

# Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)



Learning  
through  
Landscapes

**„SEL FOR SCHOOLS“**

**„It's good for them, it's good for you - Social & Emotional Learning  
through bringing nature back to schools“,**

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# Course content

- Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) project.
- Social and Emotional Learning core competencies. What are they? Suggested practical activity and casestudies:
  1. Self awareness- Case study Bovington Academy, England
  2. Self management- Case study Craigdhu Primary, Scotland
  3. Relationship skills- Case study Ysgol Ynyswen, Wales
  4. Social awareness- Case studies Spain and Kindergarten A. Pridavka, Slovakia
  5. Responsible decision making- Case study Dingli Primary, Malta
- Benefits of social and emotional learning outdoors summary
- Resources

# The SEL Project Partners



# The SEL Project structure

- To promote **outdoor learning and emotional wellbeing**, with a particular focus on birds
- Early years children, predominantly aged 5 were studied from the UK, Malta, Spain and Slovakia. In the UK schools across England, Scotland and Wales were involved.
- Questionnaires were done at the start, followed by a suite of activities, then repeated the questionnaires to see how much had changed.
- Data collated, analysed, and a report written by the University of Presov in Slovakia to show findings.

# The SEL Project Findings

- Including social and emotional learning activities outside has a positive effect on children.
- They are more able to recognise emotions and more able to talk about how they feel.
- Being outside has a calming effect and behaviour improved





# Five core competencies of SEL

- Self awareness
- Self management
- Relationship skills
- Social awareness
- Responsible decision making

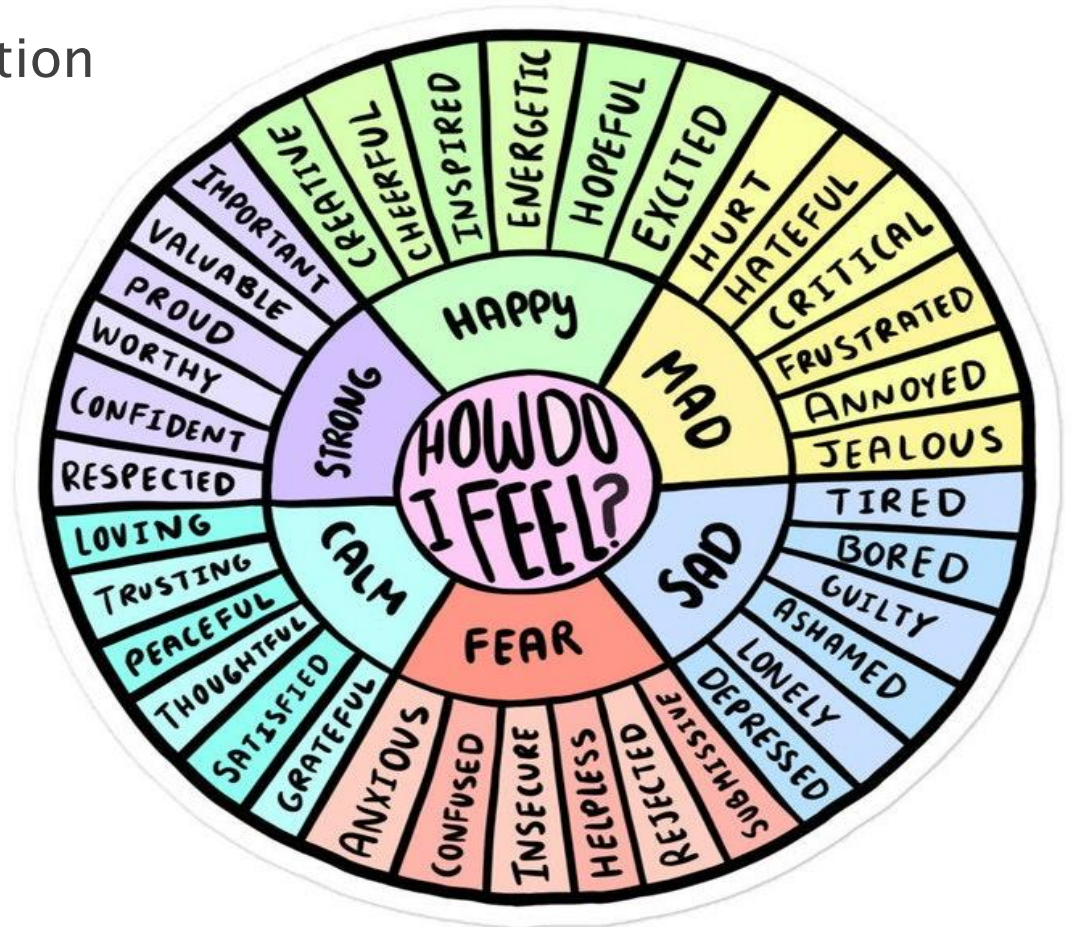






# Self awareness

- Recognising how you feel and labelling the emotion
- Know your own strengths and weaknesses
- Work towards growth



# Self awareness- Practical activity

We are going to consider how our feelings make us feel, and what they do to our bodies/faces do when we feel that way.

To help us we are going to use the story of The Colour Monster by Anna Llenas.

Click on the image to hear the story  
or

Copy and paste this link into your  
web browser.

<https://youtu.be/RCfKFEWZpEY>





# Self awareness- Practical activity

- Describe what your Happy/Sad/Scared/Angry is, and what it feels like when you're outside?
- *"This is happiness. It shines yellow like the sun and twinkles like the stars. When you're happy you laugh and jump and dance and play!"*

The Colour Monster by Anna Llenas





# Self awareness- Expressing feelings

- **Behind every behaviour is a feeling;** Naming the feeling- gives your children the vocabulary to talk about their feelings
- **Identify feelings in others-** use books, video clips or cartoons as reference points
- **Be a role model-** children will learn by watching you. Showing that **feelings are normal**, and how to behave reinforces appropriate behaviour. **Encourage with praise.**
- **Listen to your child's feelings-** resist the urge to make bad feelings go away. **Allow the child to experience the feeling** so that they feel heard.







# Self awareness- Covid's affects

- Covid has affected children's awareness of social cues, and their ability to read emotions on peoples faces, particularly when obscured by masks. (National Library of Medicine May 2021 )
- Read full article here <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8185341/>





# Case Study- Bovington Academy, England

## The School setting

- The school is situated in Bovington in Dorset, and next to Bovington Army Camp. Many of the children have a parent or carer who is in the armed services and are subject to the particular pressures associated with Service life.
- There are 10 classes across an age range of 4-11 and they currently have 235 children on roll.
- The school has extensive grounds and has a Forest School area which is a bit neglected.







# Case Study- Bovington Academy, England

The benefits of outdoor learning:

- The children's behaviour became more settled with me and they enjoyed doing activities with their class teacher such as e.g. breathing along to a chime.
- They enjoy going outside the classroom.





# Case Study- Bovington Academy, England

## Getting to know birds

- At the start of the project the children knew the names of a few types of birds – Robin, Blackbird – but they weren't very interested.
- **Over the period of the project, the children became more interested in birds.** Choosing to watch birds, and they noticed when a bird made a nest just outside the classroom, and happily spent time watching its activities. They became generally more interested in birds.
- The children's **knowledge about birds increased** a lot due to the variety of activities they took part in.







# Case Study- Bovington Academy, England

Bovington Academy teacher's advice to other teachers:

**I recommend other teachers to embrace social and emotional learning activities**, as I think they give the children great coping strategies. I have found them to be very **powerful activities** to do with children in the past. A combination of regular activities e.g. breathing activities, as well as one-off activities e.g. relationship mapping, work well.

Quotes from the children:

- Freya said that her thumbs were down because nobody would work with her when we were outside bird watching. I asked her how this made her feel. She said 'sad'. I asked the class how they felt when they heard she said she was sad and what could they do to help her. Children suggested giving her a hug. I then asked the children to hug a child next to them.







# Self management

- How you respond to situations, recognising how your actions can make others feel
- How you regulate your thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Knowing that is it OK to feel that, but also knowing what to do when you feel that way







# Self management- Practical activity

- Lie down on the ground outside, close your eyes, and just relax and listen
- *“Of all the natural sounds, bird songs and calls were those most often cited as helping people recover from stress, and allowing them to restore and refocus their attention.”*

How listening to bird song can transform our mental health. From [nhm.ac.uk](http://nhm.ac.uk)





# Self management- Coping strategies

- Take deep breaths
- Count to 10
- Ask for help or support
- Walking away and taking time out
- Relaxing before trying again
- Try a different why to do something
- Spending time with a trusted person
- Talking to help find a solution







# Case Study- Craigdhu Primary Scotland

## The School setting

- Craigdhu Primary has a roll of approx. 250 children, with classes sizes between 24-30 children. It is set within the community of Milngavie, just outside the city of Glasgow.
- To the front of the school lies a small housing development and to the side and rear, is farm land. Our green spaces surround the school with a lovely wooded area to the rear.







# Case Study- Craigdhu Primary Scotland

The benefits of getting outdoors

- I found **the biggest shift for a few children, was their love of the outdoors that developed.** A few would complain at the start of the year about spending long times outside in all weather conditions. **The more the children experienced, the more they began to get used to the elements.**
- **Using birds as a focus was very engaging and motivating for the children.** They enjoyed watching and creating food/homes for the birds. Their knowledge of the different types of birds grew greatly and was a very useful contrast to them when discussing feelings as the children correctly stated that birds don't have faces to show emotions







# Case Study- Craigdhu Primary Scotland

## The benefits of getting outdoors

- I also think that connecting with nature was important for the study as it has helped the children develop a real positive relationship with nature.





# Case Study- Craigdhu Primary Scotland

Craigdhu Primary teacher's advice to other teachers:

- My advice to other teachers would be to **have a theme to help focus the children, allowing them to learn about nature around them.** I feel that nature connectedness and social and emotional learning go hand in hand.

Quotes from the children

- "I liked drawing pictures outside."
- "I liked looking for bugs."
- "I liked learning about birds because they are nature and I like nature."







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# Relationship skills

- The ability to communicate clearly, listen well and cooperate with others.
- Team working
- Resist negative social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively and offer help when needed







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# Relationship skills- Practical activity

- Build a nest big enough for 2 people to sit in. Use materials/items you find from your outside space.
- *"If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself"*

Henry Ford, founder of Ford motor company







# Case Study- Ysgol Ynyswen, Wales

## The School setting

- YGG Ynyswen is a Welsh primary school at the top of the Rhondda valley with 257 children. The school backs onto an industrial estate and has forestry and hills on either side.
- Over the last few years the school has improved their outdoor area. They don't have a vast grass area, but there are a few trees and astro turf. We have a wildlife area, a couple of outdoor learning sheds, reading shed, a willow dome, a mud kitchen, an adventure park and outdoor stage and also an outdoor classroom area for the nursery children.





# Case Study- Ysgol Ynyswen, Wales

The benefits of getting outdoors

- We saw a **big impact on the children that were behind academically** with regards to reading and writing as they got more involved and were more forthcoming during activities, this **boosted their confidence**.
- We have been fortunate to have a Blue Tit nesting outside our classroom, and this made aspects from the project more real for the children. Once again, the **children reacted positively to the activities**, and has given them a chance to **talk about their feelings** and to start to **show empathy** towards the characters in the stories.







# Case Study- Ysgol Ynyswen, Wales

The benefits of getting outdoors

- To use a story book at the start of an activity/topic, this is a good way to start a discussion on feelings and empathy. Many books offer themselves naturally to outdoor learning
- SEL learning can be done across all areas of learning and is easily planned.





# Case Study- Ysgol Ynyswen, Wales

## The benefits of getting outdoors

- More children were engaged in activities, and it **improved their language and social skills**. They also became more independent when trying new activities. There was a definite excitement within the children during these activities.
- Some tasks were set on our “SEESAW” app and this was a way to involve family members, encouraging them to spend more time outdoors.







# Case Study- Ysgol Ynyswen, Wales

Ysgol Ynyswen Primary teacher's advice to other teachers:

- **Not to be afraid to try a new way of learning** or be put off by challenges within a class/ or school environment. **The children react positively** in different environments, enjoy new experiences/ challenges, and develop new skills during SEL activities.
- To listen to “pupil voice” , they often have ideas for activities that I wouldn't have thought of.





# Case Study- Ysgol Ynyswen, Wales

## Quotes from the children

- *"This year I have enjoyed doing the yoga tree."*
- *"This year I have enjoyed going up the forest."*
- *"I have enjoyed learning about Robins."*
- *"I have enjoyed making a face out of clay up the mountain"*







# Social awareness

- The ability to see from another persons perspective. To show empathy.
- To understand social norms in behaviour, and know that there are people who can help you
- Respect for others



# Social awareness- Practical activity

- Set up a pond scene using rope to show the pond edge, and place some small toy ducks in the middle of the pond and a bigger/adult duck on the land surrounding it.

## The scenario

The ducklings are separate from their adult care giver

Consider the following:

- How might the babies feel?
- How might the adult feel?
- How do you feel about this situation?





# Case Study- Spain

## The School setting

- The school is on the coast near an agricultural area in a city of 130000 inhabitants.
- The school has 18 classes with around 25 students per class.
- The school playground is currently a mostly paved area with a football pitch and two shaded areas with trees and natural elements.





# Case Study- Spain

## The benefits of getting outdoors

- They are **more aware of the importance and care of the environment** and the birds. The fact of enjoying the outdoors generates well-being and satisfies their need for movement, and inspires curiosity.
- **Animals are a very motivating subject** and being able to observe them daily from the school playground has generated interest in knowing more about them.







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# Case Study- Spain

Spanish Primary teacher's advice to other teachers:

- We think that in our case the project has worked very well for us because we have linked it to the children's immediate environment and to our day-to-day reality at school.







# Case Study- Kindergarten A. Pridavka, Prešov, Slovakia

## The School setting

- Our kindergarten is located on a housing estate in the city of Prešov. Many children live in blocks of flats in the housing estate, so they have very little contact with the natural environment.
- In the past, this place was fertile land where vegetables were grown. We have several kinds of trees in the school garden, for example: chestnut trees, where the children go to collect chestnuts.
- In the kindergarten, there are six classes, each of them has its own profile, which are focused on environmental and physical education as well as nature protection.







# Case Study- Kindergarten A. Pridavka, Prešov, Slovakia

## The benefits of getting outdoors

- Before the implementation of the program, the children perceived nature and the natural environment only in general. We noticed a low level of knowledge about birds and nature among some children.
- During the project **the children began to pay more attention to the natural environment** in the school garden, which provided them with new opportunities for self-realization, learning and discovery. **They acquired a positive attitude** towards the environment, observed trees, tree crowns, life in them, birds, bugs.
- They students started to be **more considerate, more empathetic towards each other**, they reacted more sensitively/with deeper perception to the situations that arose.
- After completing the SEL project, they had richer knowledge, they were able to name different species of birds, based on direct or indirect observation. They **transferred the acquired emotional skills and knowledge to the home environment**, too, while sharing the experience and activities with their parents. They expressed joy from physical movement and **happiness from being outside**.





# Case Study- Kindergarten A. Pridavka, Prešov, Slovakia

Kindergarten A. Pridavka teacher's advice to other teachers:

- **Carry out as many activities as possible outside** and in the natural environment. The activities themselves will ensure a better social and emotional development of children.

## Quotes from the children

- "We are going to draw and paint birdhouses"
- "We live in houses - let them live in houses too" (assembling of birdhouses)
- "Birds are like a rainbow" (color of the wings)
- "The thrush lost the earthworm" (talking what happened a day before in a morning circle)







# Responsible decision making

- The ability to make choices about how you behave and interact with others
- To consider the consequences of a behaviour
- Analysing and solving problems including considerations of moral and ethical responsibility



# Responsible decision making- Practical activity

Using your pond scene from the previous activity

- Can you find a way to get the baby ducks and Mummy/Daddy back together?
- You may only use rope, elastic bands and sticks. You must not cross the rope into the pond





# Case Study- Dingli School, Malta

## The School setting

- There are 21 classes, 2 offices for SLT, an office divided into 2 for the secretaries, a big hall, PE room, clinic and a kitchenette.
- For outdoor space the school has four yards; one of them is covered with artificial turf and has trees and a garden.
- The school has around 230 students.





# Case Study- Dingli School, Malta

## The benefits of getting outdoors

- I noticed how bubbly the children were. **They didn't hold back from expressing themselves** and sharing ideas with each other on any project we were working on.
- They were free to move around in class when needed and this gave them the **opportunity to interact more with each other** and with the adults in class. I could see smiley faces on all the children.







# Case Study- Dingli School, Malta

## The benefits of getting outdoors

- Children enjoyed having outdoor sessions . The introduction of circle time helped a lot, as they started to **share their feelings**, worked more on eye-hand coordination activities.
- I still had to work on the curriculum we had. However, I tried to **integrate some of the lessons outside, such as reading and maths**. Time flew by quickly when we were outside, in fact when I used to tell my students it's time to go inside they would all reply 'Already'.





# Case Study- Dingli School, Malta

The benefits of getting outdoors

- They enjoyed birdwatching. We mostly had sparrows. We used to see a lot from our class window since they came to rest on the electrical lines. Eventually the children could identify between a male and female sparrow.







# Case Study- Dingli School, Malta

Dingli School teacher's advice to other teachers:

- One should **be adventurous and try outdoor sessions**. Once experiencing outdoor session, you'll realise that the child's interest increases whilst being fully engaged in the activity.
- Through outdoor sessions **the children focus more** and you can see that they are willing to experiment more by themselves .

Quotes from the children

- " Look a Sparrow!!"
- "We're having fun"





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# Reminder- Five core competencies

- Self awareness
- Self management
- Relationship skills
- Social awareness
- Responsible decision making







# Benefits of including SEL activities

Children who learn healthy ways to express and cope with their feelings are more likely to:

- Have more positive and stable relationships
- Have good mental health and wellbeing
- Display less behavioural problems
- Develop resilience and coping skills
- Feel more competent, capable and confident
- Have a positive sense of self



# Resources

- ‘The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment.’ Public Health England 2014
- ‘Improving social and emotional learning in primary schools’ Education Endowment Foundation 2019
- ‘5 steps to mental health and wellbeing’  
[Mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk](http://Mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk)



# Resources

There are apps that might help:

- [Resilient Educator](#) - Offers resources for educators looking to understand what social-emotional learning is and how to integrate it into the classroom.
- [GoNoodle](#) - A tool that incorporates fun interactive videos to help a student's physical wellness, academic success, and social-emotional health.

Thank you for your interest, on behalf of the SEL Project Partners





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