

The Education Endowment Foundation (2021) toolkit on SEL identifies three categories of SEL interventions:
- School-level approaches
- Universal programmes
- Targeted programmes

Building on this categorisation, but informed by broader research on character development, schools can conceptualise how they support SEL by viewing it as something that is 'caught' (absorbed through the social environment) and 'taught' (explicitly addressed and included in classroom settings through interventions). (Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues, 2016; Gross & Robinson, 2020) (Figures 4 and 5).

SEL is Caught…

"SEL is at the heart of learning, it is both implicit and explicit in teaching. There's been a kind of acceptance that it is what teachers do, but actually we can be much more explicit about how teachers do it." Dr Aleisha Clarke

The 'caught' approach places greater emphasis on promoting SEL indirectly by building a school ethos that supports children and young people to develop behaviours that enable high social-emotional functioning. Schools can foster SEL through their culture and the interactions they build with young people (Figure 4).
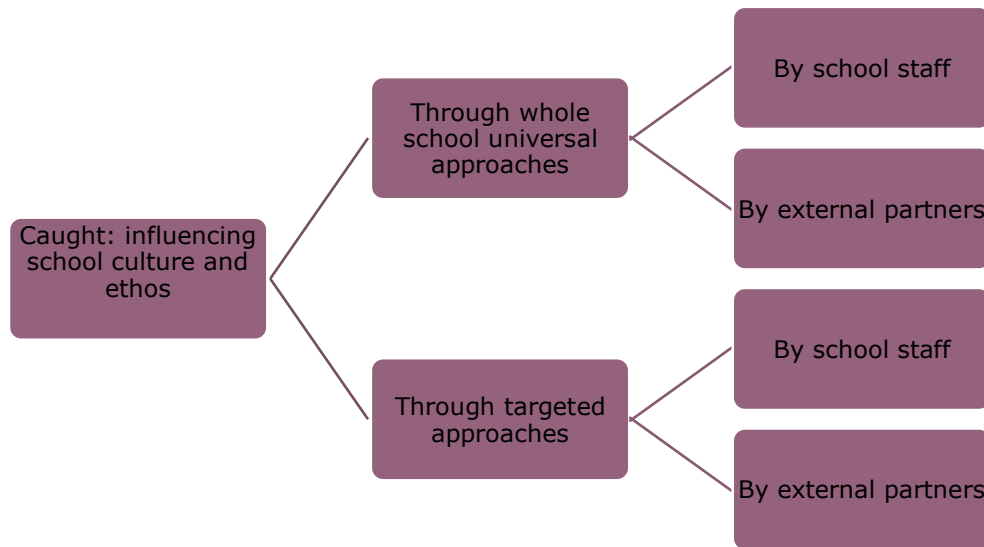

Figure 4 Caught Model

Extensive literature on child development finds that children learn by observing other people, getting ideas about how new behaviours are formed and using these ideas to navigate their actions (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, as children watch teachers controlling themselves, managing frustration and staying focused, they develop their own SES (Jones, Bouffard & Weissbourd, 2013). Whether deliberate or not, adult modelling matters (van Poortvliet et al., 2021).

A caught approach can be proactive. Gross and Robinson (2020) argue that it is best cultivated through advocating virtues and opportunities for application in children's real lives. This means that the school culture needs to encourage the active application of SES and that all adults use a shared language to describe these skills.

Examples of 'caught' approaches that schools use include: behaviour and playground policies, whole school and class assemblies, school value systems, classroom charters, and the implementation of national policies such as British Values. Most of these approaches are universal and led by school staff. However, some schools do use targeted approaches to improving school culture with specific groups of pupils (for instance, those with behavioural difficulties).[6] There can also be space within a 'caught' approach to work with external partners who might offer unique contributions to building or reinforcing a SEL-conscious school culture.

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[6] *For example, see ELSA https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/*

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... and Taught

"When educators are delivering the lessons, they're also learning and finding opportunities for integration somewhat naturally by delivering the lesson. For example, 'we just talked about how you could calm your body when you're nervous. And now I know we're about to take this maths test, let's try practising it.' I think that's not as available to educators if it's someone coming in from the outside. School culture is integral to the process." Heather Schwartz

SES can also be 'taught' through explicit instruction, such as discrete lessons, or embedded within other subject disciplines (Figure 5). Indeed, whilst all schools are statutorily obligated to provide some space for SEL-focused lessons (for instance, through Personal, Social, Health, Economic Education or Sex and Relationships Education lessons), some also attempt to incorporate the development of SES within subject-based lessons. While particular subjects, such as English, citizenship and the arts, are more readily adaptable to a SEL focus, some schools attempt to embed SEL across the curriculum. Bedales Independent School, for example, incorporates social awareness into all aspects of its curriculum.
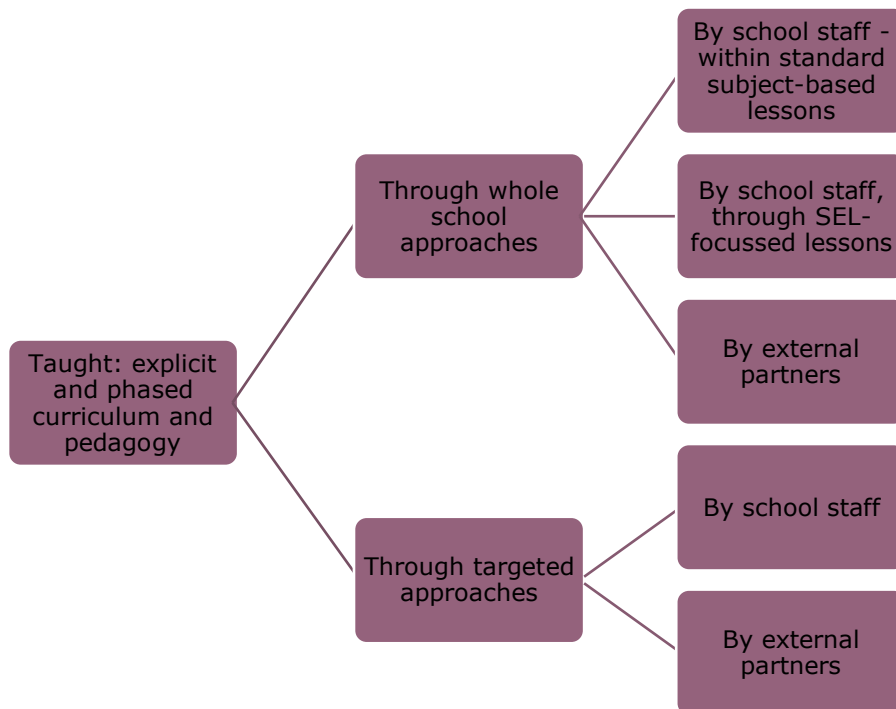
Figure 5 Taught Model

Dedicating curriculum time to the explicit teaching of SEL can be beneficial as it provides schools with a shared language and framework to refer to in discussions with students around behaviour and emotional regulation. Thus, 'taught' SEL approaches arguably enable the facilitation of 'caught' approaches by providing the groundwork for developing a shared culture of SEL.

Recent research has cast stronger empirical light on whether teachers can make a difference to SES. First, work on 'teacher effects' have shown that, as with academic outcomes, there is considerable variation in different teachers' abilities to improve pupils' SES (Jackson, 2018; Kraft, 2019; Ruzek, Domina, Conley, Duncan & Karabernick, 2015). Second, more detailed classroom observations have shown that

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teacher practices and interactions also have an impact on their pupils' SES (Blazer & Kraft, 2017).

'Taught' strategies also allow schools to measure impact more easily, providing opportunities to assess students' SEL development and audit the overall impact of their SEL teaching. Many schools, however, are reluctant to dedicate precious curriculum time to an area that is not commonly understood to contribute to academic development directly.

While there are differences in emphases, in reality all schools incorporate both caught and taught approaches. As Section 5.1 explains, England's education policies have, in recent years, shifted away from policies that aim to develop SES explicitly, signalling a belief that SES can be 'caught' rather than 'taught'. Instead, policies and resources regarding intervention have prioritised an academic focus over SEL. However, as our next section reveals, reviews of high-quality SEL provision suggest that this approach does not align with the evidence. Explicit teaching of SES has the most impact, and adult modelling or school culture approaches alone are not sufficient to ensure an equitable and beneficial degree of development (Wigelsworth et al. 2020, Education Endowment Foundation, 2021).

3.2 Understanding impact of school-based SEL programmes and interventions on SES

Emery defines SEL interventions as both those programmes "focused on positive models (emphasising social and emotional wellbeing) and those premised on deficit or negative models that seek to repair or develop responses to socially problematic issues such as depression, anxiety and anti-social behaviour" (2016, p. 25). Based on meta-analyses and evidence reviews carried out in recent years, this section explores some example findings, the challenges to evaluating impact, some conditions for intervention success, and emerging dilemmas in SEL intervention implementation.[7]

Building on earlier work by Durlak et al. (2011), Taylor, Oberle, Durlak and Weissberg (2017) conducted a global meta-analysis of follow-up effects of 82 SEL interventions with over 97,000 children and young people from early years to secondary school ages. The review found significant evidence of school-based SEL interventions having continued significant positive benefits across seven outcomes, sustained for between 56 and 195 weeks post-intervention.[8] Interventions both promoted positive and prevented negative indicators of wellbeing, and showed positive impacts across racial groups and regardless of socioeconomic status. Although interventions influenced both skills and attitudes, regression analyses showed that it was changes in skills rather than attitudes that produced longer term benefits.

More recently, an evidence review on a range of early-stage interventions was carried out by ten organisations in the UK (Banerjee, Roberts & Boddy, 2020). It found statistically significant improvements with small effect sizes on 16 out of 25 standardised measures of SES, and further improvement on broader well-being and psychological functioning (2020).

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[7] The impact of the national SEAL programme is discussed in section 5.
[8] The seven outcomes are: Social emotional skills, improved attitudes, academic performance, positive social behaviour, conduct problems, emotional distress and drug use (Taylor et al., 2017, p. 1163)

From these reviews, a small number of programmes consistently produce positive outcomes, some of which are summarised below (Table 4). However, recent independent EEF efficacy trials of two of these programmes (FRIENDS, and Zippy's friends) have produced small or null effect sizes, demonstrating the challenges associated with evaluation and consistently demonstrating impact.

Table 4 Summary of popular SEL programmes

Programme	Description	Origin	Impact
PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)	A programme for teachers designed to facilitate development of SEL skills in primary schools. A curriculum is supported by a variety of lessons, additional materials and posters that cover the core components of SEL (PATHS, 2022).	United States, adapted for the UK with the UK version being registered.	Well evidenced positive effects on: ● improved social competence and emotional knowledge ● coping skills ● internalising behaviour, improvements in peer relationships ● externalising behaviour ● reduction of behaviour problems including hyperactivity (Clarke et al., 2015, pp. 36–37).
FRIENDS (Fun Friends and Friends for Life)	Aims to build the social and emotional skills of children through play-based group activities with an emphasis on resilience skills, building positive relationships, and confidence. FRIENDS for Life focuses on reducing anxiety. It builds the ability to focus, regulate, relax, developing empathy and confidence (*Friends Resilience Hub*, 2019).	Originally designed in Australia, the programme was adapted for UK context.	Well evidenced positive effects on: ● social emotional skills and self-esteem ● reduction in anxiety scores symptoms of depression ● reduction of behaviour problems including hyperactivity (Clarke et al., 2015, pp. 36–37). Pupils in FRIENDS classrooms made 1 additional month of progress in reading at KS2 level despite time pressures which affected quality of delivery (EEF, 2018)
Zippy's friends	A lesson-based approach for 5-7 year olds. It is based around a series of stories and the programme has 24 sessions of 45 minutes. Activities and stories are suitable for children of all abilities (Partnerships for Children, 2020).	Europe-wide, the programme was originally designed by psychologists from Canada, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands and implemented internationally.	Well evidenced positive effects on ● emotional literacy skills ● coping skills ● reduction of behaviour problems including hyperactivity (Clarke et al., 2015, pp. 36–37) Small improvements in teacher reported, self-regulated learning, but no quantifiable effects on reading outcomes (EEF, 2018)

These reviews have consistently identified a number of weaknesses and challenges to understanding the impact of SEL programmes. These include:

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- The variability in the breadth of coverage of SES, as well as how these skills are defined.
- The variability of programme implication due to a range of factors, including: staff 'will and skill', staff time, maintenance of activity levels, implementation fidelity, or short-term expectations of success (Humphrey et al., 2010).
- The difficulties in disentangling the impact of 'taught' interventions from the impact of 'caught' approaches also operating within any school.
- The rarity of longitudinal research; only eight percent of SEL evaluations have any kind of follow up beyond 18 months of the programme completing (Wigelsworth et al., 2016).

The impact of programmes on young people facing disadvantage

As the EEF meta-review concludes, "there is conclusive evidence that exposure to multiple poverty-related risks increases the odds that students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged will demonstrate less social and emotional competence, lower executive functioning skills, and more behaviour problems" (Wigelsworth et al., 2020, p.40).

It is therefore imperative that SEL programmes and interventions aim to narrow rather than widen these SES gaps, avoiding the so-called 'Matthew Effect' whereby a programme has a disproportionately impact on those students who already have strengths relating to the goals of that programme (Walberg & Tsai, 1983). The Matthew Effect highlights what many practitioners already know to be true: that it is often easier to build on existing skills than improve children from a lower baseline. Whilst there is no evidence that SEL programmes are particularly prone to this, the review notes that the 'wider SEL ecology', especially through family resources, that might be available to more advantaged students, means that SEL interventions do carry this risk. However, the same review asserts that, overall, studies do not find any differential impact, which might imply that "individuals experiencing low SES, have effectively compensated by demonstrating equivalent results at post-test" (Wigelsworth et al., 2020, p.40). The review also notes that there is a paucity of evaluations comparing impact on high and low SES students, especially in the UK.

In terms of how SEL programmes focus and impact on students with special needs and disabilities and on students of different ethnicities, we know even less. As the review summarises, there is little consensus as to the empirical findings regarding differential impact on identified subgroups (low income, ethnic minority status, SEN, and or at-risk status for mental health difficulties). The complex interrelations between these factors and the wider ecology (i.e., context for delivery) means there is limited evidence available to help meet the needs of different subgroups. A recent systematic review in the US of 242 SEL interventions in elementary schools found that three quarters did not mention students with disabilities, and less than 10% attempted to understand their impact on students with disabilities. These figures were similar for racial or ethnic identity (Cipriano et al., 2022).

3.3   Conditions for successful interventions

Overall, evidence suggests that the impact of targeted 'taught' approaches tend to be higher than whole-school 'caught' approaches. However, implementation costs are higher. The EEF toolkit for social and emotional learning (2021) suggests that effective universal SEL provision is "likely to require some additional targeted support for pupils with particular social or emotional needs".

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Despite the large variety of type and focus of SEL programmes, and a fragile or insecure evidence base, a consensus has emerged on key features of effective SEL provision. This is referred to as the SAFE approach, which has been extensively cited as driving statistically significant impacts in various evaluations (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011; Wigelsworth et al., 2020; Clarke, Morreales, Field, Hussein & Barry, 2015). **SAFE** stands for:

1. **Sequenced**: a set of connected learning activities that teaches social-emotional skills through a coordinated, step-by-step approach
2. **Active**: learning methods such as role-play or behavioural rehearsal with feedback
3. **Focused**: the inclusion of at least one programme component that focuses specifically on the development of social-emotional skills through devoting sufficient instructional time to it on a regular basis
4. **Explicit**: teaching of clearly identified skills with clear and specific learning objectives, as distinguished from a programme goal on general skill enhancement (Wigelsworth et al., 2020, p. 42).

The SAFE approach is included in the latest EEF recommendations for SEL provision in primary school, alongside five other recommendations for effective school practice:

- Teach SEL explicitly
- Integrate and model SEL skills through everyday teaching
- Plan carefully for adopting a SEL programme
- Use a SAFE curriculum
- Reinforce SEL skills through whole-school ethos and activities
- Plan, support, and monitor SEL implementation

Both the SAFE model and the CASEL's framework for systemic SEL implementation (explored in Section 7) advocate for whole-school, intentional, and phased approaches that explicitly involve the schoolwide community and young people in their discovery, experience and practice of SEL. Further, that it should happen consistently, repeatedly and progressively. This approach requires a phased plan or SEL curriculum to establish continuity through the learning journey, ensuring progression through each stage. In addition, it is important that approaches embed the skills developed in discrete SEL provision throughout the school routines. It is not just ensuring that SEL is taught and caught, but the consistent interplay between these approaches, that matters.

3.4   Emerging dilemmas with SEL interventions

The significant and ongoing growth in interest and interventions related to SEL, whilst improving our understanding of how SEL works in practice, is also unearthing some 'known unknowns': dilemmas that schools and external organisations need to consider when developing their approaches to SEL.

Fidelity versus validity

Practitioners implementing SEL programmes must respond to the school community and young people's needs, potentially adapting programmes to fit their context. However, any alterations to the delivery of well evidenced programmes risks reducing effectiveness. This is known as the *fidelity* versus *validity* debate (Wigelsworth et al., 2020). The debate captures the balance that school leaders will need to establish between implementing the programme with no modifications (high-fidelity, low-validity)

or implementing a highly modified programme that responds directly to their context (low-fidelity, high-validity).

Cultural transferability

The Education Policy Institute highlights that SEL interventions fall prey to the challenges of cultural transferability (Gedikoglu, 2021). SEL is inextricably linked to societal beliefs and most SEL research and current conceptual frameworks originate from the USA and are, therefore, likely to present a cultural bias. This highlights the importance of Donnelly et al.'s (2020) addition of cultural capitals as an underpinning principle in SES development which we have incorporated into our suggested new model of SEL (2020) (see Section 1.2).

The demands of a high-stakes, narrow accountability regime

As school leaders face the dilemma of prioritising either SEL or other aspects of practice which receive greater scrutiny through inspections and examinations, some argue that ineffective 'surface-level' approaches are linked to accountability pressures (Gedikoglu, 2021). However, recent changes in Ofsted inspection policies, and the introduction and funding of the new Mental Health Leads role, opens more space for schools to dedicate resources to nurturing resilience, a trait commonly associated with character development and mental health, which shows some steps in the right direction. Gedikoglu (2021) cautions that without adequate support systems that "provide greater time, space and resources for SEL", this may not do much more than "place an extra burden on schools, and lead to a superficial tick in the box" (p. 11).

Delivering versus commissioning

There is extensive evidence supporting SEL provision that is school led, with strong involvement from teachers and other staff. Despite the challenges of delivery, training and prioritisation, SEL is simply not something you can entirely outsource to others. Inevitably, schools tend to opt for a mix of staff-led and partner-led interventions.

External partners, with deep knowledge and unique expertise, can play a role, especially in addressing the most vulnerable young people through expert provision working with designated time and resources. Further, providers in this sphere have the space to develop and address clear outcomes, and implement a consistent practitioner approach. Clarke et al. (2015) offer some insight into the sector of out-of or after-school provision, finding considerable variation in the type and effectiveness of these programmes. For this and other reasons, the impact of out-of-school provision remains somewhat unexplored; the data to evaluate impact on a large scale is simply not yet available. However, several charities have been filling gaps in this sector. Some examples of this are Khulisa, a charity that aims to create behaviour change through fostering nurturing environments surrounding young people. Part of their action includes offering training to create nurturing, trauma-informed environments to professionals and practitioners in schools, as well as parents and carers. Similarly, Kids Inspire provides training in holistic, therapeutic and trauma-informed practice to practitioners in the education, health and private sector.

As external providers, these and other charities are dedicating their time and resources to improve young people's SES, enhance their support systems, and empower practitioners and carers to provide the support and guidance they need. These already showcase how charity partners can complement the support that schools offer through their school culture and systems.

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We now provide case studies of five different charities that are working to promote social and emotional growth. Impetus has partnered with these organisations to empower and promote their work.

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4. Case Studies: Charity Partners

4.1 Football Beyond Borders

Football Beyond Borders (FBB) seeks to develop a sense of belonging among young people, improving connections with their wider school community. They prioritise working with teachers through reflective practice and continuous professional development. Good communication with parents, school and young people is developed in order to build trust, collaboration and wrap-around care. Alignment between the adults supporting young people ensures that outcomes developed in FBB spaces are embedded across young people's lives.

Table 5 Football Beyond Borders' Aims and Approaches

Aims	Approaches
- Support young people at risk of exclusion to re-engage with school - Support young people to acquire the skills and grades to transition successfully to adulthood - Improve relationships between young people and their teachers and school communities - Harness the power of football to amplify and empower young people's voices	- Embedded within schools - Weekly group sessions focused on SEL starts in Y8 with groups of 16 students 1:1 support sessions are available - Ensure their workforce is representative of the young people they support by recruiting practitioners from the communities they serve - Focus on staff retention to enable long-term support for participants and accelerate development of positive relationships - Multi-agency collaboration

FBB believe its asset-based approach empowers young people to feel confident in themselves and recognise the importance of their voice. Programme participants demonstrate improved social and emotional competencies and academic outcomes. An independent evaluation by Nesta and the University of Sussex (2020) also found statistically significant improvements in young people's SEL skills.

"[School] isn't just a transactional space for academic learning. It is the space where we shape ourselves into who we are in society. Building the skills to connect with others and understanding others' experiences is key throughout education." Gabrielle Hamill, Head of Impact

Connections with SEL

FBB's SEL curriculum explicitly teaches the social and emotional skills defined by CASEL. Classroom-based experiential learning is complemented with sessions on the football pitch, individual mentoring and target-setting, allowing SES to be embedded in a range of contexts. Supplementary meetings with members of their school's Senior Leadership Team help shape the interventions young people receive and connect FBB to their school experience. Young people who have gone through the programme play a mentoring role with younger students, strengthening the sense of community and belonging. The programme culminates in lighter touch support in Years 10 and 11, focussing on opportunities to connect with other Football Beyond Borders groups from across the country and experiences of the world of work through industry workshops.

Football Beyond Borders takes a gender-sensitive approach to developing SEL, mirroring young people's different stages of development. Boys' weekly classroom sessions focus

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on the skills within the CASEL framework that more directly impact behaviour and motivation. Girls' sessions concentrate on the CASEL skills that affect self-awareness, emotional regulation, group dynamics and confidence through a raised understanding of their talents and assets. Both are complemented with enrichment and career development opportunities.

"Football happens to be one of the most powerful tools in the world for building healthy relationships, but it's the development of social and emotional skills and the embedded nature of our work which support young people to feel proud of themselves and implement the learnings from our sessions into their lives." Gabrielle Hamill, Head of Impact

4.2   Kids Inspire

Kids Inspire, currently working with 268 schools across 11 Local Authorities, targets children who have experienced neglect and abuse, social isolation or educational exclusion, and those who engage in self-harm or risky behaviours, such as alcohol or drug abuse.

Table 6 Kid's Inspire's Aims and Approaches

Aims	Approaches
- Ensure that children receive the specialist support they need to become healthy adults and lead complete, fulfilling lives - Share best practices across a network of providers in education, health and private sectors - Target children who are victims of adverse childhood experiences - Empower young people through a range of tools and resources to support their wellbeing, including stabilisation and creative activities	- Talk Together Programme - Provides bespoke therapeutic services adapted in response to Covid19 - Three levels, based on how much support is required - Provides specialist support that promotes self-resilience, greater self-awareness and positive relationship building - Kids Inspire Therapy Programme - Trauma informed focussing on child's attachments with the team around them - Involves 1:1, 1:2 or whole family therapy groups - Considers how past experiences affects present - adapting their approach to different communities.

As Kids Inspire's support often occurs in schools as a non-statutory, third-sector organisation, schools are not accountable to the LA for their work, resulting in reduced pressure on schools. It also means that their work can impact the school's approach to SEL, with a school-based staff member forming a solid relationship with a class teacher.

Young people and their families take baseline surveys, which inform goals for the support they provide, while service user surveys are used twice a year. The CEO acknowledged that self-perception surveys should be viewed with some caution and explained that young people use the arts to express their progress. A clinical impact manager draws on evaluation findings to shape future sessions.

"We recognise that we need to work with schools and we need to work with families because quite often the child at the centre is crying out on behalf of their systems, the systems that are broken." Sue Bell, CEO

Connections with SEL

Kids Inspire's work is underpinned by several approaches. It is child-centred, trauma-informed, creative, adaptive, and therapeutic (drawing on psychodynamic, CBT, integrative, attachment, systemic, specialist trauma methods). As well as providing weekly in-house professional development sessions, they support practitioners by providing case-management, clinical supervision and other support based on developments in neurobiology. In their school-based provision, they improve teachers' knowledge of attachment theory and neurobiology, helping them understand barriers to young people's engagement with educational opportunities, and allowing them to effectively build students' range of SES.

Kids Inspire looks to achieve various specific outcomes such as improving friendships, family relationships, self-esteem, confidence, education and learning. All support follows a similar model around assessment, stabilisation and support. The trauma-informed approach enables Kids Inspire to address inequalities by focusing on children's needs for additional SEL development: *"we have to recognise that not every child is equal in the learning arena because of their adverse childhood experiences. There is a huge gap; if we carry on and ignore the reasons for that, we're far from closing that gap."* Sue Bell, CEO

4.3   Khulisa

Khulisa supports young people affected by trauma or adversity, ensuring they have the social skills and emotional support needed to thrive. They work in schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in London and Manchester. Khulisa's Theory of Change draws on evidence from the UK (e.g. Young Minds) and international literature, focusing on those at risk of social exclusion. Last year they supported 627 young people between the ages of 11 and 18.

Table 7 Khulisa's Aims and Approaches

Aims	Approaches
- To ensure young people have the social skills and emotional support they need to thrive - To make school-wide changes to SEL provision through their work with senior leaders and teachers - Improve the trust between young people and the professionals that support them.	- Target marginalised young people whose behaviour is deemed challenging or anti-social - Draw on a team of therapeutically trained professionals using various strengths based and restorative approaches - Offer intensive, therapeutic group programmes for young people to explore the root causes of emotional distress via three key programmes, as outlined below - Train professionals, parents and carers to create nurturing, trauma-informed environments for young people.

Three key programmes:
1. **Face it** (schools and PRUs): a six-week programme delivered by drama therapists, exploring root causes of emotional distress, aimed at those at risk of offending, exploitation and exclusion. The programme includes one-to-one

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sessions and group experiential techniques. It aims to help young people develop coping mechanisms, identify triggers, work through alternative responses, and develop executive function skills. Last year, they worked with seven schools across seven Local Authorities in London and Manchester.

2. **Social and Emotional Learning curriculum:** Delivered in weekly sessions over a full academic year, young people develop their social and emotional skills using Khulisa's content, delivered by their teachers.

3. **Trauma-Informed Training:** Khulisa trains parents and professionals who support young people in their trauma-informed methodology, enabling them to create and sustain nurturing environments around young people.

Connections with SEL

Khulisa's work is beginning to address the link between improved social and emotional skills and wellbeing to positive long-term outcomes, such as the absence of crime, exclusion or negative behaviour, and meaningful engagement with others. They focus on 'flourishing and thriving' and tailor their work to both biological and developmental age. Their performative approaches are non-verbal and take place in an inclusive environment so that all participants stand to benefit from the work.

Using a neurosequential model,[9] they target improvements in three key areas: social and emotional wellbeing, resilience and emotional regulation. These are evaluated using pre- and post-surveys that draw on validated frameworks to ensure robust data, which have shown promising results in their school engagement. Given that schools are under increasing budgetary and accountability pressures, they feel it essential to demonstrate a return on investment.

"Not only are we working with more communities than ever before, but we are also investing in a range of evaluations which seek to evidence the link between improved wellbeing, reduced exclusions, crime and violence, and the long-term benefits of developing a whole community, trauma-informed culture." Iman Haji, Evidence and Impact Manager

Khulisa aims to follow up with participants at different intervals after the programme. Their evaluations show improved social and emotional wellbeing, increased resilience, and improved emotional regulation. 60-70% of participants show an improvement for each measure, including a number who start the programme below the national and scale average and finish above it. As well as the impact achieved through delivery, they see their role as contributing to the evidence base around SEL and are in the middle of a three-year evaluation of their work while also evaluating various pilot programmes. In one programme, they found that training teachers to identify pupils' needs enhanced their confidence and ability to better support pupils.

4.4 Jon Egging Trust

The Jon Egging Trust provides support to young people with complex home lives (e.g. young carers living in poverty). They currently deliver support to 2,137 young people aged 10-16. They acknowledge that children living in more fortunate circumstances might be more likely to develop their SEL at home and seek to address this imbalance: *"if those young people have those support mechanisms, they're*

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[9] See: The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (Perry, 2006)

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going to be more socially and emotionally able than young people who are facing a huge amount of hardship." Emma Egging, CEO

Table 8 Jon Egging Trust's Aims and Approaches

Aims	Approaches
- Increase young people's self-confidence, self-esteem and aspiration to ultimately empower them to become role models within their communities. - Inspire young people through particular subject domains (like aviation and STEM) - Promote teamwork and leadership skills to overcome challenges, identify strengths and fulfil ambitions.	- The Blue Skies programme - Three year programme - Aimed at groups of 15 young people aged 12-16 who are currently underachieving at school or at risk of dropping out - 48 partner schools across 31 constituencies - Combination of in-class interventions and visits to partners at external sites e.g pilots, engineers - The Inspirational Outreach sessions - Short-term one-off sessions focussed on engagement

The CEO, Emma Egging, presented an example of a participant for whom the programme was a particular success. The participant, who was neurodivergent and had previously had contact with the police, spent time with some engineers as part of his intervention, igniting an interest in mathematics and helping him identify and develop the skills he needed to pursue such a career. He is now a chartered surveyor.

This illustrates the trust's aims to make improvements to SEL that increase young people's confidence, educational attainment, and social mobility to *"unlock the young person's ability to communicate, to be a leader, to be a team worker, to work with others."* Emma Egging, CEO

Connections with SEL

Through the programme, young people develop skills across six core competencies.[10] The sessions are delivered in partnership with role models from a range of corporate and military organisations, who plan their sessions with the Trust's staff according to the programme's curriculum. Jon Egging Trust breaks the boundary between SEL and school subjects by delivering an SEL-based approach to STEM: *"having the confidence in yourself opens that door for achievement [...] And we've seen that in our students."* Emma Egging, CEO

Over the past ten years, the trust has developed a theoretical framework that grounds its work and partnered with the University of Northampton to evaluate their programmes. The evaluation tracks outcomes such as behaviour, academic attainment and attitude to learning. It is a stepping stone to building greater evidence around SEL interventions that occur outside the classroom. They have found statistically significant improvements among participants across SEL competencies, as well as in English and science.[11] The Trust is now focused on improving data quality and fidelity of delivery to further improve evidence levels, by supporting evaluation against matched groups of students.

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[10] Communication, leadership, resilience, working with others, setting and achieving goals, and confidence.
[11] However, the evaluation did not include a control group and acknowledged data quality was patchy.

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Being an external organisation has brought Jon Egging Trust increased flexibility and committed partner schools. However, it has also meant that they cannot work with some schools either because they lack funding or SLT fail to prioritise their work. One issue here is SEL's reportedly weak reputation. The CEO notes the disparity between the levelling up agenda, and the lack of focus on SEL development, which echoes the perspective of teachers Jon Egging Trust works with: *"What's frustrated those teachers is that the pressure has been on about getting their grades back up."* Emma Egging, CEO

4.5 West London Zone

West London Zone works with children at risk in West London, helping them overcome challenges and thrive in the transition to adulthood. From 2021-2022, they developed and delivered support plans to 1,388 children across 45 schools. West London Zone originated from a White City community consultation in 2015 which found that, due to poverty and deprivation, some young people are excluded from several opportunities for personal growth. They identified opportunities outside the young people's reach which would enable them to develop as well-rounded individuals with a social and emotional dimension to their lives: *"We always thought about children as real people who exist socially and emotionally, who are not simply a product of the grades that they're achieving at school."* Andrew Berwick, Strategy and Impact Director

Table 9 West London Zone's Aims and Approaches

Aims	Approaches
• Create a 'SEA Change': support children and young people to build the relationships and skills needed to get on track socially, emotionally and academically • Four key interrelated outcomes: emotional wellbeing, relationships with peers, self-confidence and reaching age-related standards for English and maths	• *Link Workers:* school-based practitioners who work with young people and become a trusted adult in school • Develop an individual support plan for the child • Ensure support is provided via a network of external delivery providers • Occurs through phased provision and joins up systems of support • Track and evaluate participant progress against standardised measures of emotional status, quality of social relationships and self-esteem, and academic results. • Tailored support plans responsive to individual student needs

Through the specialist support offered and their networks with delivery partners, West London Zone links young people with the further opportunities they need and allows them to explore their interests and strengths.

The support includes but is not limited to:
- referrals to specialist mental health support and supporting schools to gather evidence for EHCP assessments
- a range of out-of-school opportunities that include building creative potential
- explicit SEL development
- dance, sport or theatre classes
- mentoring and coaching
- support for literacy and confidence

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Connections with SEL

West London Zone understands that SEL underpins young people's ability to thrive. Their programme aims to impact overall wellbeing, social integration and academic achievement positively. By tracking schools' internal assessment data on academic performance, West London Zone has observed positive changes in the young people who complete their 2-year intervention, supporting the hypothesis that early intervention can help children improve their social-emotional wellbeing, and have a later impact academically: *"We see the schools we work with are struggling to meet the needs of this high-needs group of children and young people. We talk to them about a group in the abstract. Then the schools say they can almost immediately identify the individuals who would benefit from that kind of support."* Andrew Berwick, Strategy and Impact Director

West London Zone targets young people who schools have identified as being academically behind and disengaged. They find, however, that it is often the case that an academic intervention is not immediately appropriate. For some young people: *"what's holding them back is something more fundamental around their ability to function effectively within a school."* Andrew Berwick, Strategy and Impact Director

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5.   How has the Social and Emotional Learning policy landscape evolved in England?

"We've had SEL in our curriculum for a while: Under New Labour, it was about tax efficiencies. Prior to New Labour it was about behaviour. After New Labour, and prior to COVID, it was about mental health. It ticked all these boxes but always under constant change. Under a crushing economic crisis, we talk about resilience. I think it gets repackaged and reshaped." Dr Michael Wigelsworth

In England's education system, a focus on cultivating emotional intelligence in children, especially those in financial disadvantage, emerged in the mid 1990s, informed by various US initiatives.[12] Although some local authorities or schools initiated SEL-related programmes in the UK before 1997, New Labour was the first government to develop a national approach. This has since evolved to a model which includes some statutory guidance on SEL delivery, in the form of PSHE and RSE curricula and guidance, while affording schools greater autonomy over modes of delivery. In theory, allowing them to be more responsive to their specific communities, cohorts and needs. As some interviewees commented, there are opportunities and risks in this approach.

5.1   New Labour, 1997-2010: a national programme with school-level flexibility

New Labour's education strategy generally favoured centralised, prescribed policies and programmes to improve academic standards (Heath, Sullivan, Boliver & Zimdars, 2013). However, this contrasted with the relative flexibility embedded in the Every Child Matters agenda, which from 2003 aimed to create a child-centred, holistic approach to children's care, education and safeguarding (Maynard, 2007). Similarly, the '*Aiming High for Young People'* youth agenda emphasised "the importance of good social and emotional skills [and] helping children and young people to become more resilient" (Clarke et al., 2015, p.18).

The government implemented the Social Emotional Approaches to Learning (SEAL) programme in two waves - first in primary schools, with around 90% uptake, and then in secondary schools, with around 70% uptake (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2010). SEAL proposed a whole-school approach, aiming to promote SEL for effective learning, positive behaviour, and improved health and wellbeing overall (Humphrey et al., 2010). The programme was designed around Goleman's model of emotional intelligence. It consisted of a phased implementation framework that allowed schools a significant degree of agency and flexibility. While this enabled schools to adapt the programme to suit the contextual needs of their students, it may also have resulted in inconsistent levels of effectiveness.

The 2010 DfE evaluation of SEAL found a mixed picture, with some schools and areas showing significant progress and others showing little improvement. It was found that schools implementing SEAL using a SAFE approach (Section 3.3) were more effective, while barriers to success were identified as:
● a variation of time and resource allocation
● staff 'will and skill'

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[12] e.g. California Self Esteem Task Force, and Baumeister in 1970's, followed by work on social skills from Durlak, and Conger and Keane in the 1980's

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- schools focussing on their interpretations of what the biggest needs of the school were over adopting the 'full picture' programme
- staff feeling like SEAL was not offering anything new
- short-term expectations of change decreasing long-term buy-in and commitment (Humphrey et al., 2010, pp. 94–96).

5.2 Coalition Government 2010-2015: Education and PSHE

The 2010-2015 coalition government further shifted the focus on England's school system toward academic attainment in a context of reduced spending. Alongside the rhetoric of greater autonomy for schools and a reduction in central guidance and national programmes, policies enforced an even tighter focus on basic skills and attainment, and greater prescription in the methods used to improve outcomes (Clarke et al., 2015). The SEAL programme was phased out along with many other abolitions to central programmes.

The impact of the abolition is unclear, although in comparison to responses to some cuts, schools demonstrated minimal opposition. However, Ofsted's 2013 report that schools were "not yet good enough" in teaching in the two statutory paths for SEL to be taught: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Sex and Relationships Education (RSE/SRE). Around 40% of inspected schools were found to require improvement or were providing inadequate PSHE and RSE teaching (Ofsted, 2013). Provision was particularly poor in low-attaining schools where students were at personal risk due to a lack of information in areas such as sex and relationships, mental health and alcohol misuse. Formby & Wolstenholme (2012) reported that schools adopted a 'tick-box' approach to PSHE education and that delivery of topics was often down to teachers' discretion, due to a lack of guidance for delivery.

Allen's (2011) report to the UK government on the 2010 Early Intervention Review described how community institutions such as local authorities, charities, businesses, schools and the media could be galvanised to work together to improve social and emotional outcomes of 13-19 year olds, particularly those who were experiencing financial disadvantage (Allen, 2011; Clarke et al., 2015). This led to the introduction in 2011 of 'The Positive for Youth' policy, advocating for early intervention for teenagers at risk of harm or neglect (Department for Education, 2011; Clarke et al., 2015). It emphasised the importance of developing social communication, positive relationships, ambitions, confidence and resilience.

5.3 Conservative Government since 2015: Character Education, Personal Development and Mental Health

Policy in the late 2010s enabled a partial re-focus on SEL through the introduction of Character Education and an increased prioritisation of aspects of the PSHE curriculum. In early 2015, the Department for Education launched a small grant programme to support character education interventions, "a set of character traits, attributes and behaviours that underpin success in education and work" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 17).

In 2019, the DfE published the Character Education framework, outlining that schools should be responsible for promoting the personal growth and development of students. It dictated that "children and young people should all be facilitated to remain motivated towards long-term goals, develop the learning of positive moral virtues, grow social confidence for success in education and labour opportunities, and cultivate an

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appreciation of long-term commitments for establishing roots and building community" (Department for Education, 2019, p.7).

In the same year, Ofsted (2019) separated the 'personal development, behaviour and welfare' inspection category into two judgements, one for behaviour and attitudes and one for personal development. The guidance on the personal development category shows a clear commitment to ensuring quality provision in schools and includes a nurturing and intentional approach to personal growth.

5.4   The current SEL policy landscape

Currently, SEL provision is primarily delivered under the umbrella of PSHE, which became statutory in 2020. The curriculum is delivered under three sections: health and wellbeing; relationships and living in the wider world; and economic wellbeing and being a responsible citizen. However, some authors still suggest that a large proportion of schools' PSHE provision is of insufficient quality, and the subject is often deprioritised in favour of core academic subjects (Formby & Wolstenholme, 2012; National Children's Bureau, 2016; Martin, 2022).

Recent reviews have highlighted that the provision of SEL-focused education is patchy and called for greater clarity and coherence in SEL policies by the government and the adoption of more systematic monitoring of provision (Clarke et al., 2015; Donnelly et al., 2020). In a comparative study across the UK, Donnelly et al. (2020) highlight the following issues with SEL in England:

- **Lacking a holistic interpretation of SEL:** schools across the UK appeared to frame social and emotional skills as individual competencies rather than acting within a social framework (see Section 1).
- **Greater focus on behavioural skills:** schools appeared to place greater emphasis on those skills that promote improved behaviour and higher attainment (like resilience, self-regulation and interaction with others) over other SES.
- **Low policy awareness among teachers:** teachers in England reported the least awareness of SEL policy compared to teachers in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.
- **Resource overload and variation in quality:** there is currently an overload of resources of varying degrees of effectiveness and little guidance, time or resources to support school leaders and teachers in making the best decisions for their provision.

As with all aspects of improvement in learner outcomes and schools, the most important factor is the quality of teaching. The government has made a significant investment in and reforms to teacher training, professional development and leadership. It is noticeable that exploring what they describe as the new golden thread between all aspects of teacher and leader development (for instance, the Early Career Framework and the National Professional Qualifications), there is no mention of teachers' abilities to understand and develop their students SES beyond a more reductive focus on improving pupil behaviour.

Although there has been a lack of SEL-specific attention at national policy level, a growing societal interest in young people's mental health and wellbeing, driven partly by a rise in cases of wellbeing-related medical diagnoses, has provoked a policy response. For example, the DfE's (2015) guidance on promoting children and young people's

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mental health and wellbeing describes eight principles of a whole school or college approach, providing a range of examples of good practice. The review of Mental Health and Wellbeing Provision in Schools (Brown, 2018) encourages schools to develop respectful communities conducive to good mental health for students. Although the demise of Every Child Matters reduced the capacity for local approaches, some local authorities managed to retain a focus on SEL within more comprehensive strategies. For instance, Portsmouth City Council's (2022) Social, Emotional and Mental Health Strategy (2020 - 2023), outlines specific SEL outcomes for students, giving schools responsibility for, and support to achieve, these outcomes.

"That's the challenge: teachers grappling under an infinite amount of SEL resources and a lack of clear guidance towards evidence-based interventions [We must first see] SEL being embedded at both a classroom level through curriculum learning and then building out from that through ethos and environment in the schools" Dr Aleisha Clarke

5.5 The current landscape of SEL practice: Pockets of sustained practice and innovation?

Despite the national de-prioritisation of SEL and the rise in accountability and funding pressures, many schools continue to provide high-quality, whole-school approaches to SEL, drawing on both 'caught' and 'taught' strategies. Some multi-academy trusts (MATs), (e.g Oasis, Reach, and XP) are beginning to focus on SEL as a central and unique element of their mission. Oasis MAT's 'Ethos & Habits' statement dictates that students should develop nine 'habits' including self-control, compassion and honesty, which are delivered via a framework based on character, competence and community (Oasis Community Learning, 2021). Reach2 MAT's 'Cornerstones and Touchstones' provide their schools with explicit guidance on holistically developing their students (Reach2 Academy Trust, n.d.). XP MAT's 'Values and Ethos' statement gives students 'stewardship' of themselves, their communities and their world (XP Trust, n.d.).

Other examples of innovative practices include:
- Woodhall Primary School (Sudbury), one of a growing number of primary schools training staff in the ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) program, which uses a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach to provide students with individual SEL intervention programmes.
- Sheringham Nursery (Newham), which is among a growing number of schools utilising the 'Zones of Regulation' programme, which uses specifically coded language and colours to embed a shared understanding of emotional responses across a school community.
- Billesley Primary School (Birmingham) and Virginia Primary School (Tower Hamlets) who are among a growing number of primary schools embedding explicit SEL learning in the start of every lesson.
- Sidmouth College, who were funded by NESTA to carry out their 'Building Resilient Learners' intervention. This is based on principles of cognitive-behavioural therapy and carried out in 13 secondary schools across the South-West.

The last decade has also witnessed a growth in the number of social enterprises and charities that aim, among broader goals, to improve young people's social and

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emotional wellbeing by working in, through or outside of school time.[13] However, the Early Intervention Foundation notes that provision from external actors has remained relatively unexplored and lacked evaluation as a legitimate means to supply and complement SEL provision in schools (Clarke et al., 2015).

Recently, charities like Khulisa have looked to evaluate their impact. In 2019, Khulisa's *Face It* programme (see section 4.3), evaluated by the University of Sussex, reported that 68% of their participants experienced improved wellbeing, 62% improved resilience and 72% had an improvement in coping skills. Similar results were found on a 2021-2022 interim report on the same programme, evaluated by ImpactEd. Further, their 24-week SEL programme resulted in improved resilience, with a particular positive effect on pupils with SEND (67% of participants with SEND), and overall positive effects on teacher's understanding of young people's needs.

Similarly, the evidence gap in the work of charities surrounding SEL was partly addressed by a NESTA, programme that supported ten innovative approaches to SEL. It included *Mindmoose* (a digital programme, which was designed to build students' resilience, self-awareness, and emotional competence, to ease the transition from primary to secondary schools) and the *Empathy Lab* (building the capacity of schools to develop young people's empathy, literacy and social activism across 8 schools in South Wales). Khulisa and Football Beyond Borders were also among the recipients of this funding.

Are these isolated pockets of practice and innovation, or are schools –with support from external partners– increasing their focus on SEL, despite the demise of the SEAL programme and the greater demands for guidance on academic outcomes? There is insufficient data to answer this question with confidence. However, the survey work by Wigelsworth, Eccles and Santos (2021) demonstrated a higher prevalence of and satisfaction with SEL provision within primary schools and increased nuance of understanding of SEL among practitioners, parents and students. Although no similar data is available for secondary schools, The DfE's review of school policies around mental health and wellbeing found a diverse range and quality of approaches, interventions, and support in all schools (Brown, 2018).

"I see a lot of SEL happening still in schools... it's badged in different ways. There's a huge diversity in school approaches, but what there isn't in England now is someone saying: 'Look, these are the core capabilities. CASEL has told us what the core capabilities are. This is a progression in learning from age three to age 18 in these, and here are resources that you can use to teach that.' " Jean Gross

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[13] The number of applicants - nearly 100- to the recent Impetus funding round for SEL programmes- indicates the relative buoyancy of the SEL intervention 'market'.

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6. The Covid-19 Pandemic: Ongoing impacts on the Social and Emotional Landscape

"SEL as a process is dynamic. Mental health is a consequence of life: it is a continuing self-referential statement about your thoughts, your feelings, and your behaviours that are influenced by your interpersonal skills, your interpersonal relations, and your perception of the wider ecosystem that you live in." Dr Michael Wigelsworth

6.1 The impact of the pandemic on young people's SES and mental health

Regardless of opinions on the state of SEL before 2019, its trajectory has undoubtedly been affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Unlike academic attainment, it is impossible to access robust national datasets to understand how pupils' social and emotional skills have changed year on year. However, nearly three years from the start of the pandemic, we now have a clearer picture of how lockdown, the pandemic, and the return to school has impacted young people's social and emotional wellbeing.

Children's mental health services report evidence of a growing crisis of mental health in children and young people since the pandemic (Viner et al., 2022). The school sector has also recognised this growing crisis. Ofsted's (2022) report on post-pandemic recovery cites school leaders' concerns over student wellbeing and behaviour, linking the lack of students' SES to poor attendance (Ofsted, 2022). An NAHT poll of 1,130 school leaders and staff found self-harm, suicide and eating disorders have become increasingly common in school life (Nuffield Trust, 2022). Rising need due to the pandemic has placed greater pressure on already stretched mental health services for young people in England (Commission on Young Lives, 2022).

Schools have also reported that the pandemic has impacted behavioural and wellbeing outcomes for many young people beyond those experiencing poor mental health. Inconsistent schooling and stressful conditions in the home have led to increased behavioural outbursts from students and more inadequate interpersonal and communication skills (van Poortvliet et al., 2021). School leaders have raised particular concerns over children in the Early Years and KS1 2021/2022 cohort, who have missed a proportionally more significant amount of skill development and socialisation (Ofsted, 2022b). It has been previously established that schools are environments that are rich with opportunities for developing SES and supporting SEL development. In the face of unprecedented events, uncertainty and breaks in routine, school closures also affected the development of SES in young people.

It is equally important to note that, as Sue Bell, CEO of Kids Inspire, mentioned, some pupils 'thrived' during lockdown, socially and emotionally. Furthermore, on return to school, many benefited from the changes in school routines necessitated by social distancing (for instance, reduced assemblies or new playground rules). There is a need for research to understand how and why some pupils benefited socially and emotionally from lockdown and how the beneficial aspects of changes to school life can be sustained.

Discrepancies in pupils' progress during lockdown have resulted in wider achievement gaps within year groups, in turn impacting student self-esteem (van Poortvliet et al.,

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2021). Rather than improving over the 2021/2022 academic year, school leaders reported increasing disparities in pupils' social and emotional progress, with needs becoming more complex and variable (Ofsted, 2022a). Social skills, such as turn-taking, have been repeatedly identified as the most severely impacted by EYFS staff, particularly Reception class teachers, suggesting further challenges in learning behaviours are to come, as these cohorts move up through the school system (Ofsted, 2022b). Despite efforts to re-establish clubs, trips and activities, parental fears of infection and continuity issues with staffing have prevented the reinstatement of enrichment opportunities for students, further impacting student wellbeing by depriving them of social opportunities, opportunities for personal development and to cultural capital (Ofsted, 2022a; Sharp & Nelson, 2021).

The pandemic's impact on young people's SES, their wellbeing, and behaviour has, in turn, impacted teachers' wellbeing: 91% of teachers reported that their work has adversely affected their mental health in the past twelve months, citing declining student behaviours, wellbeing and engagement due to the pandemic as contributing factors (NASUWT, 2022; Place2Be & NAHT, 2022). Pressure to 'catch-up' on lost learning has also put teachers under stress, with implications for recruitment and retention (Ofsted, 2022a). Early career teachers are of particular concern, as training processes have been severely impacted and they are entering the profession at a time of crisis (NASUWT, 2022). Teacher stress is commonly understood to adversely impact students' levels of social adjustment and academic performance, thus, the pandemic may have created a reinforcing cycle of declining SES in young people and poor teacher wellbeing (Kim & Asbury, 2020).

As explored in Section 2.1, competency in SES can act as a buffer to adverse mental health outcomes (Panayiotou et al., 2019). For that reason, we highlight the importance of strengthening the SEL offer in and out of schools, to nurture young people's abilities to adapt, cope and overcome difficulties, as well as support healthcare systems already under pressure.

6.2   Schools' and government's responses

While the Key Worker scheme allowed a few of the most vulnerable children continued access to school throughout lockdown, the threshold to access was high (Lalli, 2021). Many families struggling with issues of physical wellbeing, such as food insecurity, lack of exercise and disruption to sleep routines relied on regular communication with teachers for support (Lalli, 2021). Schools communicated directly with families about the importance of physical exercise and adequate sleep (Sharp & Nelson, 2021). In fact, with learning going online over lockdown, one of the most commonly reported benefits of home learning was improved relationships with parents. Teachers in most schools were encouraged to make regular contact with families by phone. This had the unexpected benefit of introducing families to some 'taught' and 'caught' SEL approaches, as teachers shared emotional regulation tools such as the 'Zones of Regulation' with families in order to support them through lockdown (Sharp & Nelson, 2021).

Upon returning to school, more than two fifths of both primary and secondary schools surveyed in 2020 mentioned pupils' emotional and mental health as their main concern and challenge (42% and 46%, respectively) (Sharp & Nelson, 2021). School leaders explained that social and wellbeing concerns were of higher priority than 'lost-learning', with well-being seen as a higher priority to address before academic interventions could

be effectively undertaken (Ofsted, 2022a). In response to these observations, schools have been putting a range of approaches in place to address the pandemic's impact on SES and mental health summarised below (Table 5).

Table 10 Summary of how have schools been addressing the impact of the pandemic

Social and Emotional Skills	Deficit of Mental Health Provision	Lack of Stamina and Skills for Learning
- Increasing the curriculum focus on mental health for all pupils - Dedicating more curriculum time to PSHE - Creative approaches to SEL, such as game-based SEL delivery - Training staff around the new RSE guidance	- Providing therapeutic interventions for individual students - Training staff in emotional literacy interventions such as ELSA and trauma-informed approaches - Employing staff with therapeutic qualifications, - Growing their existing pastoral teams - Partnering with external organisations: charities, Local Authorities, specialist services	- Adapting lesson timings - Using repetition and reinforcement, recall and retrieval across the curriculum - Providing greater and more frequent opportunities for regulation strategies such as movement breaks. - Employing resilience strategies such as 'Growth Mindset' - Keeping routines consistent

(Ofsted 2022a, Li et al., 2021, Van Poortvliet et al., 2021, Achtaridou, Behailus, Stiell, Willis & Coldwell, 2022, Sharp & Nelson, 2021, Quinn & Russo, 2022).

Roadmaps and advice for schools describing how to refocus on SEL in a post-pandemic landscape are also common. CASEL's 2021 Action Steps and The Coalition for Youth Mental Health in Schools' 'Fixing a Failing System', give advice to schools on how to ensure social and emotional needs of students and staff are being met, within tight resource limitations.

Perhaps the most important SEL-related momentum since the pandemic has come from localities rather than from national government. The Centre for Education and Youth's current research on area-based education partnerships is revealing a new energy amongst local coalitions of MATs and individual schools to collaborate on improving children's wellbeing and SES (CfEY, forthcoming). The largest such initiative is Greater Manchester's #BeeWell programme, which has worked with young people and a large number of regional and national partners to create a survey for all schools across Greater Manchester (BeeWell, 2021). Almost all schools (93%) across the region signed up and 40,000 year 8s and Year 10s participated - 53% of all children in those age groups across the region. Importantly, as well as the annual survey, the coalition of partners has "committed to act on the results and deliver positive change in all our communities" (#BeeWell, 2021).

Alongside changes in practices, several reports and associated recommendations have stressed the urgency of transforming the mental health and wellbeing landscape for young people. The Education Policy Institute calls for a £650M post-pandemic wellbeing package for schools to match academic catch-up funding (Crenna-Jennings, 2021). The Commission on Young Lives (2022) is demanding a commitment from the next prime minister to fund an immediate £1bn children and young people's mental health wellbeing recovery programme. School leaders, particularly those in financially deprived

areas, call for the government to provide adequate funding for an extended recovery period, allowing schools to use budgets flexibly (Sharp & Nelson, 2021; Ofsted, 2022).

Other recommendations included:
● Greater statutory curriculum time dedicated to SEL, RSE and PSHE
● National implementation programmes to embed whole-school (caught and taught) approaches to SEL
(Commission on Young Lives, 2022; Crenna-Jennings, 2021; NAHT 2021; McShane, Munnelly & Dorrell, 2022).

The government has responded to these recommendations, allocating £79m to help children access mental health support, and increasing the number of mental health support teams in schools to grow from 59 to 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3 million children (Department of Health and Social Care, 2021). Community mental health services will also be expanded, giving 22,500 more children and young people access to support by the end of 2022, including talking therapies and cognitive behavioural therapies. In 2021, a training programme was launched for schools to designate a trained senior Mental Health Lead tasked with identifying those who need support and improving access to services. Eligible schools and colleges were also able to apply for a grant of £1,200 to roll out a practical 'whole school approach' to mental health and wellbeing (Public Health England, 2021). However, these systems are generally designed to address critical cases. Expending large budgets on crisis management, rather than crisis prevention, may actually reduce the capacity for the more upstream preventative approach that SEL embodies.

Additionally, the government has been criticised for minimising post-covid 'catch-up' budgets, prompting the resignation of England's Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins, whose recommendations for a £15bn recovery plan were reduced to £4bn - just £22 per average primary school child per year, prioritising academic 'catch-up' (in the form of the National Tutoring programme), rather than broader outcomes, including SES. The contrast with other countries' budgets is stark; for example, the US has invested £1,600 per young person, and the Netherlands has allocated £2500 per head (Crenna-Jennings, 2021). While developments such as appointing a school or college Mental Health Lead seem progressive, they have also been criticised for being tokenistic and failing to address the root systemic issues in providing mental health services for young people (Youth Access, 2021), and what we see as fundamental to addressing the mental health crisis: enhancing SES provision.

6.3 Possible implications

In a post-Covid 19 world, schools' approaches to the development of SEL have the potential to make a significant difference to young people's wellbeing and attainment. However, as schools struggle under immense pressure to deliver lockdown 'catch-up', there is a risk that SEL provision will remain inconsistent and un-strategic without clear advocacy, policy guidance, and support, leaving too many young people at risk of poorer outcomes. Increased demands on services have limited the positive impact of a renewed focus on SEL, and increases in mental health provision are not expansive enough to keep up with the increased demand for wellbeing interventions. Schools are facing a storm of pressures, especially on finances and staff recruitment and retention. In this context, whether or how they might 'up their SEL game' remains to be seen. The role of Multi Academy Trusts in adopting whole-trust approaches to SEL will be crucial,

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as will how Ofsted inspect and interpret the 'personal development' aspect of school inspections or judge schools more broadly on SEL.

There is, of course, no contradiction between a focus on academic outcomes and social and emotional learning. One can reinforce the other. However, there are tensions, if nothing else, in terms of the precious time that schools have with their learners and the choices on how this time is spent (Ofsted 2022a).

Early indications on Key Stage Two and especially GCSE results are that the feared decline in results and widening of attainment gaps may not have fully materialised (Thomson, 2022). This, of course, does not imply any kind of complacency; regional disparities have grown, and younger students' performance may prove to have been more affected as they reach the age for public examinations. However, there is an emerging view that the pandemic might have had a more significant negative impact on young people's SES than on their academic performance. Although there is no empirical evidence to prove or disprove this, if school leaders and policymakers begin to believe that this is the case, it could have profound implications for how schools prioritise time and resources.

7. Catalysing SEL in England

"Social and emotional learning is an absolutely legitimate part of the solution to multiple challenges that education systems and societies around the world are facing. From the future of work and the economy, to societal polarisation, to the learning crisis. For so long, it's been portrayed as a false dichotomy in education that you are either doing SEL, or you're doing traditional PISA learning. But actually, they're mutually reinforcing." Dominic Regester

7.1 A systemic approach to SEL

Despite several decades of increased attention, several specific policy initiatives, and a growth in SEL-centred programmes and interventions, SEL in England is an agenda that remains fragile and vulnerable to more seemingly pressing priorities. This is not unusual. Generally, ambitions for young people that go beyond basic skills and academic outcomes struggle to gain sustained traction across school systems, partly because, like SEL, they lack a shared understanding of definitions, goals and what constitutes high-quality provision. Although some contexts of pandemic recovery give cause for optimism, SEL might face a 'double-squeeze', priority-wise. First, the inevitable and increased pressure to improve academic outcomes and narrow academic gaps, partly provoked by challenging new 2030 SATs and GCSE targets. Second, the increases in young people's mental health referrals might force schools to focus resources on the 'acute end', leaving less space and resources for more universal, preventative whole-school SEL-approaches.

What might turn the dial? Advocates for SEL across the world consistently argue that SEL-focused interventions are necessary but insufficient. Whether at school, local or national level, a systemic approach is required, "carried out in the context of a consistent, multi-layered educational system of relationships that support, integrate, and sustain social and emotional learning synergistically across contexts and over time" (Mahoney & Weissberg, 2018). Linking this to the outer rims of the CASEL wheel, they emphasise the importance of multiple contexts in which SEL should happen – in the school, home and wider community.

CASEL suggests ten features of a systemic approach to SEL, quoted below in full: (CASEL, 2020).

11. **Explicit SEL instruction**: students have consistent opportunities to cultivate, practice, and reflect on social and emotional competencies in developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive ways.
12. **SEL integrated with academic instruction**: SEL objectives are integrated into instructional content and teaching strategies for academics as well as music, art, and physical education.
13. **Youth voice and engagement**: Staff honour and elevate a broad range of student perspectives and experiences by engaging students as leaders, problem solvers, and decision-makers.
14. **Supportive school and classroom climates**: Schoolwide and classroom learning environments are supportive, culturally responsive, and focused on building relationships and community.
15. **Focus on adult SEL**: Staff have regular opportunities to cultivate their own social, emotional, and cultural competence, collaborate with one another, build trusting relationships, and maintain a strong community.

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16. **Supportive discipline**: Discipline policies and practices are instructive, restorative, developmentally appropriate, and equitably applied.
17. **A continuum of integrated supports/resources**: SEL is seamlessly integrated into a continuum of academic and behavioural supports, which are available to ensure that all student needs are met.
18. **Authentic family partnerships**: Families and school staff have regular and meaningful opportunities to build relationships and collaborate to support students' social, emotional, and academic development.
19. **Aligned community partnerships**: School staff and community partners align on common language, strategies, and communication around all SEL-related efforts and initiatives, including out-of-school time.
20. **Systems for continuous development**: Implementation and outcome data are collected and used to continuously improve all SEL-related systems, practices, and policies with a focus on equity.

In the US, CASEL is working with several districts to design and implement a systemic approach to SEL based practice that "contrast with a narrow view of SEL focused only on classroom programs and explicit social and emotional skills instruction" (CASEL, 2020, p.4). They also suggest that, while schools can take responsibility for a whole school strategy that effectively harnesses the multiple contexts of school, home and community, a fully systemic approach requires other elements of the school system to play its part, so that SEL can become as much of a priority as academic outcomes. They stress the crucial role of local and national actors: systemic approaches to creating "equitable learning conditions…require aligned policies, resources, and actions at state and district levels" (Mahoney et al., 2020, p.2).

Taking this thinking into an English context, what might these aligned policies, resources and actions look like?

7.2   Using systems thinking

CASEL's checklist above offers valuable pointers to help schools develop a systemic whole-school approach to SEL and, therefore, help governments to create an enabling environment conducive to this approach. However, to our knowledge, no SEL researchers or practitioners have attempted to understand this environment through a broader 'systems thinking' lens.

Systems thinking in education has emerged as a common way to analyse education systems and propose and implement priorities for improvement. Its use has evolved from tacit to explicit in the last few decades, and from the Global North to the Global South (Fuller & Kim, 2022). Ndaruhutse, Jones and Rigall (2019) define system thinking as 'an approach which recognises the dynamic complexity of an education system and works with the end goal of improving learning outcomes at scale' (p.25). When exploring an educational problem –for instance, basic literacy skills– reformers use systems thinking to consider all the levers that influence this problem and align actions across all these levers to solve it. So rather than implement a new curriculum, and then perhaps carry out some teacher training at a later unknown date, systems thinking attempts to make change happen in schools and classrooms through carefully sequenced or concurrent policies.

SEL might significantly benefit from systems thinking approach as it is a complex 'wicked issue'. It interacts not only with the school system but with health services and

a broader set of services for children and families. Its outcomes are contested, both in terms of whether it should be prioritised and how the skills it seeks to develop should be defined and measured. And, as the OECD's recent survey shows, the way these skills develop in young people is far from linear (OECD, 2021).

A complete systems thinking analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. However, a rapid application of Ndaruhutse et al.'s six accelerators (see Figure 5) to SEL leads to some questions that might guide the next steps for policy and practice (see Table 6).
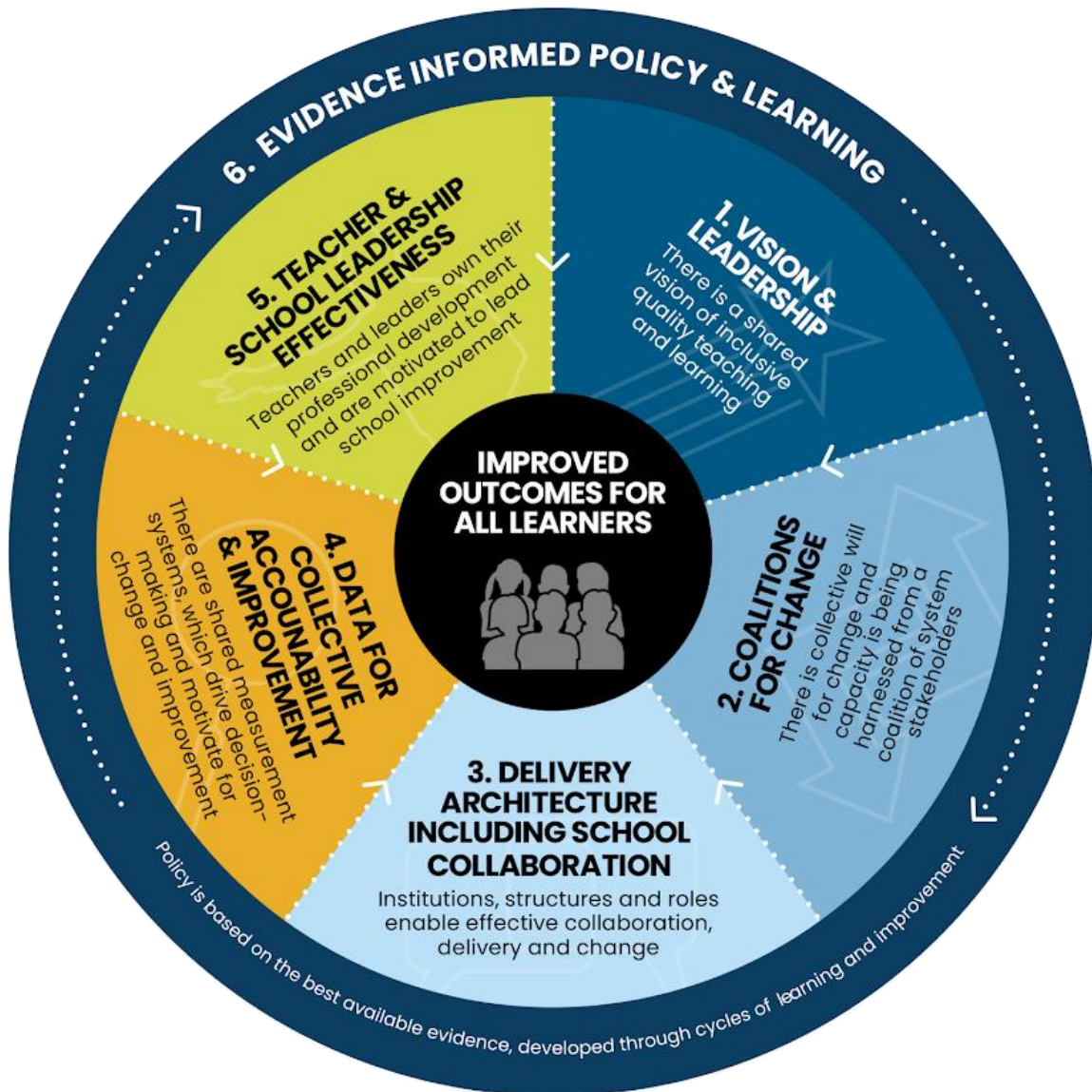

Figure 6 EDT's Systems Thinking model (Ndaruhutse et al., 2019)

Table 11 Emerging questions

Accelerator	Possible SEL-focused questions for England's policymakers
1) Vision and leadership	To what extent is there a shared vision for inclusive, high quality teaching of SEL, and how might this vision be best built?
2) Coalitions for change	Where might be the beginnings of a coalition of system stakeholders with a common interest in SEL, ready to create a collective will for change?

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3)	Delivery architecture	How might the structural changes in our education system - from increases in academisation to changes to SEND and social care, to the creation of senior mental health leads - enable a more effective delivery architecture for SEL?
4)	Data for collective accountability	How might existing shared measurement systems (for instance Ofsted's personal development category), and possible new shared data systems (for instance #BeeWell), better drive decision-making and motivate improvement?
5)	Teacher and school leader effectiveness	How can teachers and leaders better understand and be motivated to lead improvements in SEL across schools?
6)	Evidence-informed policy and learning	How can we improve the evidence base upon which SEL-related decisions are made?

7.3   Some possible directions for England

"I think what we hear from practitioners themselves is that if social and emotional learning isn't presented in a way where it's connected to larger school or district goals, it starts to slip away." Heather Schwartz

After the pandemic, schools everywhere need stability and patience. In our view, now is not the time for radical policy changes that disrupt their careful recovery work, but embedding policy that enhances and complements it. We therefore begin with what we are *not* recommending: no new version of the national SEAL programme; no changes to the Ofsted Framework or other additional SEL-related accountability and data demands on schools; no ring-fenced demands on existing school funding; and no additional guidance on SRE, PSHE mental health and wellbeing.

However, our analysis suggests a need to bring coherence to the SEL agenda; a coherence that:

- goes beyond the necessary current concentration on pupils with poor emotional health towards more preventative, all-children approaches;
- enables genuine partnership working between schools and external organisations, built on improved mutual understanding of needs and expertise;
- supports the levelling up of SES, so that efforts are targeted at disadvantaged pupils with a clear focus on contributing to improved attainment outcomes.

Our nine recommendations go with the grain of existing structures and priorities for emerging policy changes.

Community and coalition building

1. Funders with an interest in SEL, as well as supporting the growth of individual programmes, should create a national SEL network to share best practice and foster a consensus around SEL amongst schools, external providers, policymakers and academics.

2. This SEL network should be charged with creating a new definition of SEL and its components, that builds consensus around a measurable framework, recognises the crucial nature of SEL in our education system, and positions SEL as complementary to, not a replacement of academic support.

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3. Government, in partnership with local and national funders should invest in local or regional SEL partnerships that, working with schools, local services and external providers, take a long-term, whole-locality approach to the development of SEL.[14]

School and teacher development

4. Schools should use CASEL's ten features of the systemic approach to SEL to inform equity-centred changes to their SEL strategies.

5. Government, the new Institute of Teaching, and the accredited providers of the early career framework and the NPQs should explore how improved understanding and teaching of SEL can be woven into the 'golden thread' of teacher and school leader development.

6. Ofsted should carry out a full analysis of its 'personal development' inspection to understand how it influences schools' approaches to SEL and narrow outcomes.

Data, evidence and further research

7. All SEL programmes should take more rigorous, formative long-term approaches to understanding their impact, where possible and conduct relevant evaluation of the impact on specific groups of children.

8. England should create data that is more comprehensive and comparative by nationally rolling out the '#BeeWell' survey currently being trialled in Greater Manchester and participating in the next OECD survey of social and emotional skills.

9. Researchers and research funders should investigate pandemic 'bright spots' to examine why and how some children thrived, socially and emotionally, during the pandemic, or bounced back more rapidly since the return to school, and how schools might learn from changes in school practices during and since the pandemic.

"Our role is [also] to build an evidence base that can influence policy makers and practitioners elsewhere to ensure that everybody is considering wellbeing as a key part of the education setting." Cara Cinnamon, CEO, Khulisa

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[14] These can be based in existing local partnership structures - for instance, the growing number of Area-Based Education partnerships that support collaborative improvement across MATs and maintained schools in many localities.

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Appendix 1

Description of the skills included in the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (from OECD, 2021)

DOMAINS	SKILLS	DESCRIPTION	BEHAVIOURAL EXAMPLES
OPEN-MINDEDNESS (Openness to experience)	Curiosity	Interested in ideas and love of learning, understanding and intellectual exploration; an inquisitive mindset.	Likes to read books, to travel to new destinations. Opposite: Dislikes change, is not interested in exploring new products.
	Tolerance	Is open to different points of view, values diversity, is appreciative of foreign people and cultures.	Has friends from different backgrounds. Opposite: Dislikes foreigners or people from different backgrounds.
	Creativity	Generates novel ways to do or think about things through exploring, learning from failure, insight and vision.	Has original insights, creates valued artworks Opposite: Acts conventionally; not interested in arts.
TASK PERFORMANCE (Conscientiousness)	Responsibility	Able to honour commitments, and be punctual and reliable.	Arrives on time for appointments, gets chores done right away. Opposite: Doesn't follow through on agreements/ promises.
	Self-control	Able to avoid distractions and sudden impulses and focus attention on the current task in order to achieve personal goals.	Postpones fun activities until important tasks are completed, does not rush into things. Opposite: Is prone to say things before thinking them through. Binge drinking.
	Persistence	Able to persevere in tasks and activities until they get done.	Finishes homework projects or work once started. Opposite: Gives up easily when confronted with obstacles/distractions.
ENGAGING WITH OTHERS (Extraversion)	Sociability	Able to approach others, both friends and strangers, initiating and maintaining social connections.	Skilled at teamwork, good at public speaking. Opposite: Can struggle in working with a larger team, avoids public speaking.
	Assertiveness	Able to confidently voice opinions, needs, and feelings, and exert social influence.	Takes charge in a class or team. Opposite: Waits for others to lead the way; keeps quiet when disagrees with others.
	Energy	Approaches daily life with energy, excitement and spontaneity.	Is always busy; works long hours. Opposite: Gets tired easily without physical cause.
COLLABORATION (agreeableness)	Empathy	Understands and cares about others, and their wellbeing. Values and invests in close relationships.	Consoles a friend who is upset, sympathises with the homeless. Opposite: Tends to misinterpret, ignore or disregard other person's feelings.

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	Trust	Assumes that others generally have good intentions and forgives those who have done wrong.	Lends things to people, avoids being harsh or judgmental. Opposite: Is secretive and suspicious in relations with people.
	Co-operation	Lives in harmony with others and values interconnectedness among all people.	Finds it easy to get along with people, respects decisions made by a group. Opposite: Is prone to arguments or conflicts with others; does not tend to compromise.
EMOTIONAL REGULATION (emotional stability)	**Stress resistance**	Effectiveness in modulating anxiety and able to calmly solve problems (is relaxed, handles stress well).	Is relaxed most of the time, performs well in high-pressure situations. Opposite: Most of the time worries about things, difficulties sleeping.
	Optimism	Positive and optimistic expectations for self and life in general.	Generally in a good mood. Opposite: Often feels sad, tends to feel insecure or unworthy.
	Emotional control	Effective strategies for regulating temper, anger and irritation in the face of frustrations.	Controls emotions in situations of conflict. Opposite: Gets upset easily; is moody.
ADDITIONAL INDICES	**Achievement motivation**	Sets high standards for oneself and works hard to meet them.	Enjoys reaching a high level of mastery in some activity. Opposite: Lack of interest in reaching mastery in any activity, including professional competencies.
	Self-efficacy	The strength of individuals' beliefs in their ability to execute tasks and achieve goals	Remains calm when facing unexpected events. Opposite: Avoids challenging situations.

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