THE IMPACT OF THE ‘SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING’ FRAMEWORK ON PRIMARY AGED PUPILS’ LEARNING, ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the Degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities

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ABSTRACT

In 2005, twenty four Lindale schools implemented the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) framework “Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning” (SEAL). The framework was initially introduced for primary aged children with the aim of developing their social and emotional skills, through the domains of self awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. However, research around the development of children’s social and emotional skills had also suggested that this could improve attainments, attendance and reduce exclusions.

This research explores the impact of the DCSF SEAL curriculum on the distal measures of Key Stage 2 SATs (Standardised Attainments Test) results, attendance, exclusions and pupil referrals for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support. It is longitudinal and compares the data for Lindale primary schools implementing SEAL with those who were not implementing the framework. The impact is measured between 2005, when SEAL was first delivered in twenty four Lindale primary schools, to 2009 when all primary schools had received training in this area. In 2007, semi structured interviews were carried out with a sample of the 2005 cohort of schools. Responses are presented from head teachers, SENCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators), children and other colleagues in the authority regarding the impact of SEAL in these schools. The study also considers, in more detail, the impact of SEAL on five schools from the original cohort, who were considered to be examples of “Best Practice” in this area.

The research indicates no association between the implementation of SEAL and improvements in Key Stage 2 SATs results, attendance or exclusions. These findings were replicated in the more in depth consideration of five schools. However, there has been a gradual decrease, year on year, in the number of pupils referred for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support as an increasing number of schools have implemented SEAL. The views of professionals and children, involved in the original cohort of schools implementing SEAL, are positive about the framework’s impact, particularly in terms of pupils’ behaviour.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEST Behaviour and Education Support Team
BIP Behaviour Improvement Programme
CAMHs Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CVA Contextual Value Added
DCSF Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE Department for Education
DfES Department for Education and Schools
EP Educational Psychologist
EWO Educational Welfare Officer
HEA Health Education Authority
IES Institute of Education and Science
INSET In Service Training
KS 1 Key Stage 1
KS 2 Key Stage 2
NHSS National Healthy Schools Standard
OFSTED Office for Standards in Education
PATH Principled Approach to Humanitarian Action
PISA Programme for International Student Assessment
PREVnet Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence
QCA Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QCT Quality Circle Time
REM Reciprocal Effects Model
SATS Standard Assessment Tests
SEAL Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEBD  Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SEBS Social, Emotional and Beahvioural Skills
SEED Social and Emotional Early Development
SEL Social and Emotional Learning
SEN Special Educational Needs
SENC0 Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SIP School Improvement Partner
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
1. INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the DfES (Department for Education and Schools) framework entitled, ‘Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills’ (DfES, 2003b) was developed and piloted in Lindale primary schools. In 2005, it was renamed ‘Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ (DfES, 2005) and is a structured, whole school framework for all pupils. It is directed at the foundation stage and primary phase and encompasses the concepts and development of skills associated with emotional literacy. The curriculum targets every pupil, with the involvement of all staff, governors and parents. This study evaluates the impact of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ (SEAL) framework, on Lindale schools, that began implementing the curriculum between 2005 and 2008.

The initial stages involved the development of a SEAL steering group. The original cohort of this group consisted of over twelve members and was considered to be unproductive in terms of size and decision making. Consequently, a core group of four members was formed. These four officers from the authority attended Primary SEAL conferences delivered by the DfES throughout 2003 and 2004. The officers were an Inclusion Development Officer, an Advanced Skills Teacher, a School Improvement Partner (SIP) and, myself, an Educational Psychologist (EP). We were allocated time between 2004 and 2009 to support the implementation of Primary SEAL in Lindale and attend national and regional SEAL conferences. The responsibilities included management of the funding and how this could be most effectively used to support schools with the process of implementing SEAL.
My role as the Educational Psychologist, involved with SEAL, evolved from my service lead in the area of social, emotional and behavioural needs. I had previously carried out research regarding the impact of a small group emotional literacy programme on social, emotional and behavioural skills. Therefore, my position as SEAL Educational Psychologist provided me with the opportunity to carry out more extensive research in this area. Although this SEAL evaluation would inform Local Authority officers and schools, it was not directed. The research was primarily carried out for personal Continued Professional Development. My role comprised of the practical aspects of SEAL training and implementation and also that of researcher into the long term impact of the framework.

In June 2005, we advertised an introductory training day for head teachers and SENCos. This was through the school bulletin and the SEAL training day was well attended. A decision was made for schools to opt into whether they wanted to be in the original cohort of Lindale schools to implement SEAL. Twenty four head teachers declared their intention to develop SEAL in their schools from September 2005. These schools were provided with funding to enable staff development and training in this area. The training was provided by the steering group and this was through training days and subsequent INSET (In Service Training) to staff. The staff in these schools were also supported through network SEAL meetings and the facilitation of SEAL lesson observations.

In September 2005, the twenty four schools trialled materials and began the implementation of the framework. In September 2006, a further 47 schools
began the implementation of SEAL, following training and support. In September 2007, a further 24 schools implemented SEAL and in 2008, an additional 16 schools were trained and supported.

The focus of this research is the impact of SEAL on the primary schools that were supported in their implementation of the framework. It evolved into three stages. In stage one, the impact was measured in terms of attainments (Key Stage 1 and 2 average points SATs scores), attendance and exclusions. The number of pupil referrals for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support was also considered. These measures were considered over time, between 2004 and 2007, and SEAL schools were compared with those who had not yet introduced SEAL. Having considered the results of stage one, a decision was made to include stages two and three of this research.

In stage two, the views of head teachers, Special Needs Coordinators (SENCos), School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and National Healthy Schools colleagues are presented to provide some qualitative data on the impact of SEAL in a sample of the initial cohort of schools. These views were gathered through semi structured interviews and consideration of reports, in 2007, for the purpose of SEAL feedback for the Joint Area Review (JAR). Therefore, this data was not initially intended for the purpose of this thesis.

The inclusion of stage 3 was to consider the impact of SEAL on attainments in five schools that had evidenced they had embedded the SEAL framework. With the extensive research around poverty and academic success, the Contextual
Value Added (CVA) scores for pupils receiving free school meals were compared with scores for pupils not receiving free school meals. This was to consider if the attainment gap for pupils from more disadvantaged socio economic backgrounds was narrowed following the implementation of SEAL. Comments from OFSTED reports, regarding aspects of SEAL, were also considered.

The rationale for this research was that the DCSF had promoted the development of SEAL in terms of improving children’s social and emotional wellbeing (DCSF, 2004). However, they also referred to the relationship between developing social and emotional skills and improved learning, citing Greenhalgh’s (1994) statement that, “effective learning is dependent on emotional growth” (p.21). Durlak and Wells (1997) stated that programmes that develop social and emotional skills can improve attendance, along with motivation and morale. Reference was made to school becoming more inclusive if these skills are developed through the framework (Epstein and Elias, 1996). However, this had not been researched in direct relationship to the SEAL curriculum. As a result, I wanted to consider the impact on these distal measures, as SEAL was being introduced locally and nationally. Qualitative feedback from professionals, involved with SEAL, was included to provide a more holistic vision of the impact of the programme.

The aim of this research was to evaluate the longitudinal impact of SEAL on Lindale primary schools. The research questions focused on the quantitative impact of SEAL on attainments, attendance, exclusions and number of pupils referred for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support between 2005
and 2008. Attainments, attendance and exclusion data from schools implementing SEAL were compared with non SEAL schools between 2004 and 2007. They also considered the perceived impact of SEAL according to head teachers, SENCos, School Improvement Partners and National Healthy School colleagues on a sample of schools from the initial cohort. The impact of SEAL in five ‘Best Practice’ schools was also considered, in terms of attainments, OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) reports and progress of pupils receiving free school meals with non free school meals.

The thesis contains two literature review chapters. The first chapter discusses the concept of social and emotional learning and the national and international focus on this area. The theoretical aspects and background leading to the development of ‘social and emotional learning’ in educational settings are explored. The importance of Goleman’s work on emotional literacy and its impact on programmes devised for schools to address children’s social and emotional wellbeing is acknowledged. The first literature review chapter describes what social and emotional skills are considered to be and schools’ role in developing these skills. Schools based interventions that focus on social and emotional learning are considered in the UK and internationally. The review considers the international research and developments, in countries including the United States of America, Spain, Finland and Singapore. The national research and developments, including nurture groups and circle time, are discussed as a prerequisite to a more structured curriculum to develop social and emotional skills.
The second literature review chapter discusses the DCSF ‘Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ (SEAL) framework. Goleman’s domains and the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) Thinking skills are explored as a fundamental part of SEAL’s development and composition. The concept of SEAL as a whole school focus is compared to previous programmes that were more targeted in their approach. The research supporting the development of SEAL is explored, including increased inclusion, more effective learning and improved attendance. Small group SEAL research and studies related to other similar initiatives are considered. The SEAL curriculum, its aims and outcomes are critiqued.

At the initial stages of this research the following research questions were formulated:

**Stage One Key Questions**

1. What is the impact of SEAL on pupils’ SATs results at Key Stage 2?
2. What is the impact of SEAL on pupils’ attendance?
3. What is the impact of SEAL on the number of exclusions?
4. What is the impact of SEAL on the overall number of pupil referral for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support?

**Stage Two Key Questions**

1. What is the feedback from a sample of head teachers and SENCos regarding the impact of SEAL on behaviour in their schools?
2. What is the feedback from School Improvement Partners and Healthy Schools colleagues regarding the impact of SEAL in these sample schools?
Stage Three Key Questions

1. What is the impact of SEAL on the Contextual Value Added scores for pupils with free school meals compared to those with non free school meals in 5 ‘best practice’ schools between 2005 and 2008?

2. What is the impact of SEAL on Key Stage 2 SATs results for 5 ‘best practice’ schools?

3. What is the impact of SEAL on subsequent OFSTED reports in the areas of ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’?

The methodology involved a mixed methods model. The first stage compared the school’s data on SATs, attendance and exclusions from 2004, before SEAL was implemented, and for the subsequent four years. It also compares this data with the average figures across the authority. Data were collected before the implementation of SEAL and at the end of each academic year. Each year, more schools introduced SEAL and, therefore, the comparison group changed each year. The number of SEAL schools increased year on year as the number of non SEAL schools reduced. Overall pupil referral data for outreach support were also compared longitudinally.

The second stage involved semi structured interviews with a sample of 18 head teachers and SENCos from the original cohort of schools. These interviews took place in 2007, two years after the schools had introduced SEAL, and related to the impact of the framework on pupils’ behaviour. Feedback from School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and National Healthy Schools colleagues was also considered.
The third stage involved five schools, from the original cohort, and considered the impact of SEAL on their Contextual Value Added (CVA) scores and Key Stage 2 SATs results compared to the Lindale average. The CVA scores differentiated between pupils who had free school meals and pupils with non free school meals. The purpose of this was to consider if there was a relationship between SEAL and the academic progress for pupils with lower socio economic status. This derived from consideration of one school’s data (Caldwell), suggesting that those with free school meals had made greater progress, in terms of CVA scores and, therefore, the gap had narrowed. The most recent OFSTED reports were also considered in the areas related to SEAL.

The first stage of the results section compares SATs average points scores for SEAL schools with non SEAL schools and the Lindale average overall. The results section also compares attendance and exclusion figures of SEAL, non SEAL and Lindale schools. All data are compared between 2005 and 2008. This data are presented in graphs. Further detailed data analysis was not carried out as the initial analysis did not indicate that SEAL had an impact on SATs results, attendance or exclusions. The number of pupils referred for social, emotional and behavioural outreach is compared between 2005 and 2009, in order to explore if there is any impact on this area, as increasingly more schools began implementing SEAL.

The second stage of the results section gives examples of feedback given in semi structured interviews and reports. The views are presented from head teachers, SENCos, School Improvement Partners and Healthy School
colleagues, regarding the impact of SEAL in their schools. As stated, this information was initially intended for a JAR report in 2007 but was later included in this thesis with the aim of adding more clarity to the perceived impact of SEAL in schools.

As the analysis of SATs data did not indicate a relationship between SEAL and attainments, further investigation was carried out with five schools. This formed Stage 3 of the research. The schools’ Contextual Value Added scores compare free school meal pupils’ progress with pupils who were non free school meals. Key Stage 2 results are presented and compared with the Lindale average, longitudinally. Grades and comments from their most recent OFSTED reports are explored in the areas of ‘personal development and wellbeing’, ‘care, guidance and support’.

The discussion explores the indications from this study that SEAL does not impact on SATS results, attendance or exclusions. However, there appears to be a positive impact on the number of pupils referred for outreach support due to social, emotional and behavioural needs. The number of referrals has gradually decreased each year as more schools have implemented SEAL. This suggests that schools have either become more inclusive, with increased skills to meet pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs, or pupils’ needs in this area have reduced. The implications of this on education services are explored in terms of funding and resources. Limitations are also discussed in terms of the impact on referrals from other initiatives and services.
Further discussion, regarding the impact on ‘best practice’ schools is also explored and supports the findings from the first stage of the research, in terms of there being no indication that SEAL impacts on attainments. The positive feedback from professionals is discussed and, contrary to the findings from the other stages of this research, indicates that SEAL is valued and has impacted positively on schools.

The discussion of individual schools supports the findings from stage one. SEAL does not appear to impact on learning, even when SEAL has been embedded for some time. Overall, there is no suggestion that pupils who have free school meals make a greater rate of academic progress than other pupils, when there is a focus on their social and emotional skills. However, the OFSTED reports suggest that these schools may excel in the areas of ‘personal development and well being’ and ‘care, guidance and support’.

Pseudonyms are used throughout to represent schools and places.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW PART ONE: THEORY AND BACKGROUND TO SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the development of social, emotional and behavioural skills and how these skills are displayed. The concept of an emotional intelligence led to the growing interest in the importance of skills in this area and these developments are discussed. In recent years, there has been increased focus on the school’s role in developing these skills and the impact on learning if social, emotional and behavioural well being is not addressed within the school environment. The emergence of emotional intelligence, as a concept that influences success in life, has impacted on educational developments in this area. Examples of school based interventions to promote social, emotional and behavioural skills will be discussed, both nationally and internationally.

2.2 What are Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills?

The concept of social and emotional skills has recently evolved and there are various definitions and terminology to describe these skills. Although all of these have common themes and a shared language, they are very broad and tend to generalise. This is understandable when considering that the DfES (2003b) described these skills as underlying “almost every aspect of school, home and community life, including effective learning and getting on with other people”
Therefore, the definitions attempt to encompass a broad range of experiences.

The skills are described in the DfES guidance as:

an ability to:

- be effective and successful learners;
- make and sustain friendships
- deal with and resolve conflict effectively and fairly
- solve problems with others or by themselves
- manage strong feelings such as frustration, anger and anxiety
- recover from setbacks and persist in the face of difficulties
- work and play cooperatively
- compete fairly and win and lose with dignity and respect for competitors
- recognise and stand up for their rights and the rights of others
- understand and value the differences between people, respecting the right of others to have beliefs and values different from their own.

(DfES, 2003b, p.7)

The DfES referred to the various terms used to describe these skills, which include “personal and social development, emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, and social and emotional competence” (DfES, 2003b, p.7).

Elias (1997) defined emotional competence as:

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

In Scotland, social, emotional and behavioural competence is defined as: possessing and using the ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaviour to achieve social tasks and outcomes valued in the host context and culture. In a school setting, these tasks and outcomes would include accessing the school curriculum successfully, meeting associated personal social and emotional needs, and developing transferable skills and attitudes of value beyond school (The Scottish Executive, 1998, para 2).

ENSEC (European Network for Socio-Emotional Competence in Children) refer to socio-emotional competence and resilience. Their understanding of socio-emotional competence is “knowledge, attitudes and skills relating to intra and inter personal processes associated with pro-social behaviour, including problem solving skills, decision making skills, stress management, self reliance, anger regulation, collaborative skills and communication skills” (European Network for Social and Emotional Competence, 2007, para 2).

Internationally, ‘Social and Emotional Learning’ (SEL) is the commonly used term to describe the development of these skills. This has been facilitated by the ‘Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning’ which was founded by Goleman and Rockefeller Growald in 1994. The purpose of the collaborative is to gather scientific evidence to demonstrate the contributions of social and emotional learning to school success, health, well-being, family and peer relationships, and citizenship. CASEL supports practitioners with programs, resources and policies. CASEL define Social and Emotional Learning as:
a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically. These skills include recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. They are the skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2005, para 1).

In the Netherlands, social and emotional skills are referred to as “Skills for Life” or ‘Civic Education’. These were defined in three components:

- fostering adjustment and the capacity for self-regulation or the self control of emotions and impulses;
- Enhancing the ability to think independently and in a way that allows for constructive participation in democratic processes of discussion and decision-making;
- Promoting social involvement and community orientation and service, in particular with those in need. (Veugelers and Oser, 2003, p. 134)

Similarly, the DFES referred to five domains of social, emotional and behavioural skills, which are self awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. These are summarised as follows;
Self awareness
This is an ability to understand ourselves, and know how we learn most effectively. It enables us to take responsibility for our actions and acknowledge what we are good at and what we find difficult. Self awareness enables us to identify, recognise and express our feelings and thoughts and know that these are linked to our behaviour.

Managing Feelings
In order to manage our feelings, they need to be recognised and accepted. Learning and behaviour can be regulated by reducing or strengthening the intensity of a feeling, when appropriate. Skills in this area also enable us to recognise how our expression of feelings impact on situations and other people. Strategies can be learned that facilitate the management, reflection and review of feelings.

Motivation
Motivation refers to the ability to be an active, focused and enthusiastic learner. It involves setting and working towards goals, being organised and resourceful. It enables us to persevere when tasks become difficult and break activities down into smaller achievable components. Motivated learners demonstrate persistence and resilience. They are able to concentrate, avoiding distractions and overcoming barriers. Motivation enables us to learn from mistakes.

Empathy
Empathy refers to the ability to understand others and see things from their point of view. This involves understanding the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of
others and recognising that they may be shown in different ways. Empathy can result in modifying our own thoughts as a consequence of understanding the feelings of others.

**Social Skills**

Social skills refer to the ability to communicate with and relate to others. This involves being an active member of a group or community and acknowledging some rights and responsibility. Social skills enable us to make and sustain friendships, listen and recognise how comments can make others feel. Social skills refer to an ability to cooperate and work together to achieve but also resolve conflict. Choices are made, problems solved and actions evaluated.

Weare (2003) referred to a set of competencies composed from definitions by Goleman (2005), Health Education Authority (1997), Elias (1997) and Sharp (2001). These were differentiated in terms of ‘emotional competences’ and ‘social competences’ and are illustrated in the following table;

**Table 2.1: Emotional and social competences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional competences</th>
<th>Having Self esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This competence includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• valuing and respecting yourself as a unique individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• seeing yourself as separate from others, with the right to be treated with respect and kindness by other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having an accurate and positive self concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This competence includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• being able to identify and feel positive about your own strengths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29
• being able to identify your own weaknesses, and accepting them without self blame or guilt
• having a clear view of aspects of yourself, such as your personality, preferences, and needs
• having a sense of optimism
• having a coherent and continuous life story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>This competence includes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• being able to have an appropriate level of independence from others, to think critically, and to resist pressure from others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• being able to make sense of yourself and what has happened to you and integrate your life story into a coherent whole.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiencing a full range of emotions</th>
<th>This competence includes:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• experiencing, recognising and accepting the full range of emotions as they happen</td>
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<tr>
<td>• being aware of the effects of different emotions, for example on the body, on mood, on behaviour, on how others around start to act</td>
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<tr>
<td>• talking about our feelings, including naming the full range of emotions.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Expressing feelings</th>
<th>This competence includes:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• expressing feelings through facial expression, gesture, and body language, verbal language and tone</td>
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<tr>
<td>• developing a complex language of the emotions, with a wide and precise vocabulary and range of expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>• expressing feelings clearly through writing and other forms, for example dance, music and art.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking the social context into account in expressing feelings</td>
<td>This competence primarily involves being able to express our feelings appropriately with due regard for the social context, taking into account, for example, the feelings of others, and our own long term best interests.</td>
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</table>
| Controlling the emotions                        | This competence primarily involves being able to manage our emotions and not respond immediately or directly to a feeling, or to put it behind us if we judge this is the best thing to do. Some specific competences that constitute this include being able to:  
  - observe our own emotions  
  - be aware of what events, circumstances, thoughts and past experiences may have triggered a feeling.  
  - soothe ourselves when anxious  
  - calm ourselves when angry  
  - contain our excitement when it is unhelpful  
  - think straight when in the throws of powerful emotion  
  - avoid sulking or withdrawal when angry or frustrated  
  - talk positively to ourselves when things go wrong  
  - relax physically  
  - distract ourselves by thinking of or doing something else that is incompatible with the emotion. |
| Increasing emotional intensity and frequency     | This competence primarily involves knowing how to increase the frequency and intensity of emotions and inner states that we and others find pleasurable. Some emotions and inner states that most people find pleasurable include:  
  - happiness  
  - optimism  
  - amusement, fun and laughter  
  - joy  
  - love |
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<tr>
<th><strong>Being resilient</strong></th>
<th>This competence involves being able to process and learn from a difficult experience, use it to aid our own development, and then to move on rather than be dragged down or immobilised by the experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Using information about the emotions to plan and solve problems** | This competence involves being able to use information about one’s own emotions and those of others to plan ahead, and organising the emotions in pursuit of a goal and to solve problems. Some of the constituent competences include:  
  • looking to long term not short term benefits and gains/ delaying gratification  
  • anticipating consequences of present action  
  • generating effective solutions to interpersonal problems  
  • being creative and seeing several ways forward, and round a problem  
  • having a realistic appraisal of the likelihood of various outcomes. |
| **Social competences** |  
| **Attachment to others** | This competence involves the ability to love and care about others, and to trust that they love and care about you. |
| **Empathy** | This competence involves being able to see the world from the point of view of another person. It includes:  
  • recognising emotions in others |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Having compassion for others</th>
<th>Communicating effectively</th>
<th>Managing relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>refraining from harming others</td>
<td>This competence involves being able to communicate our own feelings and opinions clearly and openly with due regard for the feelings, level of understanding and interests of the people we are communicating with. It includes:</td>
<td>This competence involves the ability to make relationships with others that promote our own wellbeing without damaging theirs. It includes:</td>
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<tr>
<td>sensitivity - being able to intuit how people are feeling from their tone and body language</td>
<td>• choosing our own response</td>
<td>• establishing rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving people the same concern and respect as we give ourselves</td>
<td>• listening to others</td>
<td>• making connections with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepting others and tolerating difference.</td>
<td>• responding effectively</td>
<td>• establishing appropriate levels of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating effectively</td>
<td>being clear</td>
<td>• taking appropriate responsibility for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving others the respect we expect them to give us</td>
<td>giving others the respect we expect them to give us</td>
<td>negotiating ‘win win solutions’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivating others.</td>
<td>motivating others.</td>
<td>managing difficulties in relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>breaking and ending relationships where necessary in an appropriate and positive way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This competence involves the ability to make relationships with others that promote our own wellbeing without damaging theirs. It includes:</td>
<td></td>
<td>managing conflict.</td>
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</table>
As there is no consensus on a definition of social and emotional competence, Weare’s (2004) description is helpful. It provides some clarity to the wide range of skills and gives clear examples of areas to develop. However, she stressed that they should not be seen as a ‘blueprint for the perfect person’ as the competences are not sufficient in themselves. Most need to be balanced and individual differences need to be celebrated. She also referred to cultural differences, in terms of what is acceptable or ‘competent’, and that they vary greatly.

As stated, the definitions are very similar in nature and terminology but the breadth of skills referred to make it difficult to be specific. This has implications for measuring the impact of any programmes aimed at developing social and emotional skills.

2.3 Social, Emotional and Behavioural Development in Young Children

Research indicates that the early years set the stage for all future development and there is currently more known about how young children learn, think and grow than ever before (Patterson, 2008). The rate of development between conception and three years is believed to be greater than at any other stage in life. Children are born with an innate eagerness to explore their world and development is rapid in areas such as relationships, cognition, motor development, language and emotional regulation. This development builds the foundation for the future and the quality of this foundation is determined by the child’s experiences. The early year’s environment and positive relationships are
the stepping stones for healthy development. Positive early relationships shape the child’s identity and greatly influence a child’s ability to achieve future success in school and in life. Pre school children try to understand others’ feelings and thoughts and become aware of expectations. The importance of sharing and cooperation is also established during early years’ development. Wittmer (2008) supported this view with research into the importance of baby and toddler relationships. She reported on ways professionals and caregivers can support children’s social and emotional intelligence with an insight into the social rules of play, conflict, temperament, individual differences, aggression, and family dynamics.

At birth, the brain has about 100 billion nerve cells. However, the connections that determine the social, emotional and cognitive make up of a child have not been formed. Research indicates that these connections are formed through a caring and nurturing environment (Michigan Department of Community Health, 2004). Interaction with primary carers affects the ‘wiring’ of the brain. If children are responded to when they communicate a need, they learn the principles of ‘cause and effect’. They learn that they can have a positive impact on their environment and influence the world around them.

Patterson’s views on the importance of infant development are supported by ‘Attachment’ theory, originally developed by Bowlby (1969). Attachment is a biological impulse that ensures the survival of the infant. The crucial period for appropriate attachments is in the early years and open, intimate, emotionally meaningful relationships need to be experienced. A child who is threatened or stressed will move toward caregivers who create a sense of physical, emotional
and psychological safety for the individual, feeding on body contact and
familiarity. A child develops a secure attachment by receiving responsive and
consistent care. The more sensitive, comforting and appropriate the care that is
provided, the more stable, enduring and secure is the attachment. The more
secure a relationship, the safer a child feels able to explore and learn in their
world. A child who has formed insecure early attachments is at risk of delay in
areas of social, emotional and cognitive development and the impact of this can
remain evident throughout their future. The ability of a parent or carer to
recognise and read a child’s cues is dependent on their own emotional well
being, as is their ability to respond appropriately to their needs. If parents and
carers have had positive life experiences, they are generally better equipped to
be emotionally available and responsive and are able to model appropriate
responses.

When healthy attachments are not formed in infancy and babies are raised
without the stimulation and attention of a regular caregiver, short-term effects
can include anger, despair, detachment, and temporary delay in intellectual
development. Long-term effects include increased aggression, clinging
behaviour, detachment, psychosomatic disorders, and an increased risk of
depression as an adult. Kagan’s (1983) research also supported the importance
of early childhood experiences. He focused on the biological aspects of
development and especially on children’s vulnerability to fear and apprehension,
concluding that the environments to which children are exposed during the first
two years of life have an effect on their development of memory, symbolism, a
moral sense, and self consciousness.
In 1837, Froebel developed the concept of ‘kindergarten’ (children’s garden), where they learn through play. He stated that if children’s stage of human development is not considered in their care, they will lack the foundations for school and for their future lives in general.

From birth, a baby begins to develop socially by responding to the smells, sounds and touch of familiar adults. They begin to form and value relationships with others and, if their early experiences are rewarding, they are able to move onto the next stage in their social development, by beginning to express personal views, discuss and resolve conflicts.

Emotional development involves how a child feels about himself or herself, other people and their environment. Early emotional development relates to physical conditions such as hunger, discomfort, temperature and tiredness but a baby’s ability to express their emotions is limited at birth. As children move onto the next stage of development, their emotions relate to their psychological condition, their expectations and how they interpret their feelings. With appropriate early experiences, preschoolers develop the ability to anticipate and talk about their own and others’ emotions. They begin to find ways of managing their own feelings and may experience the more complex emotions, including embarrassment, guilt, shame and pride. They also become capable of feeling empathy towards others.

Social and emotional well being is the ability to experience, regulate and express emotions, form close, secure relationships, explore the environment and learn. This is facilitated in an environment where a child has:
- Attentive, sensitive, consistent, responsive and affectionate care and interaction from parents and primary caregivers
- A nurturing relationship with at least one parent or care giver
- Caregivers with their own social and emotional support established
- A language rich environment
- Appropriate home, childcare and sleeping environments
- A developmentally appropriate environment for play that encourages exploration
- Support and encouragement in the development of new skills
- Safe and appropriate food and shelter (National Center for Infant Toddlers and Families, 2012).

The National Academy of Sciences (McLoyd, 1998) reported that, although sixty percent of children enter school with the cognitive skills necessary to be successful, only forty percent have the necessary social and emotional skills. Children are more likely to succeed in the transition to school if they can:

- Accurately identify emotions in themselves and others
- Relate to their peers and teachers positively
- Manage their feelings of anger, frustration and distress
- Enjoy and approach learning enthusiastically
- Pay attention and work both independently and cooperatively (McLoyd, 1998).
There are indications that may cause concern in the development of social and emotional skills in the early years. These are when a child:

- Resists holding
- Is difficult to comfort or console
- Has sleeping or eating difficulties (too much or too little)
- Is failing to thrive
- Avoids or rarely seeks eye contact with carer
- Appears unresponsive to efforts to interact or engage
- Rarely coos, babbles or vocalises
- Has limited ability to regulate emotions
- Shows little preference for the primary carer
- Doesn’t ever appear apprehensive of strangers
- Appears excessively irritable or fearful
- Has an inappropriate or limited ability to express feelings
- Lacks interest or curiosity about people and toys
- Fails to explore his or her environment
- Often appears sad or withdrawn
- Exhibits inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Exhibits inappropriate impulsive or aggressive behaviour
- Has excessive fears and doesn’t respond to reassurance
- Experiences regular night mares
- Has extreme and frequent tantrums
- Experiences significant language delays
- Exhibits an unusual need for order and cleanliness (McLoyd, 1998).
Early experiences and their impact on future development have been well documented and, although innate factors are also considered to predispose the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, they must be considered holistically. The characteristics and skills form the basis of our ‘emotional intelligence’ and further research links this concept with success in all areas of life.

2.4 Emotional Intelligence

“Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to accurately identify and understand one’s own emotional reactions and those of others, and to regulate one’s emotions and to use them to make good decisions and act effectively” (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001, p.14).

The term ‘emotional intelligence’ was introduced by Payne in his 1985 doctorate thesis and explored by Salovey and Mayer (1990). However, Goleman (1995) popularized this concept with his best seller, ‘Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ’. Prior to the emergence of the concept, ‘emotional intelligence’, general or cognitive ability was considered to be the best predictor of future success in life.

An intelligence quotient (IQ) is a score derived from standardized tests designed to assess intelligence. IQ scores are used to predict factors such as educational achievement, job performance and income. Research, including studies of twins brought up together and apart, suggests that cognitive ability is hereditary (e.g.
Boubard and McGue, 1981). However, there have been many decades of debate regarding the concept of intelligence and IQ, the validity of tests and the significance of heredity (Devlin, Daniels and Roeder, 1997).

Intelligence has been defined in different ways, including abilities for abstract thought, reasoning, learning, understanding, communication, retaining, planning, and problem solving. However, there has been no consensus reached by theorists including Binet (1916), Burt (1931) and Wechsler (1944). When over twenty prominent theorists were asked to define intelligence, they gave over twenty different definitions (Neisser, Boodoo, Bouchar, Boyk, Brody, Ceci, Halpern and Loehlin,1996). The lack of clarity, regarding the definition of intelligence, has obvious implications on the accuracy of IQ tests to measure cognitive ability. Controversy over intelligence quotient (IQ) tests, what they measure and what this means for society has not abated since their initial development by Binet (1916). IQ tests rely largely upon symbolic logic as a means of scoring but, as symbolic logic is not inherently synonymous with intelligence, the question remains as to what these tests actually measure (Fredrick, 2011). For example, someone who cannot read would be at a significant disadvantage on an IQ test, though illiteracy is not indicative of lower intelligence. Neisser et al (1996) stated that findings do not dispute the stability of IQ test scores or the fact that they predict certain forms of achievement. However, they argue that to base a concept of intelligence on IQ test scores alone is to ignore many important aspects of mental ability. This is supported by Gardner’s (1999) concept of multiple intelligences.
In 1994, ‘The Bell Curve’ was published with recommendations for public policy related to class and the importance of intelligence (Herstein and Murray, 1994). It suggested that those born into economically and educationally advantaged family backgrounds inherited higher intelligence, compared to those born into ‘lower classes’. However, there is ongoing debate regarding the strength of correlation between heredity and economic advantage and claims of the Bell Curve have been refuted, due to other environmental factors not having been taken into account (e.g. Fischer, 1996). Gould (1996) stated that most psychological studies, have been heavily biased, by the belief that the human behaviour of a race of people is best explained by genetic heredity and cites Burt’s (1931) allegedly fraudulent twin studies.

The degree to which nature versus nurture influences the development of human traits, especially intelligence, is an ongoing scholarly controversy. There is increasing research to support the view that multiple intelligences need to be considered and that IQ only measures a specific type of intelligence (e.g. Gardner, 1999).

The concept of an emotional intelligence, that is more relevant than an innate cognitive ability to real life success, was received as a positive and more optimistic belief. Goleman (1995) suggested that emotional intelligence can be ‘taught’ and, therefore, there are implications for those who have lower ‘IQs’ and are not born into economically and educationally advantaged families.
Goleman (1996) differentiated between two different yet interdependent systems; rational intelligence and emotional intelligence. Goleman (1996) asserted that both determine how well an individual functions and, ideally, these two minds work together. Our feelings inform the rational mind, and the rational mind can impact on the effective input of our emotions. When they team up, both emotional intelligence and intellectual ability are stronger.

Goleman's (2005) model outlines four main constructs:

1. **Self-awareness** – the ability to understand one's emotions and recognize their impact.
2. **Self-management** – controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.
3. **Social awareness** – the ability to sense, understand, and react to others' emotions and social networks.
4. **Relationship management** – the ability to manage conflict and inspire, influence, and develop others.

Goleman (2005) includes a set of emotional competencies within each construct and states that these constructs are not innate, but learned capabilities that can be worked on. He claims individuals are born with a general emotional intelligence that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies. Goleman (1996) supported his work with research and theory based on neurological studies and E.Q. measures that stressed the importance of the development of emotional skills. Using measures of emotional intelligence, he claimed that 20% of success in life is due to I.Q. but 80% due to E.Q.. However,
as discussed later, critics state that this is not supported with scientific evidence.

Goleman (2005) argued that,

“in theory, there is no reason why such a curriculum could not be taught in every school nationwide. It already exists in many, but only in bits and pieces... not as a fully developed, step by step curriculum.” (p.15)

Prior to the academic interest in ‘emotional intelligence’, there was a lack of widespread academic or popular acceptance for the focus on social, emotional and behavioural skills, as a concept ‘taught’ explicitly within schools. This was due to the sparse ‘scientific’ evidence to support their relevance in the curriculum and there was no consensus on what these skills referred to. Programmes varied greatly in terms of the vocabulary used to describe the skills being developed. The concept of emotional intelligence has provided specific skills and constructs that can be developed more systematically through taught programmes.

Goleman (1995) explained the neurological basis of emotional literacy research. The amygdala, situated in the limbic region of the brain, is the centre of the emotional mind. All information passes through this before being processed in the cerebral cortex. The amygdala has analysed this information and provided varying degrees of emotional charge. If this charge is powerful, it can override thinking and logic.

The amygdala can evoke anger, pleasure, compassion and excitement. It reacts much quicker than the rational mind, if information is deemed to be an emergency. Goleman refers to ‘emotional hijacking’, which is when the amygdala
provokes the rest of the brain to respond, before the rational mind considers the logical course of action. The prefrontal lobes are part of the neocortex. They are able to evaluate situations and control feelings more effectively. When an emotion is triggered by the amygdale, the prefrontal lobes can quickly analyse information and choose the most appropriate course of action.

The emotional circuit between the amygdala and prefrontal lobes can work in harmony. However, if the amygdala overreacts, powerful emotions override the ability to think and reason. The effectiveness of these circuits, and the emotional responses, are determined by early childhood experiences. Goleman (1995) stated that the emotionally driven automatic responses are learned as early as four years of age. If information in the present resembles that of the past, feelings from the past are triggered. “The emotional mind…takes elements that symbolize reality or trigger a memory of it to be the same as reality” (p. 295).

Goleman explained that, “the rational mind reasons with objective evidence; the emotional mind takes its beliefs to be absolutely true and discounts evidence to the contrary…it’s futile to reason with someone who is emotionally upset…feelings are self justifying” (Goleman, 2005, p295).

Schilling (1996) stated that when a child repeatedly experiences abuse, particularly parental abuse, they suffer from post traumatic stress disorder and the brain alters. Extra large doses of chemicals are secreted from the brain, in response to situations that are reminders of traumatic events. The fight or flight response is also caused by the pituitary gland over secreting and, therefore, post
Traumatic stress disorder is a limbic disorder. However, she states that the emotional circuitry can be rewired through relearning.

The neural pathways of the amygdala are innate or determined by an early age. Therefore, it is the neocortex, which manages the amygdala, which can be changed by the development of social, emotional and behavioural skills. Although reactions may continue to be intense, the severity and duration can be controlled.

Since Goleman (1996) popularised the concept of emotional intelligence, there has been widespread criticism of his ideas. The term in itself has been criticised as an oxymoron, where ‘emotions’ are commonly considered as irrational thoughts, whereas ‘intelligence’ is considered to be rational and reasonable thought (Matthews, Ziedner and Roberts, 2002).

The concept of emotional intelligence has been referred to as mere "pop psychology" (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008) with claims that it doesn’t contribute anything more than is already known by psychologists working in the field of personality. Indeed, Goleman (2005) himself makes reference to emotional intelligence as denoting an individual’s ‘character’. There has been criticism that the constructs are over inclusive, encompassing all traits that are not associated with IQ (Intelligence Quotient), and that they are not interrelated as Goleman assumes (Roberts, Zeidner and Matthews, 2001). Landy (2005) claimed that studies conducted on EI have shown that it adds little or nothing to the explanation or prediction of some common outcomes, such as academic and
work success. Landy stated that the reason why some studies have found a small increase in predictive validity is a methodological fallacy as alternative explanations have not been completely considered.

Goleman (1996) claims that emotional intelligence is a better predictor of success than IQ. However, there is no published study to support these claims. Also, the concept has been criticised for relying on established areas of psychology, including neuroscience. However, Goleman does not critically evaluate these areas of support, including research carried out on animals but related to humans. The association between brain function and emotion has been questioned by emotion theorists e.g. (Lazarus, 1999) who state that psychological factors are more influential. Mayor, Salevoy et al (2000) refer to Goleman as a journalist distilling psychological ideas rather than presenting emotional intelligence as a scientific theory.

Critics of emotional intelligence refer to the lack of evidence in terms of emotional intelligence measures. Bar-On (1997) constructed the first index for the assessment of EI, the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). Bar-On referred to EI as, “an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (p. 14) and the EQ-i assesses five broad subtypes. ‘Intrapersonal intelligence’ is measures of emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualisation and independence. ‘Interpersonal intelligence’ involves empathy, interpersonal relationship and social responsibility. ‘Adaptability’ is comprised of problem solving, reality testing and flexibility. ‘Stress management’
refers to stress tolerance and impulse control. Finally, ‘general mood’ refers to happiness and optimism. Bar-On (2005) questioned whether ‘general mood’ should be considered as a facilitator of emotional intelligence rather than a construct.

Two measurement tools have been developed by Goleman. The Emotional Competency Inventory was created in 1999 and the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory was created in 2007. The Emotional Intelligence Appraisal, was developed by Goleman in 2001. The ‘Emotional Literacy Assessment Instrument’ (ELAI) was devised by Faupel (2003) and provides indices of children’s self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. This relates directly to the areas of skills that the SEAL framework aims to develop and was recommended by the DfES (2006a). The measure consists of a series of statements that children rate on a four-point Likert scale, in terms of level of agreement. It was developed for use with 7 to 16 year olds and Southampton Psychology Service demonstrated that it has good construct validity.

Stewart-Brown and Edmonds (2007) carried out research as to the available assessment materials to measure ‘social and emotional competence’. They recognised that there were a growing number of measures that supported the development of skills rather than focusing on negative behaviours and identifying ‘problems’. However, they found that none of the tools identified for assessing emotional and social competence had been fully validated and tested in UK schools and that validity could not be assumed. Roberts, Zeidner et al (2001)
found that measures of emotional intelligence were unreliable as they assume that there is a correct response to a real life situation. Also, an individual may know how they should best respond to a situation but may not necessarily behave in this way when the situation arises. Day and Carroll (2008) found that Bar-On’s EQ-i is highly unreliable due to the nature of self-report items. Concerns are raised about the extent to which self-report EI measures correlate with established personality dimensions and are believed to converge because they both measure personality traits.

The concept of emotional intelligence, and the development of related programmes to develop skills in this area, has been the subject of increasing academic interest. The idea that these skills can be taught, and are possibly more important than cognitive abilities in the prediction of future success, has resulted in this being an area developed in educational settings. However, as with IQ, critics have raised concerns regarding the validity of emotional intelligence as a scientific theory and the reliability of measures related to this concept.

2.5 The Psychology of Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The evolving developments from emotional intelligence to the focus on social and emotional well being are embedded in the field of psychology. The belief that developing social and emotional skills in children can improve many aspects of their lives, such as learning, mental health and confidence is associated with the concept of positive psychology. The fundamental principles of positive
psychology and developing a ‘happy’ school environment are embedded in social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2010).

Positive Psychology involves the study of optimal human functioning and has a change in focus from supporting people who have problems to helping people who are ‘ok’ to become happier and function better. Positive Psychology focuses on building on strength as well as improving weakness. It aims to fulfil lives as well as healing ‘illness’. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) stated that, “a science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless.” The prevention of serious problems is not considered to be achieved by the disease model but by building competencies. Strengths, such as courage, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, and the capacity for flow and insight are considered as ‘buffers’ against mental illness. Seligman (1998) stated that “much of the task of prevention in this new century will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people” (p. 5). Psychologists need to, “amplify strengths rather than repair the weaknesses of their clients” and those “working with families, schools, religious communities, and corporations, need to develop climates that foster these strengths” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).

Winner (2000) discussed positive psychology in relation to work with gifted children. She focused on the origins of giftedness, the motivation of gifted children and the social, emotional, and cognitive correlates of exceptional
performance. She considered what can be applied to nurture and to keep giftedness alive.

Larson (2000) discussed the development of excellence in children and young people. He found that the average student reports being bored about one third of the time he or she is in school. Larson argued that youths in society rarely have the opportunity to take initiative and that their education encourages ‘passive adaptation to external rules instead’. He advocates involvement in voluntary activities, such as sport, art, and civic organisations, to providing opportunities for concentrated, self-directed effort applied over time. Ryan and Deci (2000) referred to the need for competence, belongingness and autonomy in relation to self determination theory.

Positive Psychology differs from the field of ‘self help’ and ‘personal development’ as it adopts scientific disciplines, with research and evidence to support its theories (Seligman, 1998). It focuses on happiness, well-being and other positive emotions, human strengths and how to apply them and positive states of mind such as confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience.

This approach has been known since the Ancient Greeks and appears in Ibn al-Haytham's 11th Century text *Book of Optics*. However, the concept was developed further in the 19th century by the philosopher and founding sociologist, Comte. He believed that theory and observation are circularly dependent. Durkheim further expanded on this philosophy as a foundation to social science. In psychology, the approach was exemplified in studies of giftedness (Terman,
1939), marital happiness (Terman, Buttenweiser, Johnson and Wilson (1938),
effective parenting (Watson, 1928), and Jung's search for and discovery of
meaning in life (Jung, 1933). More recently, ‘positive experience’, where
consideration is given to why one moment can be better than the next, has been
explored by Kahneman (1999). He stated that what makes people happy in small
doses does not necessarily add satisfaction in larger amounts. A point of
diminishing returns is often reached.

Myers (2000) has focused on ‘happiness’. The concepts of ‘pleasure’ and
‘enjoyment’ are distinguished between. Pleasure is considered to be the feeling
that is derived from meeting needs such as hunger, comfort and sex whereas
enjoyment is the experience of doing something that stretches a person, such as
doing something worthwhile, a stimulating conversation or an athletic event. It is
enjoyment that is believed to bring about happiness and personal growth but
individuals are considered to choose pleasure over enjoyment. The relationship
between positive emotions and physical health has also been explored by
(Salovey, Bedell, Detweiter, and Mayer, 2000).

“The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective
experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and
optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present). At the
individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and
vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance,
forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom.
At the group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move
individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic” (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.5).

Although not explicitly stated, these traits and virtues are the focus of social and emotional learning and, therefore, the principles of positive psychology are embedded in the development of skills in this area. This also has implications on the role of psychologists in this aspect of education.

2.6 A School’s Role in the Development of Social and Emotional Skills

The development of children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills has always been an implicit part of their education. Teachers have always established expectations in these areas and often reinforced appropriate skills by modelling, direction, rewards and sanctions. On personal reflection, ‘rules’ were referred to and a child or young person would, implicitly or explicitly, learn the consequences of ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ responses. The expectations and consequences were often dependent on the teacher, situation or setting. In my personal experience, most people recall memories of their ‘favourite’ teachers and those who were considered to be ‘strict’ and authoritarian. The fondest memories are generally of teachers who showed some personal interest in us and had a positive impact ‘socially, emotionally or behaviourally’. On personal reflection, teachers can be identified for their emphasis on our personal development and those who focused primarily on academic teaching. The ‘social, emotional and behavioural skills’ children ‘learned’ during their education
were, therefore, often developed on an 'adhoc' basis and messages were often contradictory. It was often dependent on the personal skills and beliefs of individual teachers and 'ethos' of how schools were managed. Social, emotional and behavioural skills were not taught explicitly but schools generally delivered some form of religious education, which varied greatly, dependent on whether attending a state or church school. In the nineties, there was a developing interest in 'positive behaviour management' and Canter's 'Assertive Discipline' (1992) was established in many school systems. These ideas encompassed whole school approaches to behaviour but did not involve explicit 'teaching' of social, emotional and behavioural skills.

The growing interest in emotional intelligence and Goleman’s claim that this concept can be taught has resulted in research to support the explicit teaching of social and emotional skills. CASEL (2007) states that research supports the teaching of social and emotional skills through school-based programmes. Prior to this research, there was an implicit assumption that pupils were motivated, ready and able to access and benefit from experiences in school. Approaches to school improvement did not always create optimal school conditions or enhance children’s capacities to learn. However, children learn better when they feel safe and valued in a supportive environment. Although not explicit, the principles around personal construct psychology, positive psychology and attachment, as discussed earlier, are embedded in the increased focus on social and emotional learning in schools. For example, children are encouraged to develop more varied constructs around feelings. Throughout their primary education, they are taught an increasing range of vocabulary to describe how they feel and enable them to communicate this to others. The focus on developing skills such as
problem solving, effective communication and empathy reflect the principles of positive psychology, where strengths and weaknesses are built upon to facilitate ‘happiness’. The intention is that these skills will equip individuals to have happier and more fulfilling futures by developing social and emotional skills. Similarly, social and emotional learning aims to develop skills that facilitate positive relationships with adults and peers. For example, activities to develop effective communication and an ability to resolve conflicts better equip children with the skills to form positive relationships and attachments.

“When we combine social and emotional skill instruction with safe and caring school environments, student attitudes and self perception improve, behavioral adjustment becomes easier, substance abuse and internalizing symptoms lessen, and student achievement increases” (CASEL, 2006, p. 17).

Consequently, many primary schools and settings began promoting social and emotional learning through;

- the whole-school environment
- the Foundation Stage personal, social and emotional area of learning
- the Key Stages 1 and 2 PSHE/Citizenship curriculum
- their approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- the National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) framework or
- opportunities provided in curriculum areas such as art, music and drama.

There are an increasing number of evidence-based programmes available that provide a systematic approach to enhancing children's skills in the area of social
and emotional competence. There are also resources that are designed to create supportive, nurturing climates in the classroom and throughout the school.

Effective programs provide opportunities for:

- students to contribute to their communities,
- families to enhance their children’s social and emotional development,
- professional development for school administrators, teachers, student support services, and support staff, and
- community groups to partner with schools and affect the lives of children and youth (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schuab-Stone and Shriver, 1997).

### 2.7 School Based Interventions to Promote Social and Emotional Learning

#### 2.7.1 Social and Emotional Learning in the United Kingdom

In recent years, particularly following the popularisation of the concept emotional literacy, programmes have been implemented in schools to develop social and emotional skills. Many of these have been adapted from American resources e.g. Schilling (1999). However, an earlier focus on the importance of this area of development was carried out in England.

In the 1970s, Boxall and Bennathan developed the concept of nurture groups, recognising that not all children had reached a developmental stage, where there basic needs had been met when they began their schooling. ‘Nurture bases’ were established in school settings and provided holistic, intensive support for
children and their families. The considerable benefits of nurture groups continue to be accepted in many areas of education but there are funding issues for schools and LEAs who support their implementation. The impact of this approach on challenging young children was evidenced through research and evaluation. On 5th January 2009, ‘Dispatches’ (Channel 4) advocated the value of ‘nurturing’ as an early intervention for children and their families.

Over two decades ago, Mosley (1991) began developing school and classroom management models based on ‘Quality Circle Time’ (QCT). ‘Circle time’ provided a forum for teachers to plan activities that addressed personal issues and skills. The ‘Quality Circle Time’ model is a whole approach to setting up and maintaining a positive management system:

- Promoting positive relationships
- Creating a caring and respectful ethos
- Helping children develop their self-esteem and self-confidence
- Providing efficient and effective systems and support for all staff
- Creating great lunchtimes and playtimes
- Nurturing the creativity in all people in school
- Promoting social and emotional development of all absent children.

Quality Circle Time is described as “a democratic and creative approach used to support teachers and other professionals in managing a range of issues that affect the whole learning community” (Mosely, 1991, p. 1). Mosley promoted the involvement of teaching staff, children, support staff, parents and governors to support children with their emotions. She stated that a young child’s ‘thinking
brain’ is not fully formed and, therefore, their responses are dominated by emotional experiences. Children must learn that intellect and emotion need to work in harmony (Mosley, Grogan, Luck and Doyle, 2006).

The QCT model involves a commitment from schools to set up an ongoing process of Circle Meetings for adults and children, at which the key interpersonal and organisational issues that affect school development can be addressed. The sessions can be linked to the PSHE curriculum, and often consist of weekly meetings lasting half an hour where children sit in a circle. The activities involve children carrying out activities, games and the practice of speaking and listening skills, often in a round. Mosley stated that there are several key elements which include:

- Improving morale and self-esteem of staff
- Listening systems for both children and adults
- The Golden Rules: a system of behavioural rules
- Incentives: a weekly celebration to reward the children for keeping the Golden Rules
- Sanctions: the partial withdrawal of ‘Golden Time’ incentives
- Lunchtime Policy

The QCT model is effective in supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and developing clear targets for Individual Education Plans. Research suggested that it is successful in promoting better relationships and positive behaviour, leading to improvements in both learning and the effective running of a school (Canney and Byrne, 2006).
A range of materials and resources have been developed and implemented in schools over recent years. These have included programs to build self esteem, manage anger, reduce anxiety (e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), build friendships (e.g. Circle of Friends) and improve emotional literacy (e.g. Schilling, 1999). The way in which these are implemented varies greatly, from individual and small group work to class or whole school initiatives. The approaches are delivered by a range of professionals, including class teachers, learning mentors, educational psychologists, BEST (Behaviour and Education Support Teams) or mental health practitioners. There is also great variation in the time scales that interventions take place and the level of evaluation and monitoring. Many of these programs are targeted rather than providing universal support for all children to develop social and emotional skills.

2.7.2 International Approaches to Social and Emotional Learning

The development of children and young people’s social and emotional learning is not only a national focus. Educational programmes and initiatives are supported and delivered internationally with the aim of developing social and emotional skills. Some examples of these international approaches will be discussed in this section, beginning with the United States of America, where extensive research and guidance has been carried out by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).
The Children’s Mental Health Act of 2006 set out requirements, in America, to develop and monitor a children’s mental health plan. Consequently, the Education Law was modified to direct the Commissioners of Education and Mental Health to develop guidelines for incorporating social and emotional development into elementary and secondary schools. The implementation of such programs was voluntary for school districts rather than mandatory. However, the importance of Social and Emotional Learning is well established in many states. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is based at the University of Illinois, Chicago and has produced extensive guidance and research to promote school’s development of these skills, both nationally and internationally. They produced, ‘Safe and Sound: An educational leaders’ guide to evidence based social and emotional learning programs’. This provides learning standards, benchmarks, assessment materials, worksheets, checklists and resources to involve parents. They recommend programs including, ‘Caring School Community’, ‘I Can Problem Solve’ and ‘Learning for Life’.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2002) encourages schools to incorporate life skills into their teaching. Every district is required to adopt a policy to meet the social and emotional needs of all children. In 2006, $5 million was allocated to support the legislation and the Offices of Education are providing training in this area of teachers’ development. State initiatives vary but include physical, emotional ‘learning supports’ in California and in Illinois, the State Board of Education (2004) developed Social and Emotional Learning Standards. Social and emotional learning standards have been developed and approved in the Anchorage district of Alaska. New Jersey produced Core Curriculum Content
Standards, in 2004, which incorporate character education, community service and SEL skills.

In New York, ‘universal foundation skills’ have been referred to in their learning Standards since 1996. A range of programs to develop students’ ability to demonstrate personally and socially responsible behavior, to care for and respect themselves and others, to recognize threats to the environment, and to demonstrate skills of cooperation and collaboration have been implemented across the state but the focus has remained on academic achievement. There is a drive to establish the link between SEL and cognitive ability. New York City Department of Education (2002) funded and supported 20 schools in the planning and implementation of school wide SEL. This informed their ‘Code of Ethics for Educators’ supporting the teaching of social and emotional skills. Principle 1 of the Code of Ethics for Educators (2002) stated that, “Educators nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of each student” (New York City Department of Education, 2002).

‘Second Step’ (Committee for Children, 1997) is North America’s leading crime prevention programme that integrates academics and social and emotional learning. It is aimed at children from preschool to eighth grade and skills are taught, such as anger management, cooperation, respectful behaviour and problem solving. It is claimed that these skills will reduce pupils’ negative and violent behaviours, therefore, increasing the focus on learning. In Australia, there is currently no uniform approach to social and emotional learning but there is an increasing interest in the link between SEL and academic achievement.
(Ministerial Council for Education, 2010). Most schools refer to ‘social and emotional wellbeing’ in their policies and the Government have funded initiatives including ‘KidsMatter’, for elementary schools, and ‘MindMatters’, a mental health resource for secondary pupils. Long term evaluation suggests that MindMatters can be a powerful catalyst for positive change in schools (Australian Primary Principal’s Association, 2007). Victoria has recently developed a mandatory framework to establish personal and social learning as part of the curriculum. Frydenberg, Care, Freeman and Chan (2009), from the University of Melbourne, envisage a collaborative that will support a national coordination of SEL.

In Canada, the Ministry of Education (2000) identified ‘social responsibility’ as one of four foundation skills with reading, writing and numeracy. A framework and performance standards provide a common language and set of expectations in four categories:

- Contributing to the classroom and school community
- Solving problems in a peaceful way
- Valuing diversity and defending human rights
- Exercising democratic rights and responsibilities.

Although most schools are using resources and programmes to develop these skills, they are not mandatory. However, a national centre to promote SEL is being led by Craig (Queens University) and Peplar (York University). PREVnet (Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence) has a mandate to develop a national strategy by 2010.
In Finland, formal education does not begin until children are 7 years old. Prior to this, they follow a high quality government funded programme, where the focus is on self reflection and social behaviour rather than academic learning. Preschool experiences are based on Froebel’s original ideas, in 1837, of kindergarten as a ‘children’s garden’, where children learn through play. He referred to children lacking the foundation for tasks in school and in later life if they are not given the care that takes into account their stage of human development. He believed that current and future living conditions of all social classes are dependent on the careful consideration and mental and physical care of early childhood. The social and emotional skills fostered prior to formal schooling are believed to be fundamental to the academic success and independence that is achieved in Finland. Out of 57 countries, Finland achieved the highest scores for 15 year olds in triennial tests carried out by the ‘Programme for International Student Assessment’ (PISA). Also, the gap between the highest and lowest achieving school was the smallest in all countries tested.

In Scotland, ‘Personal and Social development’ in the 5 to 14 curriculum is mandatory. The ‘Promoting Social Competence Project’, funded by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID), was carried out in the late nineties to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and provide a database of resources for schools. The expectation was that this would help to improve practice in schools, thereby improving educational outcomes for children and young people.
They considered programmes and resources with a view to identifying approaches yielding gains in:

- knowledge & understanding; skills & competencies; and attitudes, motivation & confidence.
- self-awareness; self-esteem; interpersonal skills; independence and interdependence.
- problem solving and decision making skills; life skills; co-operative and social skills.
- identifying, reviewing and evaluating the values of self and others.
- personal responsibility, with positive regard for others (The Scottish Executive, 1998, para 7).

In 2006, Singapore’s Ministry of Education launched ‘Social and Emotional Learning’ nationally, based on CASEL’s 5 core competencies; self awareness, social awareness, self management, relationship management and responsible decision making.

In Spain, there is no mandatory National Curriculum but parts of the country are committed to Social and Emotional Learning, including Barcelona and San Sebastian. In Malaga, ‘emotional intelligence’ is high on the agenda and, in Cantabria, learning in this area is called ‘Responsibility Education’. The Ministry of Education and Science (2007) is advocating a national approach by delivering extensive teacher training in this area.
In Sweden, there is no nationwide strategy for social and emotional learning but schools are responsible for implementing the values stated in the national curriculum. The current National Curriculum (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2006) states that schools should strive for each student to:

- Respects the equal value of all people
- Refuses to accept people being repressed and offensively treated, and contributes to the support of other people
- Feels empathy and understands other people’s situations, and develops a will to act with their best interests in mind.

Dahlin (2008) explored the school’s role in supporting the foundation of values in ‘Social and Emotional Education in Sweden: Two Examples of Good Practice’ and suggested that lasting effects will only be achieved by systematic and ‘holistic’ approaches. Occasional activities that are isolated from the core curriculum will have little or no effect.

2.8 Summary

The early years provide the foundations to social, emotional and behavioural well being. Drawing on theoretical principles such as those associated with emotional intelligence, positive psychology, attachment and personal constructs, the quality of early experiences and relationships determine whether a child develops appropriately in these areas. If a child has successfully moved through these early stages of development, they are able to respond effectively to the transition to school. However, there is increasing evidence that appropriate social, emotional and behavioural skills have not always been acquired when children
reach school age. They are, therefore, unable to respond appropriately to the demands made within school settings. Developmentally, they are unable to work independently, form effective relationships or recognise their own and others relationships. They do not always have the necessary experiences and conditions to establish sturdy social, emotional and behavioural foundations.

Evidence over the past twenty years, suggests that social, emotional and behavioural skills can be taught and promotes the school’s role and responsibility in these areas. Consequently, schools have an increasing ability to support the social, emotional and behavioural needs of children, through their increasing access to school based materials and interventions in this area of development. Nurture bases, circle time, learning mentors and emotional literacy programmes have been established in many UK schools to address the additional social and emotional needs of some children. Similarly, there has been an increased focus internationally on the development of these skills and, although terminology and definitions may differ, they have many common themes. However, support both nationally and internationally have commonly been ‘targeted’ and, therefore, not all children within any school setting may have access to these approaches or interventions. Approaches also vary considerably depending on setting, authority, state or country.

As a result of the increasing research and evidence, both nationally and internationally, the DfES developed a whole school curriculum and resource, ‘Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ (DfES, 2005), which provides universal support for all school aged children in the area of social, emotional and
behavioural development. The theoretical rationale is explicitly related to Goleman’s (1996) emotional intelligence and implicitly based on psychological theories, such as positive psychology, underlying the development and research of social and emotional learning, particularly in the United States. Government funding and systemic support was available to facilitate SEAL becoming established as a whole school ethos and to ensure that all children, from the foundation stage through to secondary age, were ‘taught’ skills in this area. Although the framework is not mandatory, many primary and secondary schools have SEAL established and embedded.
3. LITERATURE REVIEW PART TWO: ‘SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING’ – REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of ‘Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ as a whole school curriculum and the skills that the materials aim to develop. It establishes the unique contribution that the SEAL framework provides in schools when compared to previous interventions in this area.

The research supporting the implementation of SEAL will be discussed. Although there are limited evaluations regarding the impact of SEAL, there is evidence that it is making a positive contribution to the social, emotional and behavioural well being of all children and their ability to succeed.

3.2 What is SEAL?

SEAL (DfES, 2005) is a curriculum resource to help primary schools develop children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills. Social and emotional aspects of learning underlie every aspect of home, school and community life. There are various terms used to describe SEAL, including personal and social development, emotional literacy and social and emotional competence. The DfES developed the framework as a result of work in over 500 schools taking part in the Primary National Strategy’s Behaviour and Attendance Pilot (2006a). The curriculum was originally entitled, ‘Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills’
or ‘SEBS’. However, this implied the resource was aimed at schools that had problems with discipline and that some head teachers were dismissing it as not relevant to their school. Therefore, the title was changed to facilitate the understanding that this was a framework for all children. The framework aims to develop the underpinning qualities and skills that facilitate positive behaviour and effective learning. It builds on effective work already taking place in many primary schools.

The SEAL framework is based on Goleman’s (1996) aspects of emotional intelligence, covering the five domains of self awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. As skills are developmental and change over time, these domains are revisited every year. It also encompasses the QCA Thinking Skills. The curriculum is designed to develop reasoning, evaluation, creativity, problem solving, enquiry and information processing skills. It is aimed at the foundation stage and primary phase and the development of skills is organised into the following areas;

- Conscious awareness promotes the vocabulary of feelings and, from the onset of education, pupils are taught the necessary vocabulary to describe their feelings.
- Understanding that thoughts, feelings and actions are skills that relate to learning and achievement, decision making and relationships.
- The management of feelings develops the skills to meet one’s own needs without violating others.
- Self esteem is developed so children feel good about themselves and others.
- Management of conflict is developed through effective anger management strategies and interpersonal skills.

- An understanding of group dynamics is facilitated through the teaching of effective contributions in group settings.

- Communication skills are targeted by the promotion of appropriate expression of feelings and thoughts. Children are taught that relationships are reciprocal.

Although not explicit, the teaching and development of these skills aims to better equip children to develop positive relationships, build resilience and have successful, fulfilling futures. As discussed earlier, these principles reflect those of personal construct theory, positive psychology and attachment theory. Feelings vocabulary and a better understanding of emotions inadvertently builds on an individual’s personal constructs. The framework aims to build on the strengths that are associated with positive psychology and future happiness. Social and emotional skills are taught that facilitate positive relationships and attachments.

SEAL is a whole curriculum framework for all pupils, using current curricular arrangements. It is a spiral curriculum so progress can be demonstrated and is a means of improving PSHE provision, either through stand alone framework or a resource to supplement current arrangements. The resource is organised into seven themes and these are;

- New beginnings
- Getting on and falling out
- Going for goals
- Good to be me
- Relationships
- Changes
- Bullying.

It is suggested that the first six themes are covered throughout the year, one per half term. Each theme is introduced with a whole school assembly and scripts are provided for those delivering the assemblies. It is also suggested that each theme ends with an assembly, where pupils share the work they have completed in class, on each topic. The seventh theme, bullying can be covered as an ongoing area or a block theme used throughout anti-bullying weeks.

Each theme is organised into colour coded activity sets with ideas for each age range. The red set is intended for children in the foundation stage, blue years 1 and 2, yellow years 3 and 4 and green years 5 and 6. Each set has a higher and lower level, dependent on age and ability, and provides ideas for follow up work in other curriculum areas. There are exemplar lesson plans for one or more subject areas, pupil reference materials and teacher resources. Each level has expected outcomes.

The SEAL framework facilitates the use of a consistent ‘calming down’ technique that is used throughout the school. Pupils become experienced in using an ‘emotional barometer’ which helps them to measure the intensity of their feelings.
Skills in using a peaceful problem solving process are also developed from an early age.

The DfES (2005) recommended that schools ensure they have the support and commitment from senior management and governors. They also emphasised the importance of clear and consistently implemented policies on behaviour, bullying, race equality and inclusion. Schools should be committed to the principles of SEAL and fully understand the implications. It is recommended that parents are consulted about the implementation of the framework and encouraged to participate in the development of skills through homework activities. These are additional to the materials first produced for the piloting of the framework, as are the staffroom activities. Parents are encouraged to attend SEAL assemblies and feedback from children is recommended through circle time and school councils.

The SEAL framework links with other approaches and initiatives. It compliments the personal, social and emotional area of learning that is delivered in the foundation stage and the PSHE/citizenship framework. The National Healthy School Standard (DfEE, 1999), ‘The Nurturing Programme for Schools’ (DfES, 2002), Second Step (Committee for Children, 1997) and PATHS (Penn University Prevention Research Centre) have been considered in the development of the resource. It also facilitates whole school initiatives such as peer mediation, buddy schemes and school councils. Lessons are delivered through established approaches such as circle time and collaborative group work. Also, if the themes are followed as recommended, the lesson plans
coincide with schemes of work and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies medium term plans.

In the light of ‘Every Child Matters’ (DfES, 2003a), the SEAL framework promotes the development of skills to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution and
- Achieve economic well being.

### 3.3 Small group work

Small group resources were developed following consultation with those involved in the Primary National Strategy Behaviour and Attendance Pilot (2006a). The Silver Set includes ideas for four of the SEAL themes and further materials are being developed to encompass all aspects of the SEAL curriculum.

The group work materials support an early-intervention approach for young children who may need additional help to develop their social, emotional and behavioural skills and should build on the curriculum delivered in the whole-class setting. It is a Wave 2 intervention (Primary National Strategy ‘Waves of intervention’ model, DfES 2006b) providing small group additional support, in addition to the whole school curriculum.
The aims of group work include:

- facilitating personal development;
- exploring key issues in more depth;
- practising new skills within a safe environment;
- learning more about self;
- developing ways of relating to others;
- feeling safe and taking risks;
- being better equipped to make wise choices;
- being reflective (DfES, 2005).

3.4 Evaluations on SEAL and Related Initiatives

In recent years, there has been a growing interest and requirement to evaluate the impact of Social and Emotional Learning. The national and international drive to incorporate this area of development within a teaching framework, has been based on theoretical beliefs and supporting evidence. Programs that develop social and emotional skills have been evaluated in order to provide schools with relevant guidance to implement evidence based practice. The concept that these skills can be taught is supported by extensive evidence from a wide range of promotion, prevention and treatment interventions (e.g., CASEL, 200, Commission on Positive Youth Development, 2005).

The introduction of SEAL within schools was supported by research that suggests that the development of these skills is beneficial to many aspects of education, life and mental health. Goleman (1996) argued that emotional and social competence is more influential than cognitive abilities for personal, career
and scholastic success. “Students who are anxious, angry or depressed don’t learn…People who are in these states do not take in information efficiently or deal with it well” (Goleman, 1995, p. 78). This was supported by Greenhalgh who stated that, “effective learning is dependent on emotional growth” (Greenalgh, 1994, p.21) and this can be explained through the Personal Construct Theory, developed by Kelly in 1955. It is assumed that we come to know the world through the constructions we make of it. Constructs are applied to anything we attend to, including ourselves, and influence what we fix attention on. Knowing an individual’s system of constructs, particularly regarding themselves, helps in understanding how they behave.

“Since none of us can know anything of the world, except through the meanings we have available to us….our constructs are crucially important” (Salmon, 1988, p.22).

Therefore, it is important to gain insight into the constructs a child has developed before they enter school settings and be aware of the constructs they continue to form. Personal constructs will influence self perceptions and future learning. Hence, an awareness of these processes is an important aspect within the educational environment. SEAL’s focus on developing vocabulary to express how we feel and strategies to manage these feelings, impacts on the constructions children make in their lives. Although personal construct psychology is not directly referred to in the rationale behind SEAL, the framework’s focus on self awareness and empathy, impacts on self constructs, as an individual and a learner. The intention is also to facilitate positive
constructs of others, through an increased understanding of their feelings and behaviours.

Hellaby claimed that emotional and social processes are inseparable from cognitive processes. “In order to learn successfully, children must feel happy and secure within the school environment”, (Hellaby, 2004, p.25).

The early experiences of many children have an enduring effect on their experiences in school.

Children whose home circumstances are very stressful….are often ill equipped when they come to school. Some give up and withdraw into their own world, others act out their distress in ways that can be enormously challenging for their teachers. They underachieve and can quickly get caught up in cycles of failure. Many seem destined for special education and some may even be excluded (Iszatt and Wasilewska, 1997, p.124).

Deci and Ryan (1985) stated that learners have two fundamental needs;

- to feel competent
- to be self determined.

However, Doran and Cameron (1995) state that these are needs that are sometimes go unmet.

Greenhalgh (1994) referred to Maslow’s (1943) ‘hierarchy of human needs’ and stated that many children do not develop a sense of basic safety. He also referred to the Kleinian-influenced view of the developmental stages of childhood
to illustrate how a child may be expected to develop emotionally. With reference to Erikson’s (1950) ideas on the conflict of trust versus mistrust, he stated that, “children need to develop a sense of emotional safety and trust in others for development and learning to proceed” (Greenhalgh, 1994, p.25). The foundations of these concepts are built in early relationships with adults by ongoing support and shared basic satisfaction in terms of emotional attachment and physical proximity (Boxall, 1996).

If these conditions are not provided then it may be assumed that a child would have difficulties trusting or attaching themselves to adults within the school environment. Although the theoretical rationale behind SEAL does not refer to attachment theory directly, it acknowledges that many children’s needs are not met when they enter school settings. The framework aims to develop skills and understanding that facilitate positive, appropriate relationships with adults and peers. This has obvious implications on a child’s ability to learn and, therefore, schools are becoming more aware of the importance of emotional development.

Several meta analyses have supported the relationship between social and emotional learning programmes and improved academic attainments (e.g. Durlak and Weissberg, 2007; Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, and Pachan 2008). However, a recent meta analysis carried out by the Institute of Education Sciences (2010) did not support these findings.

The research linking poverty and academic success is extensive (e.g.
Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994, Neuman, 2008). It is claimed that the attainment gap is evident when children are 22 months old (Sharples, Slavin, Chambers and Sharp, 2011). Therefore, recent studies have been carried out that consider how this gap can be narrowed. A review of research in the UK was carried out by Coghlan, Bergeron, White, Sharp, Morris and Rutt (2009) to establish what is effective in narrowing the gap in outcomes for young children, through early years practice. They considered 465 items of literature concerning children between birth and seven years. One of the findings was the impact of poverty on children’s social skills and they stated that, “effective pre-schools are characterised by a focus on individual children’s needs, both in terms of learning and social development” (p. 6).

Sharples et al (2011) carried out a mixed method study to establish factors that narrow the gap for children and young people living in poverty. It involved a qualitative review of observational and correlational research in the UK and a quantitative review of international interventions was also considered. One of the recommendations regarding practice that can narrow the educational gap for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds was to develop social and emotional competencies in schools.

Dyson, Gallanaugh, Humphrey, Lendrum and Wigelsworth (2010) carried out a review to establish how the gap in educational achievement could be narrowed and emotional resilience improved. This involved 52 key sources, with a mixture of intervention studies, research reviews, and other studies that explored the relationships between a range of factors and outcomes for children and young
people. One of their conclusions was that, “individual interventions are likely to be most effective if they are part of whole-school approaches to social and emotional wellbeing, such as the SEAL programme” (p.39). These reviews all support a link between social and emotional learning and improved educational outcomes for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The development of social, emotional and behavioural skills also creates greater social cohesion as we need to be more skilled emotionally if we are to be effective in our community (Antidote, 1998). SEAL enables schools to deliver a whole school programme that teaches social, emotional and behavioural competences and Wells (2000) found that this approach was more effective than focusing on behaviour alone.

Epstein and Elias (1996) stated that improved skills, in these areas, increase the success of inclusive education and that the behaviour of difficult children is better understood by adults and peers. Durlak and Wells (1997) provided an extensive peer reviewed meta analysis of primary prevention mental health programmes. Short and long term experimental and observational studies, large scale survey studies and longitudinal survey studies were considered. They concluded that programmes could improve school attendance and increase motivation and morale. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) review of evaluation studies considered after school programmes focusing on social and personal skills. They found positive effects in the areas of achievement tests, school grades, social skills, problem behaviours, drug use, bonding to school and self esteem. However, there was no improvement in school attendance. Patton, Bond, Carlin, Thomas,
Butler and Glover (2006) carried out 3 large scale reviews of SEL research, involving over 320,000 children from kindergarten to eighth grade, and again found positive impacts in all areas apart from attendance.

Meta analyses and review articles, that summarised the findings of several primary and secondary youth community programmes, were examined by the Board on Children Youth and Families (2002). They also considered three specific programme evaluations in detail. They recommended that community programmes for young people should be based on a developmental framework that supports the acquisition of personal and social assets. However, they stated that very little research applied the critical standards of science to identify which features of programmes influence development.

The NHSS (2003) stated that research shows there are benefits to many aspects of mental health. Greater social and emotional competence reduces depression, suicide and eating disorders. In the United States, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2003) reported that 28% of youth reported feeling so sad or hopeless every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing their normal activities. They also found that 12% of youth surveyed had made a plan to commit suicide sometime during the last twelve months. Princeton Survey Research Associates International (2006) carried out interviews, in the USA, with 725 high-school and 515 middle-school professionals, who were considered to be knowledgeable about mental health services. 68% of the high school professionals identified depression as a great (14%) or moderate (54%) problem in their schools and 54% identified bullying as a great (11%) or moderate (43%) problem. 82% of middle school professionals
reported bullying as a concern and fighting was reported by 57%. Social and emotional competencies are predictive of children’s ability to learn, solve problems non-violently (Zins, Weissberg, Wang and Walberg, 2004) and make healthier choices (e.g., avoiding drug use).

Several reviews suggested that engagement with and support from families and communities are more successful than programmes that focus on schools alone (e.g. Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins 2002, Durlak, Taylor, Kawashima, Pachan, DuPre, Celio, Berger, Dymnicki, and Weissberg, 2007). Catalano et al (2002) found that 75% of effective programmes included family and community standards and targeted healthy bonds between youths and adults. In 2008, Durlak and DuPre reviewed over 500 studies to assess the impact of implementation on programme outcomes and identified factors affecting the implementation process. They found that the implementation process is affected by variables related to communities, providers and innovations. They identified aspects of delivery and support that impacted on positive outcomes.

Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan (2010) carried out a further meta analysis on 213 studies of SEL programmes and again reported positive outcomes for 5 to 18 year olds in areas such as social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, conduct problems, emotional distress and achievement scores, when compared to pupils who did not access these programmes. They found that they do not have to be conducted by personnel from outside the school as programmes delivered by teachers were effective. They reconfirmed that the implementation has a strong influence on outcomes and that SEL needs to be supported by
coordinated state and educational policies, leadership and professional development.

Since SEAL has been introduced in England, there have been few studies evaluating the impact of the framework. In 2002, the DfES commissioned Southampton University’s Health Education Unit to carry out a study exploring children’s emotional and social competence and wellbeing. The purpose was to establish how these skills could be developed most effectively at a national and local level. Weare and Gray (2003) produced their report “What Works in Developing Children’s Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing?” as a result of this study, which consisted of a literature review, case studies work in five local education authorities (LEAs) and interviews with professionals working in this field. Their first recommendation was to develop a common language. As discussed, there is a wide range of terminology used to describe this area of development and Weare and Gray (2003) suggested two clusters of terms be used to cover environmental and pedagogic aspects:

- emotional and social competence
- emotional and social wellbeing.

They recommended that the DfES and local authorities should recognise and make links with emotional literacy, emotional intelligence and mental health.

The second recommendation was that this area of work should have a high priority in the organisational framework with an individual term such as ‘emotional and social competence’, with links to behaviour and the National Healthy Schools Standard. The report encouraged the DfES to promote that
“problem behaviour has underlying social and emotional causes which need to be addressed in a holistic, environmental way rather than through approaches which focus on detection, containment, negative reinforcement and punishment” (Weare and Gray, 2003, p. 6). This view was prevalent in the case studies and all linked work on emotional and social competence and wellbeing as integral to strategies to promote good behaviour.

The third recommendation referred to the lack of research in this area. Although literature, mainly from the United States, suggests that there are educational and social benefits from developing social and emotional competence, evaluation in England is not well developed.

The fourth recommendation suggested that the DfES promote the benefits of developing social and emotional wellbeing and the fifth that this area of work should be given a high profile in Local authorities. The case studies involved in this research indicated that a “whole school approach is vital in effectively promoting emotional and social competence and well being,” (Weare and Gray, 2003, p.6).

The report recommended that effective work requires a multi agency approach at all levels. The involvement of parents and the community, as well as a range of professionals, is important in developing a coherent framework. There was also evidence that initiatives need to be accessible and special provision be targeted at an early age. a developmental approach was recommended, with support to promote this area of work in secondary schools. Weare and Gray (2003) stated
that the largest determinant of emotional and social competence and well being, in pupils and teachers, is the school environment. They recommended that the DfES and LEAs ensure they work in “emotionally competent, participative and clear ways to encourage professional autonomy” (page 7).

The report recognised that there are effective programmes available that teach skills explicitly and that these should be promoted with clear lesson plans and schemes of work. Finally, the evidence suggested that teachers cannot transmit these skills if their own emotional and social needs are not met. Therefore, there are implications for staff development.

Recently, there have been some case studies evaluating the impact of SEAL on individual schools. Humphrey, Kalambouka, Bolton, Lendrum, Wigelsworth, Lennie and Farrell (2008) carried out an evaluation of small group work, a wave 2 intervention for pupils perceived to require additional support in the area of social, emotional and behavioural skills.

This research was carried out in three phases. The first phase involved interviews with SEAL leads in 12 Local Authorities. The second phase involved a quantitative evaluation of the impact of SEAL small group work in 37 schools. The sample consisted of 624 pupils. The third phase involved case studies of 6 ‘lead practice’ schools. Although there was variation in the level and type of support Local Authorities offered schools, the main findings were that:

- Support for schools typically takes the form of training events, support mechanisms (e.g. inter-school networks) and the provision or joint development of additional materials and resources;
LA staff suggested that successful implementation was influenced strongly by existing work (e.g. SEAL Wave 1 and/or other general approaches to social and emotional learning) within a given school;

- The skills, knowledge and experience of the small group facilitator were crucial;
- Auditing and evaluating progress in schools is typically done in an informal manner involving discussion amongst key members of staff
- More ‘formal’ evaluations involving outcome measures are rare as yet (Humphrey et al, 2008, p.7).

Key barriers to success in this area were reported to include attitudes of staff, misconceptions about the nature and purpose of SEAL small group work, and initiative overload.

The quantitative research concluded that statistically SEAL small group work has a positive impact. Each theme showed improvements in at least one domain. ‘New Beginnings’ resulted in an increase in pupil rated emotional literacy, ‘Going for Goals’ increased staff rated self regulation, reduced peer problems and increased pupil rated empathy, self-regulation, social skills and overall emotional literacy. ‘Getting On and Falling Out’ increased pupil rated social skills and ‘Good to Be Me’ reduced pupil rated peer problems. The impact was sustained in a seven week follow up, after the intervention had ended. However, the positive impact from parents was not statistically significant and ‘Getting On and Falling Out’ suggested a significant reduction in staff rated empathy.
The case studies of 6 lead practice schools suggested that SEAL small group work had a positive impact on social and emotional skills and pupil wellbeing. There were indications that the positive impact was sustained outside of the small group setting. The skills of the facilitator and the appropriateness of the environment, in which the sessions took place, were also important factors, as was the allocation of sufficient time. Key recommendations also included making explicit links with wave 1 work and maintaining a high degree of fidelity with the national guidance. It was suggested that small group sessions should take place over a longer period with two sessions per week and that support should also be provided in the mainstream classroom. The report also recommended that families should be directly involved and that Local Authority training should be standardised and possibly accredited.

An evaluation of secondary SEAL was carried out in 2007, (Secondary Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills Pilot Evaluation, DCSF, 2007). The aims were to (a) assess the impact of secondary SEAL on a variety of outcomes for pupils, staff and schools, and (b) examine how schools implemented SEAL, with particular reference to the adoption of a whole-school approach.

The research design combined quantitative and qualitative inquiry. The quantitative component mainly provided data regarding the impact of secondary SEAL and 22 SEAL schools were matched with 19 comparison schools in the quasi-experimental study. The target cohort involved 8,630 Year 7 pupils at the beginning of the academic year 2007/8. Key outcome data focused on pupils’
social and emotional skills, mental health difficulties, pro-social behaviour and behaviour problems. Data were collected through self-report surveys carried out on an annual basis at the beginning of 2008, 2009 and 2010.

The qualitative data were primarily to provide insight into the implementation process. Nine of the 22 SEAL schools participated in longitudinal qualitative case studies, which involved observations of lessons, interviews and focus groups with pupils, teachers, SEAL leads, head teachers, and LA staff. Analysis of school documents such as SEAL self-evaluation forms and policy documents were also carried out during 5 visits. The DCSF also requested additional quantitative data regarding pupil and staff perceptions of school climate, staff social and emotional skills, and pupil understanding, knowledge and involvement in SEAL.

The analysis of case study schools’ approaches to and progress in SEAL implementation indicated a very mixed picture. A range of issues were considered to have impacted on the variability in outcomes, including a “somewhat superficial approach to implementation (‘box ticking’) and a failure to sustain initial activity levels in the latter schools,” (Humphrey, Lendrum and Wigelsworth, 2010, p.4). However, the analysis of impact data for each school revealed that this made little difference to outcomes for pupils as there was very little variation evident between schools.

The extent to which whole school SEAL approaches were implemented varied greatly in the nine case study schools. Humphrey suggests that an issue may
have been the limited time frame of the study, as whole-school approaches take time to become fully embedded, particularly in large institutions such as secondary schools:

consistent with the findings of previous research (e.g. Durlak and DuPre, 2008; Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk and Zins, 2005), our analysis of qualitative case study school data revealed a range of barriers and facilitators relating to preplanning and foundations, implementation support systems, implementation environment, implementer factors, and programme characteristics. The factors identified clearly interacted in creating the conditions for effective (or ineffective) implementation of SEAL. Amongst these factors, we tentatively point to staff ‘will and skill’, in addition to time and resource allocation, as being the most crucial in driving implementation forward (or, indeed, holding it back) (Humphrey et al, 2010, p.4).

The analysis of pupil-level outcome data suggested SEAL did not impact significantly upon pupils’ social and emotional skills, general mental health difficulties, pro-social behaviour or behaviour problems.

The Secondary SEAL research did not support the literature advocating that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes can lead to significant improvements in a range of outcomes (e.g. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger, 2011). Factors considered to have contributed to these outcomes were that SEAL did not have a high level of structure and consistency in programme delivery, careful monitoring by developers or the level of resources necessary to ensure an effective SEL programme.
Recommendations from this study included ensuring time and resources are available to staff and parents and carers are fully engaged if schools want to fully implement a SEL programme. Humphrey also suggested that programmes should reflect research regarding the structure and consistent delivery of programmes with SAFE (Sequenced, Active, Focused, Explicit) principles and close monitoring of fidelity. The study concluded that greater trialling of such initiatives should be carried out before being rolled out nationally.

Hele’s school, a state school in Plymouth, introduced secondary SEAL in 2004 and has monitored the impact on absenteeism, punctuality, detentions and exclusions. Clouder (2007) reported that temporary and permanent exclusions dropped from 795 in 2004/5 to 723 in 2006/7. They also found that attendance improved for both pupils and staff. The school established a ‘lateness code’ and SEAL ‘permeates the approach to teaching’. Most lessons have a plenary session with time for self reflection and ‘dream grades’ are established for individuals’ academic goals (Clouder, 2007).

Student Support Services at Hele include two counsellors and a parent support advisor. Individual and group support is provided and a ‘nurture group’ is run for year 7 pupils to support them in their transition. The first term focuses on self confidence and emotions and the second term on organisation and homework. The year 7 pupils are mentored by year 9 students and a ‘raising aspirations’ program is implemented for older pupils who lack motivation.
Prior to SEAL, pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were placed in the Student Support Centre for a 6 week period but evaluation suggested that this contained the problem and had little impact when the pupils returned to mainstream classes. The students are now taken out for certain periods and counsellors work within the mainstream classes. The intervention is less intensive but focuses explicitly on social and emotional skills. A recent OFSTED report rated the school as outstanding. Children, staff and parents are treated as individuals and SEAL is permeated across the school curriculum.

3.5 International Research

There is a growing body of research available internationally, which supports the relationship between social and emotional skills and success in life.

In Sweden, Dahlin (2007) carried out an evaluation of eleven schools to investigate the development of values and social competencies. These schools are known as ‘Steiner Waldorf’, an alternative educational movement that began in Germany in 1919, based on the ideas of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. The approach considers the whole child and considers physical, behavioural, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual maturation (Rawson and Richter, 2000). The focus is on values rather than skills and social and emotional learning is indirect. Dahlin compared responses to questionnaires completed by Steiner Waldorf students and those in municipal schools. He found that students educated with this approach had higher self esteem, were more tolerant, felt a greater responsibility for social and moral issues. A study by Woods, Ashley and
Woods (2005) of Steiner Waldorf schools in the UK suggested that this approach encourages ethical and social development.

In the Netherlands, since 2006, schools are obliged to invest in ‘education for citizenship’ with guidelines on the use of systemic social, emotional and moral education. A ‘Skills for Life’ program was developed based on two psychological theories: social learning theory (1986) and rational-emotive therapy (Ellis, 1962). The aim of the program is to teach social and emotional skills by addressing behaviour and associated mental processes. It has three modules and is delivered in standard classes. Diekstra (2007) evaluated the short and long term impact of the program and stated that the benefits included a belief in self efficacy, an ability to effectively express negative emotions and improved relationships between students and peers and students and teachers. It also had a positive impact on the number of suicidal thoughts and attempted suicides reported. Interviews also suggested that teachers benefited from training and delivery of the program, including areas such as emotional and personal development, an ability to pick up and react to signals and an increased self confidence. Despite the research and guidelines, Diekstra stated that the importance of teaching these skills has not been embraced in the Netherlands.

In Spain, ‘Responsible Education’ aims to promote well rounded and healthy growth, with an emphasis on social and personal well being. In the province of Cantabria, 80 schools were involved in the evaluation of this project, implementing and adapting programs that pre existed. These included ‘Prevent to Live’ for pupils between 3 and 12 years of age and ‘the Untied Nations’ Model’
for 12 to 16 year olds. There are continuous accredited training courses for teachers and a ‘Home User’s Guide’ for families. There are also associated courses in the community targeting professionals including educational psychologists and social workers. The evaluation carried out by Fernandez-Berrocal involved questionnaires for teachers to collate their own views on the project and their perceptions of the impact on pupils. The initial results have been very positive in terms of teachers’ satisfaction with the program (91.8% satisfied or very satisfied) and 93.5% found it of considerable or great interest to pupils. They perceived that 92.1% of families valued the project highly or very highly. The responses suggested that the project had a positive impact on pupils’:

- expression of opinions and feelings
- decision making
- positive attitudes towards health
- ability to relate to each other
- self assurance.

This project has resulted in the development of further materials and resources to support social and emotional learning, including an ‘audiovisual toolkit’ introduced in 2008.

Another program, in Spain, aiming to transform schools and the surrounding community, by improving emotional intelligence and social abilities is known as the ‘Guipuzcoa Project’. Emotional intelligence training has been delivered to families, organizations and professionals groups in the community with the aim
of creating and emotionally literate society. The impact is currently being evaluated and findings will soon be published.

Social and emotional education has only recently been developed in Germany but Harm Paschen (2007) studied the varying approaches of six schools using national and international resources. His findings suggested that these programs created noticeable benefits according to teachers, experts and the authorities but that there was little evidence based evaluation.

In the USA, Weissberg, Durlak, Taylor, Dymnicki, and O’Brien (2007) conducted a meta analysis of 207 school based SEL programs. The 233,000 student sample was selected from published and unpublished studies in this area. The programs all focused on improving social and emotional development through competencies such as intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness, self management, realistic goal setting and responsible decision making. Pupils between 5 and 18 years of age were targeted, from the general population, with no identified additional needs. Weissberg explored the impact on attitudes, behaviours and school performance.

The experimental group was compared to a control group on one of the following six areas:

- social and emotional skills
- attitudes towards self, others and school
- positive social behaviours
- conduct problems
- emotional distress
- academic performance.

The research concluded that SEL programmes had a positive impact on all six outcome areas, including academic performance. The experimental group was reported to have achieved 11 percentile points higher than the control group on standardized achievement tests. The most positive impact was found to be with ‘at risk’ students.

The efficacy of programs conducted by a) teachers b) researchers and c) school staff and additional school or family members was compared. The research suggested that school based programs delivered by teachers were the most effective and, therefore, additional after school programs and resources were not necessary. Finally, Weissberg found that programs that had the most positive outcomes had no difficulties with the implementation.

In Anchorage, a SEL program was delivered in two pilot High Schools. Advisors target ninth grade pupils in order to build SEAL skills and an academy was established for students, considered to be unlikely to pass the ‘High School Graduation Quality Examination’. The outcome exceeded expectations with 93% of students passing the exam (Blakeney, 2007). The Anchorage district now employ SEL standards and benchmarks and most schools implement a program known as ‘Resolving Conflict Creatively Program’ (RCCP). SEL is a focus across the curriculum and there are ‘Health/SEL Specialists’ to support the
developments. A ‘Social and Emotional Learning Standards Based Report Card’ is being piloted in elementary schools, to replace the current ‘behavioural’ emphasis. A normed and validated survey is being carried out, with a priority on building ‘positive school climates.

Davidson, a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin, found that by teaching students skills, such as empathy, self-awareness, and how to manage distressing emotions, they become better learners. He has produced data that indicate memory, attention and learning is impaired when the brain’s centres for distress are activated. Emotions can either enhance or inhibit our ability to learn. Davidson (2000) stated that programs that promote repeated experiences of self-discipline, empathy, and cooperation create stronger underlying circuits in the brain and facilitate these essential life skills.

A one-year evaluation of the ‘Second Step’ programme (Committee for Children, 1997), aimed at preschool to middle school children, was conducted by the University of Washington. It concluded that physical aggression decreased among students who were involved in the Second Step programme, which teaches skills such as anger management and problem solving. Physical aggression increased among students in control classes. Pro social and neutral interactions, increased in the Second Step classes, but did not change in the control classes. Six months later, positive interaction was sustained in the experimental group. The U.S. Department of Education’s Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined and Drug Free Schools reviewed one hundred and thirty two programmes for quality and effectiveness and rated the Second Step program as
“Exemplary”, due to its positive impact on measures such as aggression, anxiety, social skills and pro social behaviour. Second Step is the only violence prevention curriculum to be given this top rating.

Although these findings support the development of SEL programmes, not all large-scale studies have resulted in these positive outcomes. In 2010, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), which carries out research within the U.S. Department of Education, released a report that evaluated seven different SEL programs, including Positive Action. The Positive Action programme consists of a school curriculum, with family, and community components. Lessons are delivered in school classrooms on an almost daily basis. The programme is based on theories of self-concept, learning, behaviour, and school ecology. A research team compared a group of five to seven schools, running each SEL programme, with other schools in the same district not implementing the programme. The results indicated no significant differences in social and emotional literacy between the schools. There were no increases in academic achievement or decreases in problematic behaviour.

As this was conducted by an outside agency with little to no connection to the individual SEL programs, it may have been subject to less bias in its results. However, Weissberg stated that Durlak was involved in their meta analysis as he was not connected to CASEL or any of the programmes considered. He also argues that the nature of meta analyses ensures they are less likely to be subject to bias.
Elias (2011) suggested that discrepancies between the Institute of Education Sciences study and Durlak and Weissberg’s (2011) research are due to the methodology. IES researchers couldn’t be sure that the non-SEL schools in their study weren’t using some SEL techniques in their classrooms and statistical measures did not apply to the kind of data they collected. Flay and Allred (2011) reanalysed the IES data using other statistical measures and found significant improvements in the behaviour and attitudes of children involved in the Positive Action programme. This U.S. Department of Education evidence based programme is aimed at preschool to year 12 pupils and works on the philosophy that positive thoughts lead to positive actions and that positive actions lead to positive thoughts. It targets physical, intellectual, social and emotional development.

Most of the international findings have indicated that social and emotional learning impacts positively on young peoples’ education. However, most of the evidence, particularly in the USA, is from research connected to CASEL. The most recent independent study did not support previous findings. Although proponents of SEL have criticised some aspects of the IES study, as discussed, even Weissberg has stated that further research is needed, regarding which programmes are effective and meet evidence based criterion.

3.6 Critique of SEAL

Since SEAL was introduced in England, there has been criticism about the increasing focus on emotional development in education. Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) refer to the “Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education” and consider the
impact in education settings and the work place. The framework is explicitly related to Goleman’s concept of emotional intelligence and was developed to ‘teach’ the constructs Goleman (1996) refers to. As discussed earlier, caution has been raised regarding the acceptance of emotional intelligence as a scientific theory and criticism has been directed at the validity of measures (e.g. Roberts et al, 2001).

The Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing is an organisation based in Glasgow, which focuses on young people’s well-being. Following the 2007 UNICEF paper on child well-being in rich countries, which placed young people in the UK at the bottom of the league, they carried out research in Scottish schools, which suggested high levels of depression at S2. (S2 is the Scottish equivalent to year 8 in England.) Subsequently, they explored the move within the UK to encourage schools to address the well being of young people through SEAL. However they concluded that, “following research and deliberation over the past two years we are increasingly concerned about the type of psychological interventions government in the UK, particularly in England and Wales, is now encouraging in schools” (Craig, 2007, p. 3).

Concerns were raised that SEAL would bring about a “revolution in education and schooling as we know it” without adequate supporting evidence or “credible intellectual rationale” (Craig, 2007, p. 3). She argued that teaching children calming techniques, in a systematic way, may encourage children to become more anxious and that focussing on the self and feelings may encourage narcissism and self obsession. “In short, we fear SEAL is encouraging a large-
scale psychological experiment on young people, which will not just waste time and resources but could actually back-fire and unwittingly” (Craig, 2007, p.3).

Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) support these views and perceive that the emotional curriculum has been prioritised over the intellectual. They warn that such developments engender an unhealthy preoccupation with the self, resulting in increased emotional vulnerability, anxiety and fearfulness. Critics claim that SEAL could have a detrimental effect on young peoples’ well being in the long term and there is a need to return to the authoritarian humanist approach to education.

“Knowledge can be taught passionately or indifferently by and to people who may be distraught, upset, happy or content. It does not matter. Knowledge, as it were, conquers all,” (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008, p153).

I believe these views undermine how teachers viewed the social and emotional needs of their students prior to the introduction of specific programmes in this area. The suggestion is that educators did not address these needs in the past and that the development of such skills is not encompassed in knowledge.

Ecclestone and Hayes discuss the impact of the emotional focus in secondary and further education. They also refer to the move from a union focus on individual rights to anti bullying campaigns in the workplace and believe that this is promoting a victim mentality, where the emotional demands of employees and managers become paramount.
The suggestion is that this move towards emotional learning is based on popular psychology and is not evidence based. However, critics fail to acknowledge that psychology is applied in all aspects of life, particularly in the development and education of children and young people. Contrary to the claims that SEAL is promoting a ‘revolution in education’ without adequate supporting evidence, SEAL provides an evidence based systematic framework to promote skills that have always been encouraged in school settings. Rather than the inconsistency of techniques across year groups and classes, SEAL facilitates a common language and approach. Craig (2007) also omitted to discuss the many developments both nationally and internationally in the area of social and emotional learning, that have arisen as result of the research in this area.

The premise that the rationale for SEAL based on emotional intelligence is questioned in terms of these beliefs since being discredited. Critics have stated that many of the characteristics Goleman (1996) refers to emanate from personality and include any positive characteristic, excluding IQ. If this is the case, then Craig (2007) does not acknowledge the value of encouraging positive characteristics in schools.

Further criticism is aimed at the Weare and Gray report (2003), which supported the implementation of SEAL with international studies. Craig (2007) stated that these studies are based on interventions, which are very different in their design, goals and methodology. There is no pilot study to support the impact of SEAL in the long term and, therefore, no basis for teaching these skills in the long term. She stated that, “it is because there is no evidence that anything like SEAL has
been shown to be beneficial for young people that we are claiming that SEAL is a large-scale psychological experiment” (Craig, 2007, p.30). She does not acknowledge the wealth of national and international research, discussed in this chapter, carried out to support the implementation of programmes to develop social and emotional skills.

The DfES published an “Evaluation of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Strategy Pilot” (2006a), which included the results of a study of SEAL between 2003 and 2005. However, Craig (2007) argued that this study was poorly designed and that there was no control group to compare. She claimed that feedback was mainly from teachers and could not be considered as objective. Also, the study indicated no improvement in attendance and little impact on academic performance. She also raised concerns that attitudes became more negative and that the pupils did not indicate any difficulties with social skills or self esteem prior to the intervention.

Craig (2007) stated that SEAL is “designed to change young people’s perceptions of themselves and other aspects of their psychology and relationships” (p.7). She compared it with the attempt to raise self esteem in American schools as “a panacea which would cure all social ills” (Craig, 2007, p. 7). She stated that more recent evidence suggests that self esteem is not important for academic attainment and that social problems often occur when people have high rather than low self esteem.
Craig’s (2007) evidence is supported by Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger and Vohs (2003) who found that self-esteem, the global component of self-concept, did not impact on academic performance. However, extensive research supports the reciprocal effects model (REM) demonstrating that academic self-concept and academic achievement are a cause and effect of the other. Marsh (2008) stated that self concept is an important factor in all aspects of education. Craven and Yeung (2008) discussed studies that support their views and conclude that:

these results suggest that no teacher is wasting his or her time in enhancing their students’ self-concepts in specific areas; this is likely to have a positive impact on students’ adaptive learning strategies, and gains in achievement are likely to be long lasting and optimised when self-concept and skills in specific areas are enhanced simultaneously. In essence, we propose the inclusion of self-concept as a crucial component of school intervention as well as an important measure in the effective evaluation of quality teaching and learning. In addition, we advocate that teacher education students should be taught the rationale for enhancing school students’ self concepts and specific strategies for effectively enhancing students’ self-concepts in multiple academic and non-academic domains” (Craven and Yeung, 2008, p.13).

Their conclusions advocated the value and potential positive impact of programmes such as SEAL.
Craig (2007) supported her claims with Seligman’s (1998) criticism of American education, with grade inflation and falling standards, since there has been a focus on self esteem building. The Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing reported that research by Twenge (2006) showed that since the 1960s young people in America have increased their level of self esteem, but that narcissism, blame and feelings of powerlessness have also risen. There were also reported findings by Dweck (2010) that praise may undermine the motivation to achieve. By reducing criticism and opportunities to fail, learning is undermined and, therefore, there is less need for the development of resilience. Similarly, Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) believe that seeking self-fulfilment will become the primary aim in life and that therapy will become an end in itself, encouraging individuals to turn away from the external problems of the world. They warn that therapeutic approaches suggest vulnerability, where students are wrapped in cotton wool and challenges are best avoided.

SEAL is criticised for giving unhelpful messages such as promoting help seeking behaviour and the potential for overloading services in the future. Craig (2007) also stated that avoiding hurt feelings will lead to conformity and fragility. However, SEAL does not aim to avoid hurt feelings but attempts to develop the vocabulary in young children to express and understand these feelings. Contrary to encouraging a victim mentality, the framework promotes personal responsibility and skills to overcome external challenges and goals.

A further argument is the possibility of ‘ironic effects’ when children are encouraged to use calming techniques. Craig (2007) claimed this could, in fact,
increase anxiety. Reference was also made to ‘dosage effects’, where every young person is exposed to SEAL, irrespective of their needs in this area. The potential for an overload of emotional awareness has also been raised by Weare (2004). The term ‘emotionalism’ is sometimes referred to as an inclination to rely on or place too much value on emotion, as opposed to resorting to reason. It has also been implied that it legitimises a new form of abuse. This kind of enlightenment is, “in fact a cloak for new ways to abuse children... and is sweeping the 'caring' professions” (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008, p.5). Critics of therapeutic approaches suggest that professions are benefitting from an increasing need for their services.

However, SEAL is intended to be implemented in terms of waves, whole school implementation, small group support and individual interventions for those who require intensive support with social and behavioural skills. The first whole school wave does not provide therapeutic support or promote ‘emotionalism’ but encourages students to problem solve and develop reasoning skills. It aims to teach ways of managing emotions effectively rather than them impacting on academic learning. The small group materials provide a systematic approach to supporting learning in class. Withdrawing groups of children for small group support in the area of social, emotional and behavioural skills is not unique to the SEAL framework. Learning mentors and teaching assistants have provided small group support for many years but they have tended to use a range of programmes to support development in this area. Small group SEAL provides a structured developmental programme.
Craig (2007) questioned whether teachers are adequately trained to deal with the complexity and sophistication of the SEAL framework and stated that teachers stress levels are increased by the materials available to support SEAL. Craig (2007) claimed that 80% of teachers interviewed ‘disagreed’ or ‘disagreed strongly’ with the idea that SEAL reduced their workload and the time they had to spend on discipline issues. However, feedback from teachers in Lindale, in stage 2 of this study (see 5.2.1), indicated that the materials are easy to follow and lessons do not require a great deal of planning time. She also reported that SEAL gives the message to parents that these skills are the responsibility of schools but that parents are much more important than schools. However, Craig (2007) failed to recognise that many parents are not equipped to facilitate the development of these skills at home. They may not have developed their own skills adequately and are, therefore, unable to encourage appropriate skills with their children. The SEAL framework includes a specific programme for families, known as ‘Family SEAL’. This encourages parents to support the development of social and emotional skills learned in school and provides specific activities to carry out at home. In Lindale, ‘Parent Partnership’ are contributing to training in this area and are supporting families in their development of social and emotional skills.

Craig (2007) questioned issues over gender and personality differences and the notion that there are ‘appropriate’ emotional responses. An example given is the fostering of ‘empathy’, where she argued that many creative or entrepreneurial people may not display this skill:
In short we should not be surprised that the well-being of young people in the UK is poor when our values are not child-centred and when we do not encourage them, or equip them with the skills needed to live good lives. This is not about teaching children and young people about emotions; this is about the values of society at large (Craig, 2007, p. 13).

Although parents are considered to be much more important than schools in improving the well being of children, she suggested that:

- schools could play their part by
  - adopting a supporting ethos (many already do this)
  - having well trained, motivated teachers who can relate well to young people
  - modelling the type of behaviour we would like more young people to adopt
  - teaching young people important basic skills
  - giving young people opportunities for development
  - having clear rules and boundaries
  - tackling, with the support of other authorities, anti-social behaviour (Craig, 2007, p.14).

Craig (2007) claimed that this could be achieved by “non-psychological activities” which are “at least worthy of piloting/further investigation:

- more opportunities for PE/sports/outdoor education/martial arts
- nutritional support
- more opportunities for volunteering/community activities
However, all activities to support and develop children's learning and wellbeing could be considered to be psychological. Schools are already developing these activities through extended and healthy schools. Many aspects, such as nutritional support are well established and are way beyond the ‘piloting stage’.

Craig (2007) suggested that rather than psychological interventions that are about emotions, they should be about thinking styles, cognitions and beliefs. She did not acknowledge that thinking styles, cognitions and beliefs are also the focus of psychological interventions and, in fact, SEAL will impact on these areas. Craig (2007) claimed that individual profiling and targets should be developed rather than checklists of learning outcomes for measurement and evaluation. She advocated resources put into support for parents and childcare and youth clubs to expose young people to other role models. However, no reference is made to the Family SEAL materials or small group SEAL, providing wave 2 targeted support.

Craig (2007) concluded that:

instead of the language of feelings, introspection, fragility and vulnerability the work we encourage in education is about self efficacy, taking action and doing things in the world…the type of confidence this fosters is allied to a sense of purpose, or the attempt to make a difference in the world through connections with other people (p.15).
Craig (2007) stated that formally teaching all children social and emotional skills is leading to a dangerous route. However, concepts such as self efficacy, sense of purpose and making a difference through connections with others are through skills that SEAL aims to encourage and foster through themes such as “Going for Goals” and “Relationships”.

To conclude, there is value in the debate regarding the extent of an educational focus on social, emotional and behavioural skills. There are resource, funding and ethical implications of delivering a universal framework to develop social and emotional skills, without substantial evidence. Therefore, the claims of SEL critics need to be considered, with additional research regarding which programmes are effective in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people. However, some of the criticisms appear to lack understanding of the SEAL framework and liken it to therapeutic education rather than a systematic approach to developing skills that have always been addressed in schools. The purpose of the SEAL curriculum is to promote, not detract from, academic learning. Teachers are more than aware of the time and energy spent on resolving conflicts between individuals and supporting those who have not developed the skills to work independently. Therefore, a curriculum that can develop children’s ability to solve their own conflicts and foster independence allows more time for quality teaching.

3.7 Summary and Conclusions

There are a growing number of resources and materials available to promote social and emotional learning in schools, both nationally and internationally.
There is also an increasing body of evidence to support the benefits related to the teaching of these skills. However, the DfES SEAL framework (2005) appears to be one of very few holistic approaches to the development of these skills in schools. Its common use of themes across the foundation and primary phase appears to be unique and it facilitates the acquisition of skill building throughout developmental stages. The curriculum enables schools to embed SEAL throughout all curriculum areas and provides materials for staff development. The development of ‘Family SEAL’ promotes the development of social and emotional skills at home and in the community. Although it is a Wave 1 intervention, it also provides resources for those who may need additional support. SEAL encompasses the theory and research that has evolved over recent years in areas termed ‘emotional intelligence’ and ‘social and emotional competence’. The framework enables professionals to deliver teaching in this area, with detailed lesson plans, objectives and preferred outcomes. However, there has been criticism that a whole school curriculum may be detrimental to the education system. At the outset of this study, no direct research had been carried out regarding the impact of SEAL, as schools were only beginning to implement the framework. Subsequent research considered the impact of small group SEAL and the impact of SEAL on proximal measures. The distinct contribution of this evaluation is the consideration of the framework’s impact on distal measures across one Local Authority.
4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Aims of the research

4.1.1 Introduction

The DfES Primary ‘Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ framework SEAL was developed in 2003 and was first piloted in schools in 2004. It was a strand of the National Primary Strategy’s ‘Behaviour and Attendance’ initiative and I had responsibility to support schools in the implementation of these materials. The DfES supported the introduction of SEAL with evidence that Social and Emotional Learning programmes could not only improve pupils’ social and emotional skills but also improve learning, attendance and inclusive practice. (DfES, 2003b). Therefore, the initial aim of this research, stage one, was to consider the impact of SEAL on the distal measures of attainments, attendance and exclusions in Lindale primary schools, through a longitudinal quantitative analysis of data. Lindale primary schools implementing SEAL were compared with those who were not implementing the framework, between 2005 and 2009. The more proximal measure regarding the impact of SEAL on pupil referrals for SEBD outreach was also considered.

Stages two and three were not considered at the outset of this research. However, in 2007, semi structured interviews were carried out with a sample of the 2005 original cohort of schools. The feedback provided information for a JAR report, regarding the qualitative impact of SEAL in schools. This data form stage 2 of the research and responses are presented from head teachers, SENCos and other colleagues in the authority.
Stage 3 involves a quantitative analysis of data from five schools, from the original 2005 cohort, to evaluate the impact of SEAL in settings where the framework was embedded and given a high profile. Contextual Value Added Scores are considered in each school, over a three year period. A comparison is made between pupils with free school meals and those who were non free school meals, in order to establish if the attainment gap for children from lower socio economic backgrounds was narrowed when SEAL was implemented, as recent research suggests. Attainment scores are compared with the Lindale average scores and the most recent OFSTED reports are considered.

4.1.2 Stage One

The aim of the first stage of this research, a quasi experimental analysis, was to establish the impact of SEAL on the distal measures of attainments, attendance and exclusions. The first wave of SEAL in Lindale involved twenty four primary schools and they began implementing the framework in 2005. They formed the experimental group and could be compared with the remaining 194 schools that were not implementing SEAL. A further 47 schools began implementing SEAL in 2006, 24 in 2007 and 16 in 2008. Therefore, the experimental group increased year on year whereas the control group decreased in number. The experimental and control group data were also compared with Lindale authority’s data on all schools.
The number of pupil referrals for SEBD outreach support was also considered between 2005 and 2009. The aim was to establish if there was a relationship between the number of schools implementing SEAL and the number of referrals.

4.1.3 Stage Two

The aim of the second stage of the research was to gather the views of professionals, involved with SEAL, through semi structured interviews with staff, from eighteen of the original twenty four schools, implementing the framework since 2005. Reports from School Improvement Partners and Healthy Schools colleagues were also considered. The intention was to provide some qualitative feedback that would not be reflected in the quantitative analysis, regarding the impact of SEAL in schools.

4.1.4 Stage Three

The aim of the third stage was to consider whether SEAL had impacted on Key Stage 2 SATs results and Contextual Value Added Scores in five schools, regarded as being best practice in terms of embedding the framework. The Contextual Value Added scores compared pupil data with free school meals compared to non free school meals. The purpose was to consider if there was a relationship between SEAL and the academic progress of pupils from lower socio economic backgrounds. Comments related to SEAL, from their most recent OFSTED reports, are also presented. The five schools began implementing SEAL in 2005 and it was evident from visits and network meetings that they had invested time and resources in ensuring SEAL was delivered throughout their settings. The head teachers from these schools subsequently contributed to
SEAL training in Lindale, advocating the positive impact of the framework. Therefore, this stage of the research provided a comparison of data from schools, where there was a high level of fidelity in terms of the programme’s implementation, with the Lindale average scores.

4.2 Research questions

4.2.1 Stage One

1. What is the impact of SEAL on pupils’ Key Stage 2 SATs results?
2. What is the impact of SEAL on pupils’ attendance?
3. What is the impact of SEAL on exclusions?
4. What is the impact of SEAL on the number of pupils referred for SEBD outreach support?

For stage 1 of the research Key Stage 2 SATS average points scores were compared each year. The comparison was made between SEAL schools, non SEAL schools and the Lindale average. Authorised and unauthorised attendance data were also compared year on year between SEAL, non SEAL and Lindale schools. Fixed term exclusion figures were compared in the same way between 2004 and 2008. The impact of SEAL on behaviour was also measured by comparing the number of pupils referred for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support between 2005 and 2009. As quantitative data involved a comparison of SEAL schools with non SEAL schools and the Lindale average, the schools implementing SEAL in 2005, 2006 and 2007 also needed to be considered in this analysis. The experimental and control groups did not remain static throughout the longitudinal study. As SEAL training, funding and
implementation was carried out in phases, there was an increasing number of schools joining the experimental group over time, which subsequently reduced the number of schools in the control group.

4.2.2 Stage Two

1. What will be the views of head teachers and SENCos, regarding the impact of SEAL in a sample of schools?

2. What will be the views of School Improvement Partners and National Healthy Schools colleagues, regarding the impact of SEAL in a sample of schools?

Stage 2 considered more qualitative feedback and involved semi structured telephone interviews with head teachers and SENCos from 18 of the original 24 cohort of SEAL schools. Reports, regarding the impact of SEAL in these schools, from School Improvement Partners and National Healthy Schools colleagues were also considered. The interviews took place in October 2007, two years after the initial implementation of the framework. However, this information was gathered for the purpose of a Joint Area Review and was not initially intended to inform this research. Therefore, there are limitations in the collection and analysis of data in this stage.

4.2.3 Stage Three

1. What is the impact of SEAL on the Contextual Value Added scores for pupils with free school meals compared to those with non free school meals in 5 ‘best practice’ schools between 2005 and 2008?

2. What is the impact of SEAL on Key Stage 2 SATs results?
3. What is the impact of SEAL on subsequent OFSTED reports in the areas of ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’?

Stage 3 considered the Contextual Value Added scores between 2005 and 2008, in order to establish if there had been any improvement in Key Stage 1 to 2 SATs results, following the implementation of SEAL. Data from pupils with free school meals were compared with data from pupils who were non-free school meals in order to establish if pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds made a greater rate of progress and the academic gap was narrowed. It also compared the Key Stage 2 SATs average points scores of these schools with the Lindale average, between 2005 and 2008. The OFSTED reports were also considered in areas that SEAL may have impacted. These were the categories of ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’.

4.3 Type of research

4.3.1 Introduction

This study was initially planned as a quantitative piece of research. However, as it progressed, it became apparent that a quantitative analysis of data could not reflect the positive experiences of those involved with implementing SEAL. In 2007, semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with eighteen of the original twenty-four schools that began implementing SEAL in 2005. The views of School Improvement Partners and Healthy School colleagues were also gathered, regarding the impact of SEAL in these schools, primarily related to
pupils’ behaviour. This feedback entailed some qualitative data and provided a more in depth view of the framework’s impact. However, this information was originally gathered for a Joint Area Review that took place in Lindale in 2007. The interviews were one off and not subject to thematic analysis.

Five schools were also selected to be the focus of individual quantitative analysis. The reason for their selection was that they had evidenced, during visits and network meetings, that SEAL was embedded throughout their schools and that they had maintained fidelity to the framework. SEAL was delivered through assemblies, discrete lessons and other curriculum areas. Displays, home activities and the involvement of all staff ensured that SEAL became an integral part of the whole school ethos. This was evidenced in visits to the schools by the SEAL coordinators, School Improvement Partners and National Healthy School colleagues. Staff from these schools also contributed to subsequent training in Lindale. Their presentations provided information on how they developed the framework throughout all aspects of their schools.

Key Stage 2 SATs results and Contextual Value Added scores were considered over time to see if SEAL had an impact in these settings considered to be ‘best practice’. Their most recent OFSTED reports were also considered and provided further qualitative data. Therefore, as a whole, this research adopted a mixed methods model, combining elements of positivist and interpretivist paradigms.

Punch (2009) defines mixed methods research as “empirical research which involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data” (p.
Stages one and three of this study consider quantitative data. However, stage two involves qualitative feedback, in terms of staff and colleagues views, to provide a more comprehensive insight into the impact of SEAL. The ‘weighting’ of this mixed method approach is predominantly quantitative as the qualitative data were not gathered rigorously, throughout the course of the research procedure. In hindsight, a greater emphasis on qualitative measures would have been beneficial in terms of positive psychology and the value in implementing a framework to develop social and emotional skills.

Multi methodology gives a more complete view and enables the researcher to meet the requirements during the different phases of the intervention. Quantitative and qualitative data “work to provide the best understanding of a research problem” (Creswell, 2003, p.12). However, it is not always possible, at the onset of a study to identify which measures are going to give the most complete view of the intervention’s impact. Although, quasi experimental, there were elements of other methods in the longitudinal gathering of data. Semi structured interviews provided a qualitative aspect to the research and the more in depth consideration of five schools provided further quantitative analysis.

4.3.2 Positivist and Interpretivist Paradigms

The “Positivist” philosophy of science is the belief that authentic knowledge is based on sense experience and positive verification. Skinner (1938) developed a descriptive positivistic approach in “The Behaviour of Organisms”. The philosophy is guided by the principle that logic of inquiry is the same across all social and natural sciences and that the goal of inquiry is to explain and predict. The ultimate goal is to develop a law of general understanding, by discovering
necessary and sufficient conditions for any phenomenon and creating a perfect model of it. Therefore, conditions can be manipulated to create predicted result. Positivist approaches in psychological research assumes that scientific knowledge is testable and that research can only be proved empirically not through debate. The principle is also held that research should be mostly deductive and that deductive logic is used to develop statements that can be tested. Theory creates hypothesis which leads to discovery and the study of evidence. Skinner (1938) stated that arguments are not enough and that research needs to be observed by the human senses. Research should be proved using the logic of confirmation and attempt to produce universal conditions. This understanding is then applied to individuals, organisations and communities.

The positivist approach is associated with 'scientism', with the philosophy that methods of the natural sciences can be applied to all areas of philosophical, social and scientific investigation. Positivists believe that science should be value free, with the goal of producing knowledge, irrespective of the values or morals held by those carrying out the research.

An interpretivist approach is applied in the gathering of professionals’ views, through semi structured interviews, and aspects of the stage three consideration of five schools. Attempts are made to gain insight into the impact of SEAL by improving understanding of the whole. Impressions are made from interviews, meetings and school visits and these are interpreted in the discussion.

Qualitative research is “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss and
Corbin, 1990, p.21). Interpretivism assumes that, in order to understand phenomena, the whole needs to be examined. By collecting and analysing data, from parts of the phenomena, important aspects in understanding the whole can be missed. Therefore, the semi structured interviews and consideration of five ‘best practice’ schools attempt to contribute to the understanding of the impact of SEAL by more in depth analysis.

There are three main methods of qualitative data collection, interactive interviewing, written descriptions by participants and observation. In this study, head teachers and SENCos from selected schools were telephone interviewed, regarding the impact of SEAL in their schools. Myers (2002) states that:

> In communicating or generating the data, the researcher must make the process of the study accessible and write descriptively so tacit knowledge may best be communicated through the rich, thick descriptions….A major strength of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncracies of the situation” (p. 9).

At the onset of this research, the intention was to carry out a quantitative analysis of data. However, the findings did not indicate a relationship between SEAL and the distal measures involved. These results did not represent what I had interpreted as the views of those involved. Therefore, the qualitative information was only considered part way through the longitudinal study and, due to time constraints and practical issues, was not given the systematic approach that could have provided the ‘depth’ of exploration Myers describes as a strength in this approach.
However, Myers (2002) states that it is near impossible to avoid the subjective experience, even for the most experienced researchers. At the outset of this research, my role was that of a Local Authority officer responsible for the training and implementation of SEAL in Lindale schools. Therefore, the analysis of purely quantitative data would have ensured that my role did not bias any findings and provided an objective experience. However, the decision to include qualitative data was as consequence of my direct involvement in the implementation of SEAL in schools and the feedback received, as a consequence. Therefore, my role within the Local Authority impacted on the methodology adopted as a researcher.

Angen (2000) refers to the substantive validity, where evidence of the interpretive choices the researcher makes and an assessment of the biases, are clear. In the evaluation of SEAL, I had an invested interest in the positive impact of SEAL, due to my role in the implementation of the framework and support for schools. Teachers were aware of this when they relayed their experiences. Therefore, the qualitative findings of this research may have been influenced by my role as an Educational Psychologist rather than an independent researcher.

### 4.3.3 Stage One

Stage one involved a quantitative comparison of data. It is quasi experimental and this approach is very similar to true experiments but use naturally formed or pre-existing groups. When studying the impact of a SEAL framework, schools selected themselves and endeavoured to implement this approach. The variable studied was a ‘subject variable’ rather than the ‘independent variable’ observed in true experiments.
The design of a quasi-experiment relates to a study in which one has little or no control over the allocation of the treatments or other factors being studied. This design does not assign randomly and uses time series analysis, interrupted and non-interrupted. The variables are identified and the quasi independent variable is the x-variable. This is manipulated in order to affect a dependent variable. X is usually grouped in two or more, for example, a ‘treatment’ group and a placebo or control group. The predicted outcome is the dependent variable, y. A time series analysis involves the dependent variable being observed over time for any changes that may occur. The procedure is then implemented and any changes identified. In this research, the grouping of the quasi independent variable is schools implementing SEAL compared to those not implementing SEAL. The predicted outcome is the impact of SEAL on SATs results, attendance, exclusions and referrals for SEBD outreach support. This is the dependent variable and is observed over 5 years.

The experimental group consisted of schools implementing SEAL and the control group comprised of schools not implementing SEAL. However, these groups changed in size over time. The experimental group did not remain constant over the five years. In 2005, twenty four schools implemented SEAL and became the experimental group. In September 2006, a further 47 primary schools joined the experimental group, as they began implementing SEAL. In September 2007, a further 16 schools began implementing SEAL and, therefore, transferred from the control group to the experimental group.

The comparison group consisted of schools that were not implementing SEAL and therefore the number of schools in the control group changed each year. As
the experimental group, implementing SEAL, increased over time, the control group reduced in number.

There are many differences between the groups that could not be controlled and these could account for any differences in dependent measures. Therefore, it is more difficult to make a statement of causality with quasi-experimental designs. Any differences in attainments, attendance, exclusions and referrals may or may not be due to the implementation of a SEAL framework.

The two common approaches to quasi experimental designs are ‘cross sectional’ and ‘longitudinal’. A cross sectional methodology observes two samples on the same dependent variable once. Differences can be described but not definitively explained. This research was longitudinal in its methodology and measures were taken at the end of five academic years between 2004 and 2008. A longitudinal method observes one sample several times on the same dependent variable. It was also cross sequential as measures from the control group were taken over time. The study involved the measure of more than one variable and is, therefore, a multi variate procedure, which enables interrelationships between variable and constructs to be examined. For example, it allows some analysis of whether SEAL impacts on attendance and exclusions but not attainments.

The exploratory element to this study was the analysis of distal measures. I have attempted to measure whether SEAL has impacted on academic learning by analysing SATs results. Attendance and exclusions have also been compared over time, as a distal measure. The theory behind these measures is that if children are happy and secure within the school environment, they are more
receptive to academic learning and more willing to attend. It is also assumed that if teachers implement a programme to improve social, emotional and behavioural skills, there will be a decrease in exclusions and pupil referrals for SEBD outreach. These measures are more proximal in their analysis.

SEAL provided a structured programme that could be followed methodically, with a set of themes and activities to implement across all curriculum areas, throughout the foundation stage and Key Stages 1 and 2.

4.3.4 Stage Two
Stage two involved semi structured interviews with head teachers and SENCos in eighteen out of twenty four of the original cohort of schools. SIP and National Healthy Schools coordinators reports on these schools were also considered. This stage of the research took place in October 2007, just over two years after schools had started implementing SEAL. As stated, this information was initially gathered for the purpose of a Joint Area Review and was not originally intended to contribute to this research.

A semi structured interview is a method of research used in the social sciences. A structured interview has a formal, limited set of questions, whereas a semi-structured interview is flexible and enables new questions to be introduced, during the interview, as a result of what the interviewee says. Generally, the interviewer has a framework of themes to explore. An interview guide can provide an informal "grouping of topics and questions that the interviewer can ask in different ways for different participants" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, p.195).
The semi structured interviews, in this study, involved questions regarding the impact of SEAL on pupil’s behaviour and the ethos of the school. They enabled interviewees with an opportunity to provide broad answers, regarding their perspectives in these areas.

The interviews were short and were based around the following questions:

1. Do you consider that behaviour has improved over the last two years?
2. Do you consider that SEAL has impacted on behaviour over the last two years?
3. Do you consider that SEAL has improved children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills?
4. What are staff views on the framework, in general?
5. What are pupils’ views on the framework, in general?

4.3.5 Stage Three

This research involves the study of the impact of a whole school curriculum on school settings. Although one part of this research looks at the overall Impact on schools implementing SEAL compared to those not implementing SEAL, I also considered a sample of primary schools in greater depth. These five schools were part of the first cohort of schools to implement SEAL and had evidenced that they had embedded the framework throughout the school.
Therefore, an element of this research involves ‘mini’ case studies. Case studies are defined as a “strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 2003, p.23). The impact of SEAL on these schools was considered by quantitative measures. Key Stage 2 SATs results were compared with the Lindale average, longitudinally. Contextual Value Added Scores compared the progress of pupils who received free school meals with non free school meal pupils, over a three year period. The most recent OFSTED grades were also considered in the areas considered to relate to SEAL. However, procedurally true case studies include “many variables of interest; multiple sources of evidence; theoretical propositions to guide the collection and analysis of data” (Yin, 2003, p.15). As stage three was not planned at the outset of this research, a thorough analysis of the impact of SEAL in these individual schools was not carried out.

4.4 Data collection

4.4.1 Stage One
The quantitative data collection involved gathering information on Key Stage 2 SATs results, attendance and exclusions for all primary schools in Lindale. In each of these analyses, data were gathered for the academic years 2004 to 5, 2005 to 2006, 2006 to 2007 and 2007 to 2008. The necessary information was accessed via the ‘Strategic Intelligence Team’, a central team in Lindale Children’s Services, who collate school data.
Key Stage 2 SATs results were compared for the year prior to the intervention and subsequent years, following the introduction of the framework. The average points score was used for the purpose of this study. This provided an overall score for Maths, English and Science. The scores for the SEAL schools were compared with the non SEAL schools and the Lindale average. The experimental group data were averaged and compared to the control group, year on year. This analysis provided information on any trend over the years but also enabled a comparison with the overall results in the authority.

Unauthorised and authorised absences were considered over four academic years. The percentage of authorized and unauthorized absences for the SEAL schools was compared to the percentage of absences in non SEAL schools and the overall figures in the authority. This analysis provided information on any trend over the years but also enabled a comparison with the overall figures in the authority.

Similarly, the percentage of fixed term and permanent exclusions in SEAL schools were compared, between 2004 and 2008, with non SEAL schools and the overall percentage in the authority.

In Lindale, additional support for individuals is requested through a ‘Provider Panel’, made up of a group of professionals, working for the authority. A Key Stage 1 and 2 panel meets every fortnight to consider individual referrals for learning or behavioral outreach support. The outcomes are categorised and recorded centrally, including details of the school. Therefore, consideration of
any trends in requests for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support could be tracked between 2005 and 2008. This data provided some indication of the number of individuals considered to have additional needs which could not be met solely by the schools. However, any impact on referrals to Provider Panel, as SEAL was implemented in more and more schools across the city, could not determine if behaviour had improved or deteriorated overall or whether schools had become more inclusive and better able to manage behaviour internally. Also, it could not be concluded that any trend in referrals was directly related to the implementation of SEAL, as other initiatives and support may have been introduced during this time.

The quantitative analysis was made more complex due to the experimental and control groups not remaining static throughout the longitudinal study. As SEAL training, funding and implementation was carried out in phases, there was an increasing number of schools joining the experimental group over time, which subsequently reduced the number of schools in the control group. In September 2006, a further 47 schools joined the experimental group when they began implementing SEAL. In September 2007, a further 16 schools also began implementing SEAL.
The quantitative data gathering is illustrated in the table;

**Table 4.1: Experimental and control groups 2003 - 2008**

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<td>24 schools during first year of SEAL implementation</td>
<td>24 schools during second year of SEAL implementation and 47 schools during first year of implementation</td>
<td>24 schools during third year of SEAL implementation and 47 schools during second year of implementation and 16 schools during first year of implementation</td>
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<td><strong>Control Group</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Number of pupils referred for SEBD outreach</strong></td>
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4.4.2 Stage Two

Additional information, regarding the impact of SEAL, was collected through semi-structured interviews with head teachers and SENCOs with eighteen of the original twenty-four schools. They began implementing the framework in 2005 and the short telephone interviews were carried out in October 2007, as a Joint Area Review was taking place in Lindale. The feedback was intended to inform inspectors regarding the perceived impact of SEAL but was later included in this study to provide a more holistic view of SEAL in Lindale schools.

Attempts were made to contact all 24 of the SEAL coordinators in the initial SEAL cohort of schools. The named coordinators were head teachers, deputy heads or SENCOs. I was successful in carrying out telephone interviews with 18 of the 24 schools. The questions were pre-planned;

1. Do you consider that behaviour has improved over the last two years?
2. Do you consider that SEAL has impacted on behaviour over the last two years?
3. Do you consider that SEAL has improved children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills?
4. What are staff views on the framework, in general?
5. What are pupils’ views on the framework, in general?

The responses to the interviews were recorded by the interviewer, in written form. The analysis of this feedback was not rigorous but looked at common themes, in terms of positive and negative impacts of SEAL on behaviour and
staff and pupils’ perception of the framework. Specific comments are cited in the results. If the qualitative stage of this research had been planned at the outset, more detailed interviews would have been carried out over time and been subject to more rigorous consideration, such as thematic analysis. As the questions could be considered as leading and responses were collected in a short time scale for the purpose of a JAR report, they did not provide the level of detail that would have justified a thorough analysis and encoding of themes.

Available reports, on a sample of the original cohort of schools, from the School Improvement Partners and National Healthy Schools coordinators, were also considered. Again, these were only considered in 2007, for the purpose of the Joint Area Review, and were not compared longitudinally or with reports from non SEAL schools. The JAR report (Bowden, 2007) needed to be completed in a very short time scale and this factor impacted on the validity and strengths of the stage in the analysis.

4.4.3 Stage Three

Following the initial longitudinal quantitative analysis of SATs data, attendance and exclusion data, comparing SEAL schools with non SEAL schools and the Lindale average, further analysis was carried out with five schools, from the original cohort implementing SEAL from 2005.

Quantitative data were considered in terms of the Contextual Value Added scores for each school between 2005 and 2008. The purpose of this further analysis was to explore whether pupils who received free school meals made
greater progress in their attainments, in terms of improvement from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 SATs results. Key Stage 2 SATs average points scores were also considered over this time frame. The data for individual schools were compared with the Lindale average scores.

The most recent OFSTED reports of the five schools were also considered in terms of ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’.

4.5 Permission for research and ethical issues

The evaluation of SEAL required the support and permission of a range of professionals and stakeholders. The implementation of the framework in Lindale began in 2004. A steering group was established to plan the training and implementation across Lindale primary schools. We had received funding from the DCFS and how this would be distributed was agreed. The Steering group originally comprised of 10 professionals, including 2 head teachers, 2 Educational Psychologists, Inclusion Development Officer and other representatives from Children’s Services. Information was cascaded and discussed with head teachers associations and other relevant stakeholders. The steering group expired once an operational group was established. The operational group responsible for training and supporting implementation consisted of an Educational Psychologist, Inclusion Development Officer, Advanced Skills Teacher and School Improvement Partner. This group continued to support Primary SEAL until 2009 and briefings were regularly delivered to senior management teams, including updates on this research.
The operational group delivered INSET to schools that demonstrated an interest in the Summer Term 2004. When schools attended the initial training days, the suggestions that SEAL could impact on attainments, attendance and behaviour was discussed. They were also informed that the impact in Lindale would be measured. Head teachers agreed to the overall evaluation of SEAL and were assured that the quantitative data would be gathered from central systems. Therefore, this did not involve additional input from schools. The implementation of SEAL was discussed and agreed with respective governors. Training was then delivered to individual schools and this evaluation was discussed with all staff attending. Schools were responsible for informing parents about the implementation of SEAL. Letters were sent home, explaining the ideas behind the SEAL curriculum and that they would be invited to assemblies introducing themes and presenting children’s work. Unfortunately, parents were not directly involved in this research.

As data were averaged across all schools involved with SEAL and compared with the average from schools not implementing SEAL, all findings were anonymous and individual schools could not be identified.

Permission was not sought from pupils prior to this research as they were not identified individually. However, permission was sought from pupils and their parents prior to their contribution to a Lindale SEAL DVD, filmed two years after the implementation of SEAL in their schools. Their views have since been sought informally and through school councils.
As schools voluntarily opted if and when to implement SEAL, ethical issues regarding selection of control and experimental groups was not an issue in this study. However, ethical issues arose in the receipt of data from the Strategic Intelligence Team, where they were assured that schools would not be identified by their name. This also impacted on the identification of groups of pupils.

As the framework focuses on the development of social, emotional and behavioural skills, pupils are encouraged to express their feelings and be open about events in their lives. The schools, as a whole, are intended to have a more emotionally literate ethos and we initially discussed the possibility of disclosures that would need acting on.

We explored the safeguards already adopted by schools and agreed that these would be appropriate. These included referral to:

- Learning Mentor
- Rainbow
- CAMHs
- The BEST team
- Social Services
- Educational Psychology Service.

4.6 Research Procedure

4.6.1 Stage One

In Autumn 2004, myself and three colleagues from Lindale Children’s services were seconded to lead on the implementation of SEAL in Lindale schools. In
Spring 2005, an advert was placed in the school’s bulletin for head teachers and Special Needs Coordinators to attend an introductory one day conference regarding the SEAL curriculum. Head teachers and SENCos from twenty four schools attended the course and, at the end of the introductory day, all registered their interest in implementing the SEAL curriculum. They subsequently attended further INSET training and agreed to implement the SEAL framework the following academic year, September 2005. They became the initial cohort of the experimental group and could be compared with the remaining 194 schools that were not implementing SEAL. In September 2006, a further 47 schools had attended training and began implementing SEAL. In 2007, a further 24 schools and 2008 a further 16 schools began implementing SEAL. Schools implementing SEAL were the experimental group and results were compared each year with the Lindale average and schools not implementing SEAL. Data were compared longitudinally in terms of 2 SATS results, attendance and exclusions, between 2004 and 2008.

As the data on SATs and attendance are recorded centrally within Local Authorities, this was readily available for analysis at the end of each academic year.

4.6.1.i SATs
The Key Stage 1 and 2 average points scores were gathered for all Lindale schools from Summer 2004 to Summer 2008. The results from the SEAL schools were compared with the non SEAL average points scores and Lindale average each year.
4.6.1.ii Attendance
The percentage of authorized absence, in the SEAL schools, for each academic year was compared with the non SEAL and Lindale average. The percentage of unauthorized absence was also compared from 2004 to 2008.

4.6.1.iii Exclusions
The percentage of fixed term and permanent exclusions from SEAL schools, non SEAL schools and Lindale schools were compared for each academic year between 2004 and 2008.

4.6.1.iv Referrals for SEBD outreach Support
Data regarding pupil referrals for social, emotional and behavioural support were also considered between 2004 and 2009, as SEAL became embedded in an increasing number of schools across the city.

4.6.2 Stage Two
In 2007, semi structured telephone interviews were carried out with 18 out of the original 24 schools that began implementing SEAL in 2005. Head teachers or SENCos were asked about the impact of the framework in their schools. Comments from School Improvement Partners and National Healthy Schools colleagues were also considered and contributed to a SEAL report for the Joint Area Review (Bowden, 2007). As the results of the quantitative analysis became apparent, it was decided to include this information to provide a greater insight into the impact of SEAL in Lindale.
4.6.3 Stage Three

As the data analysis evolved, it became apparent that the results were not indicating a relationship between SEAL and attainments, attendance and exclusions. As we were unable to monitor the extent to which every school had embedded SEAL, I carried out a further stage of analysis that involved 5 case study schools. They were from the 2005 cohort and were considered ‘best practice’ in this area, due to the level of commitment they had given to the framework’s implementation. Contextual Value Added data compared free school meal pupils’ progress with non free school meal pupils’ progress over a three year period. Key Stage 2 results were compared with the Lindale average scores over time. Their most recent OFSTED reports were also considered in the areas of ‘personal development and welfare’ and ‘care, guidance and support’.
### 4.6.4 Chronology of Involvement

#### Table 4.2 Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 04 to July 05</td>
<td>Pilot study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 05 and Sept 05</td>
<td>Training for head teachers and significant other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September and Oct 05</td>
<td>Staff training in 24 schools selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September to Nov 05</td>
<td>SEAL framework implemented and pre questionnaires completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 05 to July 06</td>
<td>Organize and deliver training days (2 Staff per school). Support schools as requested. Observe lessons, assemblies, informal discussion with staff and pupils. Organize network meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 05 onwards</td>
<td>Leading practice schools meetings (SEAL coordinators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 06</td>
<td>Further 47 primary schools begin the implementation of SEAL, with training and funding. The amount of training was very similar to the previous year but the content differed slightly. Local schools previously involved with SEAL delivered presentations on their experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 07</td>
<td>Collect and evaluate KS2 SATs, attendance, exclusions and behaviour data from initial SEAL schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 07</td>
<td>Secondary SEAL training for 10 secondary schools and a further 24 primary schools. The amount of training was very similar to the previous year but the content differed slightly. Local schools previously involved with SEAL delivered presentations on their experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 07</td>
<td>Semi structured telephone interviews were carried out with head teachers or SENCos from 18 schools in the 2005 cohort. Comments from SIPs and National Healthy Schools colleagues were also included in a report for the Joint Area Review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 08</td>
<td>A further 16 Primary schools begin the implementation of SEAL, with training and funding. The amount of training was very similar to the previous year but the content differed slightly. Local schools previously involved with SEAL delivered presentations on their experiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7 Analysis of data

The following data were collected in order to provide insight into the key question;

4.7.1 Stage One

1. What is the impact of SEAL on pupil’s Key Stage 2 SATs results? KS (Key Stage) 2 SATs average points scores for 2003-4, 2004-5, 2005-6, 2006-7, 2007-8.


4.7.2 Stage Two

1. What will be the views of head teachers and SENCo’s, regarding the impact of SEAL in a sample of schools? Semi structured telephone interviews carried out with a sample of 18 schools.

2. What will be the views of School Improvement Partners and National Healthy Schools colleagues, regarding the impact of SEAL in a sample of schools? Consideration of SIP and National Healthy School reports on a sample of 18 schools.
4.7.3 Stage Three

1. What is the impact of SEAL on the Contextual Value Added scores for pupils with free school meals compared to those with non free school meals in 5 ‘best practice’ schools between 2005 and 2008? Comparison of Contextual Value Added scores, on free school meal pupils with non free school meal pupils, for 2005-6, 2006-7 and 2007-8.

2. What is the impact of SEAL on Key Stage 2 SATs results? Comparison of Key Stage 2 average points scores for 2005-6, 2006-7 and 2007-8.

3. What is the impact of SEAL on subsequent OFSTED reports in the areas of ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’? Exploration of most recent OFSTED reports and how the case study schools were categorised in these areas.

4.8 Rationale of Method and Limitations

4.8.1 Stage One

The rationale, for stage one of the research, was to consider if SEAL impacted on the distal measures of attainments, attendance and exclusions and the more proximal measure of SEBD referrals. This data was not subject to researcher bias and was considered to be reliable.

However, there are several limitations in the methodology applied in stage one of this study. Firstly, the samples were not randomly selected. Schools selected themselves to be part of the first phase of SEAL in Lindale. This, in itself, raises issues regarding their motivation and factors that differed between samples prior to any intervention. For example, the twenty four schools may have previously recognised social and emotional wellbeing as an important aspect of their school
ethos. As a result, they may have given this area of development a higher priority in their approach to learning before implementing the SEAL framework. Conversely, the schools that initially opted to be involved in SEAL, may have been motivated by the belief that social and emotional wellbeing was an area not addressed in their schools and, therefore, needed a greater focus. There were additional factors impacting on the sample, such as the funding received and the realisation that some schools are keen to take on most new initiatives, whereas others prefer to focus more on one particular initiative in greater depth. These factors were not measured in the initial selection.

The second issue related to the validity of this research is the reliability of the ‘independent variable’. The independent variable between the ‘experimental’ and the ‘control’ group was the implementation of the SEAL framework. However, there was no stipulation that SEAL had to be implemented as a whole school approach, although this was recommended and encouraged. Some schools began by sampling SEAL materials in one particular year group, others by selecting a number of teachers to trial and feedback. At least one school only implemented small group SEAL work with individuals believed to have particular social and emotional needs. Some schools ensured all teachers embedded SEAL across the curriculum, whereas others delivered discrete SEAL lessons. There were also differences in the experimental sample in terms of the staff delivering SEAL. At least two schools had learning mentors delivering SEAL and this will have impacted on how the skills were reinforced after the lesson.

The impact of SEAL was tracked over several years. Each year, data from SEAL schools were compared with non SEAL schools and the Lindale average.
However, each year, a greater number of schools were implementing SEAL in Lindale and less monitoring was possible. This may have impacted on the validity of this study. The subject schools could have been matched with schools which had not implemented the SEAL framework in order to compare results. However, this would have had its own methodological limitations.

Thirdly, there was no measure of what the schools in the control group were doing to develop social and emotional skills. For example, many catholic schools did not wish to implement SEAL as they stated it was very similar to a curriculum that they already delivered. Also, schools did not have to receive funding and training from within Lindale Children’s Services to use SEAL materials. They could access their own copies of the framework and implement as desired. Schools that may have done so, were not acknowledged in the selection of groups.

The SATs analysis involved different year groups being measured. Therefore, the average points scores could have been influenced by individual differences in ability of year groups. Average points scores were used to compare results with the non SEAL schools and Lindale average, in order to give more validation to data. The results for individual subjects rather than average points may have indicated a relationship between SEAL and learning in a specific area. A Key Stage one analysis would have provided more insight into the framework’s impact on learning and may have indicated that the programme impacted on the learning of younger children.
The attendance was compared over time and also to the Lindale average but the outcome could have been a result of other factors, such as the national drive to improve attendance, including publicised prosecutions and fines. Also, the BEST team, including the police officer and EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) seconded to BIP (Behaviour Improvement Programme), had been targeting attendance, through assemblies, truancy watches and family support. Again, data involved a different cohort each year and results could have been impacted upon by certain individuals e.g. persistent absentees.

Other factors implementing the validity of this study were that behaviour, attendance and attainments were distal measures. Although this can be considered a strength, SEAL’s proximal measures, in terms of the development of social and emotional skills, would have provided more in depth areas of discussion regarding the impact of the framework. For the purpose of this research, it is assumed that these skills will impact on the dependent variables. The cause and effect of any differences in the dependent variables may not be directly related to SEAL. The internal validity of longitudinal studies is threatened by ‘history’ and events that occurred between the time of testing. There are several other factors that could have impacted on any changes in measures over time. A large number of schools in the experimental group may have implemented other programmes that had a more direct impact on the distal measures. For example, multi agency approaches and penalty notices may have had a proximal impact on attendance but also a more direct impact on measures of attainment, than SEAL. Several other factors such as ‘accelerated learning’, improved systems for monitoring and reviewing, parenting programmes and
‘Team Around the School’ approaches may have impacted on the dependent measures.

The impact on validity of cohort and history effects was addressed to some extent with the cross sequential design. All cohorts were measured at all times. In other words, measures on behaviour, attendance and attainments were gathered from both the experimental and control sample, over time, minimising the impact of history influences. Multi variate procedures were also applied, which increased the external validity, when compared to studies that only measure one variable. A multivariate procedure enables interrelationships between variable and constructs to be examined.

There were predicted outcomes for this study as the DfES had supported the introduction of the framework with a theoretical rationale. Therefore, this was a confirmatory study (Robson, 2000). Ideally, the progress of pupils and staff would have been tracked over many years, once the framework had been implemented but, for the purpose of this study this was not possible. Therefore, the impact over four academic years is limited in its validity. Further comparative research is also restricted by the relatively small number of schools in Lindale, and nationally, who are not delivering the SEAL curriculum.

As my role was not only that of a researcher but also a Local Authority officer, the evaluation of the framework was open to bias. Therefore, attainments, attendance, exclusions and SEBD referrals for outreach support were considered to be objective measures. A strength in this stage of the study is that the quantitative data was not subject to interpretive bias.
4.8.2 Stage Two

As it became apparent that, overall, the quantitative analysis was not supporting a relationship between SEAL and the distal measures, qualitative information, gathered in 2007 for a JAR report, was included in the study. If my role had been that of an independent researcher, with no direct involvement with SEAL schools, the qualitative analysis may not have been undertaken. The purpose of the second stage was to try to reflect comments that those involved with the framework had made, regarding SEAL’s impact and value in their schools. Therefore, my role in the Local Authority had a direct impact on the methodology of this study and how it evolved. This element of the analysis provided an added dimension to the overall analysis. However, a limitation in this study is that qualitative data were not gathered in a systematic way, throughout the research procedure. This is mainly due to the fact that these data were not initially considered in the design. Qualitative information was considered, at a later point, when quantitative analysis of data began to appear inconclusive in many areas. The semi structured interviews, with head teachers and SENCos from eighteen of the original cohort of twenty four schools, were carried out in order to compile a report for the Joint Area Review, regarding the impact of SEAL. There was limited time to carry out the interviews and staff, from six schools, were unavailable during the time scale. They were, therefore, unable to respond. The interviews were only carried out with a sample of the initial cohort of schools, who had opted into the implementation of the framework. This suggests that they were enthusiastic about a curriculum to develop social and emotional skills, which could have biased their perception of SEAL’s impact. The staff interviewed
were also coordinating the implementation of SEAL in their schools. This factor may have influenced their perception of the impact.

Detailed qualitative analysis, over time, with a sample of SEAL schools from each cohort and non SEAL schools, would have been extremely useful in supporting the implementation of SEAL as staff feedback, in the semi structured interviews was generally very positive. The views of staff, who were not leading on the implementation of the framework, may have been more reliable. However, the difficulty in measuring social and emotional development has been debated over recent years (Willhelm, 2005). Research carried out by Humphrey et al (2008) focused on the impact of small group SEAL. The authors reported that, “when questions around impact were asked, there seemed to be a general feeling that this was something that was very difficult to quantify”. Views could have been gathered in a more systematic way, possibly through questionnaires or structured interviews. A thematic analysis of responses could have been carried out over time and compared with responses from non SEAL schools.

The responses to the semi structured interviews tended to be emotive, at times, and impressionistic. They were subjective and open to bias. I was not a passive interviewer, as I was seconded to implement SEAL in Lindale. Therefore, I had delivered training and been an advocate for the implementation of SEAL. I had invested time and a commitment to SEAL improving the outcomes for children and schools. The staff were aware of my role in Lindale and could, therefore, have been influenced as to the nature of comments they fed back to questions that could be perceived as leading.
The SIP and Healthy School Coordinators reports were limited in their availability. I was only able to consider reports on nine of this sample of schools and reports from non SEAL schools were not compared. The analysis was not rigorous but examples of comments related to SEAL were extracted. With more time and resources, more detailed consideration of this information may have provided valuable insight into the impact of the framework.

Observations were carried out in this cohort of schools and, although they were not included in the analysis of data, they contribute to the discussion. Borg and Gall (1989) state that observation usually obtains more accurate quantitative data than self report but there are also limitations. Cohen and Manion (1994) claim that unstructured observations can be, “subjective, biased, impressionistic, idiosyncratic and lacking in precise quantifiable measures that are the hallmark of survey research and experimentation” (p. 10).

Informal discussion with pupils and staff was carried out but not analysed as qualitative data. As Bell (1993) points out that this can be time consuming and difficult to analyse. Data are subject to bias from the interviewer and this would have been a factor, in this research, as I supported the ethos behind the framework and was keen for it to have a positive effect on pupils and the school, as a whole. I was also hoping staff would be committed and enjoy delivering the SEAL curriculum, particularly as I had advocated its benefits.
4.8.3 Stage Three

The rationale for stage three was to consider the impact of SEAL in schools that had evidenced they had embedded the framework throughout. This stage compared Key Stage 2 SATs scores with the Lindale average. It also considered whether SEAL impacted on the academic progress of pupils receiving free school meals compared to pupils receiving non free school meals. The rationale for this measure of CVA scores was to establish if relatively greater academic progress was made with children from less advantaged socio economic backgrounds. Extensive research suggests that there is a link between poverty and academic attainment but recent studies suggest that developing social and emotional skills can narrow the gap (e.g. Sharples et al, 2011).

Five schools were identified to be the subject of further analysis. They were not randomly selected as they were considered to be best practice. Not all quantitative data were available in this analysis, particularly in the area of Contextual Value Added scores. Comments from the most recent OFSTED reports were considered in the areas of ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’ but were not compared with previous reports. No comparison was made with schools that had not implemented SEAL.

More detailed analysis of these schools could have involved pairing them with control group schools. However, time and resource constraints prevented this.
4.9 Summary

The study is mixed methods and has three stages. The first stage explores the impact of SEAL on the distal measures of attainments, attendance, exclusions and pupil referrals for SEBD outreach support. The strength in this analysis is that the data are considered longitudinally and there is no scope for bias in the acquisition and comparison of results. The second stage involves the feedback from semi structured interviews with professionals involved in the initial implementation of SEAL in 18 schools. However, the interviews only involved a sample of schools and were limited in their content, timeframe and analysis. The third stage considers five schools, from the original cohort, and provides a more specific analysis of the impact in individual settings. They are also schools where SEAL has been embedded throughout.

The mixed methods model, with elements of positivist and interpretivist paradigms, provides a broader exploration of the impact of SEAL in schools but both quantitative and qualitative approaches have their limitations.
5. RESULTS

The results are presented in three sections. Section one considers the quantitative impact on attainments, attendance, exclusions and referrals for SEBD outreach support. Inferential statistics were not considered as the initial comparison of data, in terms of SAT results, attendance and exclusions did not indicate that there was a relationship between these measures and the implementation of SEAL. The second section presents the findings of a SEAL report compiled for the Joint Area Review. This involved telephone interviews and qualitative feedback from head teachers, SENCos, School Improvement Partners and Healthy Schools feedback, related to SEAL.

5.1 Stage One

5.1.1 Attainments

In order to consider the distal impact of SEAL on learning and attainments, schools’ Key Stage 2 average points scores were considered. The data were analysed from 2004 to 2008. SEAL schools were compared with non SEAL schools and the Lindale average over time.
This graph represents all schools implementing SEAL at any given year and compares results with schools that are not implementing SEAL and the Lindale average. Therefore, the number of SEAL schools increases year on year, whilst the numbers of schools not implementing SEAL decreases.

The results indicate that, in general, SEAL schools were lower attaining and all schools follow a similar trend, over time.
The results indicate that overall there is no relationship between the implementation of SEAL and Key Stage 2 SATs average points scores.

The Key Stage 2 data indicate that the original cohort of 2005 SEAL schools, who began implementing SEAL were, on average, achieving SATs scores below the Lindale average points score. The 2006 and 2007 cohort of SEAL schools were also achieving an overall average points score below the LA average when they began implementing SEAL in their respective years. The non SEAL schools
were consistently achieving higher average points scores than the schools that engaged in SEAL.

This suggests that, in general, the schools who were initially motivated to implement SEAL were lower achieving at Key Stage 2. The schools that did not introduce SEAL in the first three years were the highest achieving schools, on average.

The graph suggests that the original cohort had improved Key Stage 2 SATS results following their first year of SEAL. This was also the case for 2006 and 2007 schools. However, results indicate that non SEAL schools’ attainments improved over this period.

5.1.2 Attendance

Attendance data were analysed in order to identify if the implementation of SEAL had a distal impact on attendance. The theory behind this analysis is that SEAL will improve the pupils’ security and enjoyment in school and, they will, therefore, attendance would improve.
The results suggest that attendance in SEAL schools has improved since the implementation of the framework in 2005. However, this is consistent with the trend across the authority and in non SEAL schools. This suggests that the improved attendance is likely to be due to other national and local initiatives targeting attendance rather than the impact of SEAL.

It is also a significant factor that most primary aged children are dependant on adults to bring them to school. It is possible that the development of family SEAL may have a more significant impact on attendance. The introduction of secondary SEAL may also be a more significant measure, in terms of the impact
of SEAL on pupils’ attendance at school, due to pupils’ increased independence. Further analysis could be carried out, according to year group, to identify if there is an increasing relationship between SEAL and attendance, as pupils become more independent in the primary sector.

**Figure 5.4: Comparison of average unauthorised attendance between SEAL schools, non SEAL schools and Lindale average**

An analysis of unauthorised absence indicates again that the trend follows the Local Authority average and non SEAL school average. Unauthorised absence has increased over time, with a slight dip in the percentage for SEAL schools in
the second year of implementation. The data suggest that there is no relationship between SEAL and unauthorised absence.

5.1.3 Exclusions

The fixed and permanent exclusions from the experimental group of schools, implementing SEAL, were compared with non SEAL schools and the Lindale average.

Figure 5.5: Comparison of fixed term exclusions between SEAL schools, non SEAL schools and Lindale average

The analysis of fixed term exclusions suggests that SEAL schools again follow the Lindale and non SEAL school trend. The number of permanent exclusions has not decreased as SEAL has become embedded in the subject schools.
However, there is a slight decrease in the year that SEAL is implemented. As this is consistent with other schools in Lindale, it cannot be assumed that this is related to the impact of SEAL.

**Figure 5.6: Comparison of permanent exclusions between SEAL schools, non SEAL schools and Lindale totals**

The SEAL schools represented in this graph are the total number of schools implementing the framework each year. Therefore, the number of SEAL schools increases each year. The non SEAL schools are those that are not implementing SEAL year on year. Therefore, this number of schools decreases each year.

Analysis of permanent exclusions suggests that the number reduces in SEAL schools from 2005 and in the subsequent year of implementation. The 2006-7 data do not follow the Lindale and non SEAL trend and, therefore, it is possible that SEAL may have an impact on these figures, in terms of improved behaviour.
and school ethos. However, this figure rises again in 2007-8, so perhaps the effect, if there was one, only related to the first two cohorts.

Further analysis of exclusion data in the academic year 2006-7 indicates that sixteen out of 24 schools in the original SEAL cohort had fixed term exclusions below the Local Authority average of 3.42 pupils per school. Twenty three out of twenty four SEAL schools had no permanent exclusions and only one SEAL school excluded one pupil from the original cohort. The total across the authority was 11 permanent exclusions giving an average of 0.136 per school.

**Figure 5.7: Comparison of average fixed term exclusions between SEAL schools, non SEAL schools and Lindale**

**Average Fixed Term Exclusions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>SEAL Schools</th>
<th>All Liverpool Schools</th>
<th>Non SEAL Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.4 Referrals for SEBD outreach support

Lindale commission all outreach support through a system, known as provider panels. These are multi disciplinary panels that convene every fortnight. There is a panel for Early Years support, Key Stage 1 and 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Schools refer individuals directly to the appropriate panel, providing all supporting evidence for learning support, behavioural or therapeutic support. They also refer for any alternative educational provision. An analysis of provider panel referrals was made to measure if there was any impact on the number of referrals for Social, emotional and behavioural support, following the implementation of SEAL.

The following table shows the number of referrals to Provider Panel between 2005 and 2009. It also indicates the number of schools implementing SEAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>2005/6</th>
<th>2006/7</th>
<th>2007/8</th>
<th>2008/9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEBD Referrals</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Schools Implementing SEAL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These figures indicate that year on year, the number of SEBD referrals decreased, as the number of schools implementing SEAL increased.

5.1.5 Summary

The quantitative data do not support a relationship between SEAL and attainments, attendance and exclusions. There does appear to be a relationship between the increasing number of schools implementing SEAL and a decrease in the number of referrals for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support. However, the reduction in referrals could have been the result of other initiatives to support SEBD needs. The Behaviour and Education Support Team were supporting schools during this time and information was not gathered, in terms of other programmes schools were implementing to address these needs.
5.2 Stage Two

5.2.1 Feedback from Head Teachers and SENCos

During the course of this research, informal feedback was received from schools involved in the implementation of SEAL. Feedback and discussion also took place with colleagues in other service areas, around their views on the framework.

In 2007, a Joint Area Review was carried out in Lindale and an interim SEAL report was compiled including views of head teachers and SENCos (Bowden, 2007). This feedback was gathered through semi structured telephone interviews, which involved questions regarding the impact of SEAL (see appendix for questions). At the outset of this study, stage 2 was not planned. A decision was made to include this qualitative feedback to provide a more holistic view of how SEAL impacted on schools.

Eighteen SEAL coordinators or head teachers were telephone interviewed by the researcher in October 2007. They were all based in settings from the original cohort that began implementing the framework in 2005. They all reported that they had experienced notable improvements in the behaviour of children over the past two years. Sixteen of these respondents attributed improvements in behaviour to the implementation of SEAL. Two teachers responded that they believed the improvements were due to a number of initiatives and programmes they were implementing and not specifically to SEAL.
Responses from the semi structured interviews included;

- Seal is having a huge impact on the behaviour of children.

- Ofsted reported that we were outstanding in all areas of SEBD.

- Ofsted identified social and emotional aspects as a strength of the school.

- We rarely have fights on the yard anymore.

- SEAL has made a great difference to the behaviour of our children. We have made no referrals to the Educational Psychology Service or Provider Panel for behaviour.

- The improvement in behaviour is significant. We have had no fixed term exclusions, since embedding SEAL and have admitted two children on negotiated transfers.

- Children are far better at negotiation skills and dealing with different points of view.

- We are building on SEAL with pupil advocates. They are taking a lead role in friendship clubs, anti bullying and health. They have produced power point presentations for the school on respect, bullying and smoking.

- The improvement in children’s self esteem is noticeable.

- SEAL has improved the school management of behaviour but has not been enough for one or two children with significant, complex needs in this area.

- SEAL is contributing to the general code of behaviour, how staff and pupils relate to each other.

- Children are more able to negotiate and solve problems without the intervention of adults.

- There is less aggression on the playground as children are better equipped to deal with any problems.
- Staff have a better understanding of children’s behaviour and the reasons behind it.
- Staff from the junior department noticed a difference after just one year of SEAL being implemented. They recognised that there were fewer disagreements between pupils.
- We appear to have far fewer ‘traumatised children’ in our school.
- The materials are easy to follow and require very little planning time.
- The school is a much happier place for both children and staff.

As stated, these comments represent the views of staff interviewed in stage 2 of the study. The reliability of these responses needs to be considered with caution as they are open to bias. The questions could have been leading and interviewees were aware of the interviewer’s role, regarding SEAL, within the authority. They were short one off interviews and were not subject to rigorous analysis. Also, the interviews were with a sample of staff from the initial cohort of schools opting into the SEAL curriculum. Therefore, despite the comments being mainly positive, staff could have been biased in their perception of the impact. The staff interviewed, in stage 2, were coordinating the implementation of the framework in their schools and this may also have influenced their responses to the telephone interviews.

5.2.2 Feedback from School Improvement Partners
School Improvement Partners evaluations of schools, involved in the initial cohort implementing SEAL from 2005, were considered and included in the
SEAL JAR report (Bowden, 2007). The following comments were made in relation to SEAL;

- There is a visibly noticeable array of displays allowing children to convey their feelings.
- Following SEAL sessions, subsequent learning is more settled.
- Staff ‘know’ their children and are much more aware of how situations outside of the school setting can affect their ability to concentrate.
- An analysis of OFSTED reports indicates SEAL has made a huge impact on the ethos of schools in Lindale.
- There are a significant number of ‘outstanding’ grades in primary schools implementing SEAL in the area of Personal Development.
- As a result of the positive impact of SEAL, the summer term SIP visits will focus on pupils’ personal development and well being and the quality of provision in this area.

5.2.3 Healthy Schools Evaluations

The SEAL report compiled for the Joint Area Review (Bowden, 2007) also consisted of comments related to the analysis of National Healthy Schools Evaluation forms, carried out by local authority colleagues in this area. Schools from the initial cohort had completed these questionnaires that related to PSHE and SEAL in their schools. Comments included;

- An analysis of questionnaires indicates that children know they are safe in school, trust adults and find them approachable.
- Staff questionnaires indicate children are more caring towards each other and relationships between children and staff have improved, particularly at lunchtimes with learning supports assistants.
- End of Key Stage statements and results in year 1 show improvement.
- The school council reported that children are more willing to approach them regarding issues related to SEAL.
- The recorded incidents in the ‘detention book’ have reduced from an average of 10 per week to 3 in a month.
- Pupil interviews suggest that fewer children are worried about incidents of bullying in school -12% of children in April 2008 compared to 32% in April 2007.

5.2.4 Summary
Although this feedback is not quantifiable, or rigorous in its data gathering or analysis, it is generally very positive. This suggests that, although SEAL may not be related to the distal measures in this research, it is perceived as having impacted on many aspects of everyday school life. This suggests that children, staff and schools are benefitting from the framework, despite the quantitative feedback on attainments, attendance and exclusions not indicating that SEAL has had an impact in these areas. The feedback, from head teachers, SENCos, SIPs and Healthy School colleagues for the JAR report, supports the findings that SEAL has impacted on referrals for SEBD outreach and that children’s behaviour may have improved. However, information was only gathered from a sample of schools and reports in 2007. They were not compared with non SEAL schools and did not involve responses over time. If this stage had been
considered at the onset, an in depth analysis may have provided more convincing evidence of SEAL’s impact, with the inclusion of views from staff who did not have responsibility for the implementation of SEAL.

### 5.3 Stage Three

As part of this analysis, five schools were the subject of individual case studies regarding the impact of SEAL. They were selected as a result of their commitment to the implementation of the framework and their recent SEAL award for good practice at Lindale’s Inclusion Awards (May 2009). All schools had made an extensive contribution to the training and promotion of SEAL in Lindale schools. They had all evidenced good practice, by giving the framework a high profile and embedding it throughout the school. They had provided time and resources to ensure staff were confident with the materials and endeavoured to share their practice across the authority.

Characteristics of each school are represented, in order to provide more in depth information about aspects such as size, Special Educational Needs and deprivation factors. Interestingly, though this was not intended, all schools were from wards that indicate a much higher than average index of social deprivation, even within the authority. Their attainments were also below the Lindale average.

In each case, the Contextual Value Added data are represented, in order to analyse whether the gap has narrowed between free school meals and non free school meal pupils’ attainments. This measure was to consider whether pupils from less advantaged socio economic backgrounds made greater progress.
following the implementation of SEAL. Contextual Value Added (CVA) is a statistic used by the government to assess the performance of schools. The statistic is intended to show the progress children have made whilst attending a particular school. Contextual Value Added attempts to take into account the circumstances of children attending the school that are beyond the school's control.

CVA takes into account nine factors that are known to affect the performance of children;

- Gender
- Special Educational Needs
- Eligibility for free school meals.
- First language
- Whether pupils move between schools
- Ethnicity
- The age (i.e. the month they were born in) of different pupils within the year group
- Whether a pupil has been taken into care (e.g. Foster Care) at any stage
- The level of deprivation in the area the pupil lives (using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index).

It works by comparing a child's performance with that of children with a similar prior performance and similar circumstances. There are three levels and Level 1, used in these case studies, measures performance of primary age children. It measures the performance of pupils between the end of Key Stage 1 and the
end of Key Stage 2. It is based around a median score of 100. There is also a Level 2 CVA that measures performance of secondary schools, between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4. Level 3 CVA measures performance of post 16 pupils from the end of Key Stage 4 to the end of Key Stage 5.

This measure was used as it is a national target to narrow the gap between these groups. Unfortunately, this data are only available from 2005 and, therefore, cannot be compared with statistics prior to the implementation of SEAL.

The Key Stage 2 SATS average points scores, for each school, were compared with the Lindale average. The purpose was to consider whether the case study schools, that had evidenced embedding SEAL, made greater improvements in Key Stage 2 attainments, when compared to the Lindale average, than the SEAL school average data compared in stage one of the research.

The most recent OFSTED reports were also considered in the areas of children’s personal wellbeing and behaviour and the effectiveness of care, guidance and support. The OFSTED inspections took place after the case study schools had begun the implementation of SEAL.

5.3.1 Dutton Primary

Dutton is a primary school in a socially deprived area of Lindale. It borders with Kingsley and, has fewer pupils than the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is considerably higher than the
national average. However the number of pupils with a statement of SEN is below the national average, despite a considerably higher percentage of pupils with Special Educational Needs.

The school also has a much higher than average index of deprivation.

The following tables give a breakdown of the basic characteristics of the school;

**Table 5.2: Characteristics of Dutton school 2006-8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number on roll</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils known to be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eligible for free school meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils with statement of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils with SEN (including statements)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School deprivation indicator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As suggested earlier, the graph indicates that attainments were below the Lindale average. However, as SEAL has become more embedded, the gap narrowed then grew in the final two years.
Interestingly, this data show that the Contextual Value Added for those receiving free school meals was considerably higher than non free school meals, in the year after the implementation of SEAL. However, this difference has reduced by 2008.

The most recent OFSTED inspection was carried out in May 2010. Their overall grade was 3 but their grade for ‘The effectiveness of care, guidance and support’ was 1.

The following comments relate to children’s personal wellbeing and behaviour;

- *The school places a very strong and successful emphasis on children’s personal development...*
- Pupils behave well and enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils’ contributions to the life of the school and local community are outstanding.
- They have a strong influence on how the school is run
- Pupils, throughout the school, collaborate effectively in lessons when asked to work in pairs and small groups
- Pupils are very polite and friendly.
- They behave well in lessons and around the school
- Pupils from different age groups mix happily.
- Pupils have good awareness of how to keep safe and a clear understanding of the need to have regard for the safety of others.
- Pupils develop good social skills and enjoy their leadership roles.
- Prefects take pleasure in nominating pupils from around the school for weekly awards, such as for being kind and helpful to others. Pupils benefit from the high-quality care, guidance and support that they receive.
- Staff know the pupils very well, encourage them to take responsibility and expect them to look after themselves and each other.
- A number of pupils who join the school have troubled lives; using its own resources and by working effectively with a range of partners, the school ensures that these pupils settle well and develop their self-confidence, social and academic skills appropriately.
5.3.2 Caldwell Primary

Caldwell Primary is a school in a socially deprived area of Lindale. The area has well publicised difficulties with guns, drugs, gang and street crime. I had been involved with the school since 2001, as an Educational Psychologist and a member of the BEST team and recognised that the community had a significant impact on the role of the school. The police officer attached with the BEST team had been involved in targeting these issues with gun and knife amnesties, restorative justice and truancy watches. Many of the staff had taught parents of current pupils and part of their role was to support families in difficulties they were experiencing outside of the school setting. An aspect of this was a number of altercations between parents on school premises and some verbal and even physical aggression towards staff. There had been occasions when police had been involved and parents had been banned from school premises.

I was also involved with the secondary school that most pupils transferred to and tracked many pupils during this time. Unfortunately, many of the subject’s ex pupils have been involved in reported violent incidents as had parents of current pupils. There was a high incidence of pupils whose parents were imprisoned and occasionally children would talk about related incidents that they had witnessed at home. Many of these primary children seemed to be very aware of the negative aspects of life and, in many ways, appear to be desensitised. Obviously, there were social, emotional and behavioural impact on pupils, related to what they had or were experiencing out of school, and this was evident in the nature of my involvement as an EP. Most individual and systemic work,
carried out as the school’s Educational Psychologist, was related to challenging behaviour and social and emotional needs.

Despite these difficulties, the school and Senior Management had a very welcoming, warm ethos and staff worked hard to support pupils and their families. They were very open to new initiatives and commit to programmes that they felt would benefit their pupils.

The following tables give a breakdown of the basic characteristics of the school;

**Table 5.3: Characteristics of Caldwell school 2006-8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number on roll</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils known to be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eligible for free school meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils with statement of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils with SEN (including statements)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School deprivation indicator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, the profile of this school is very similar to case study A, with a much higher percentage of free school meals, SEN and index of deprivation. However, their percentage of pupils with a Statement of SEN is well below the national average.

Figure 5.11: Key Stage 2 average points score for Caldwell school 2005 – 2008

Key Stage 2 SATS Average Points Scores

Again, the attainments are below the local authority average and continue to be so, after the implementation of SEAL. However, there is a narrowing of the gap with the Lindale Average over time.
Figure 5.12: Contextual Value Added scores for Caldwell school 2006 - 2008

Contextual Value Added Key Stage 1 to 2

There is an overall increase in Contextual Value Added scores two years after the implementation of SEAL. Children with free school meals have made greater progress in these scores since SEAL was implemented.

The most recent inspection was in November 2008. The overall grade was 3 (satisfactory) and grade 3 was given to all areas of the inspection, apart from ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’, where grade 2s were reported (good).

Comments included;

- The pupils enjoy life at school.
- Around the school, their behaviour reflects the very good guidance they receive about how to relate to each other.

- They support and respect one another well, behave responsibly and are pleased to be well thought of by adults in the school.

- Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good overall, based on a reliable sense of right and wrong.

- Overall, pupils make a good contribution to the smooth working of the school.

- Attendance is now closer to, although still below, the national average. It has improved consistently since the previous inspection, reflecting the school's well-focused efforts on this issue.

- Adults in the school share a very high commitment to pupils’ welfare.

- A notable strength of the support is the way in which it guides pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.

- There are effective and frequent contacts with parents and carers.

5.3.3 Beech Primary

Beech is a primary school in an area with a mixed intake, in terms of social deprivation. The staff at Beech embraced SEAL when it was initially implemented. They invited the Lindale SEAL team to assemblies and provided support for other schools, particularly in the area of family involvement. The head teacher and SEAL Coordinator presented their experiences and good practice at SEAL conferences and in the SEAL DVD.
The following tables give a breakdown of the basic characteristics of the school;

**Table 5.4: Characteristics of Beech school 2006 - 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number on roll</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of pupils known to be</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eligible for free school meals</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of pupils with statement of</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of pupils with SEN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including statements)</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School deprivation indicator</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This school was considered to be leading practice, due to the motivation and drive from all staff, including the Senior Management Team. The SEAL coordinator was supported in terms of time and resources to ensure the framework was embedded. The school developed SEAL newsletters and actively encouraged parental involvement in the framework. The Key Stage 2 data indicate that the school was achieving SATS results above the Local Authority average prior to SEAL and the average points score increased again during the first year of implementation. However, the overall trend was in line with the Lindale Average.
The Contextual Value Added scores gradually decline following the implementation of SEAL. This is the case for pupils with free school meals and non free school meals.

The overall grade was 2 in Beech’s most recent OFSTED inspection. However, they achieved grade 1 for personal development and well being. The following comments, made in their last inspection report (September, 2007), relate to the principles SEAL aims to achieve;

- **The high quality care, support and guidance make a very significant contribution to pupils' well-being and to their good achievements. This is particularly true for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or**
behavioural difficulties, who speak English as an additional language or who are particularly vulnerable.

- The outstanding curriculum and excellent care pupils receive are crucial factors in promoting their most effective personal development and welfare.

- Pupils behave well because they enjoy lessons

- “I just love everything about this school” was a typical comment from pupils.

- The work of the attendance and welfare officer has been crucial in raising pupils’ attendance significantly since the last inspection. Pupils feel safe because they are well nurtured.

- Pupils grasp opportunities to take responsibility, contributing well to school decision-making, to enhancing the environment and to befriending shy pupils or those new to the school.

5.3.4 Beeston Primary

Beeston is in a socially deprived area of Lindale with high rates of unemployment and drug related crime.

The following tables give a breakdown of the basic characteristics of the school;
Table 5.5: Characteristics of Beeston school 2006 - 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number on roll</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils known to be</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eligible for free school meals</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils with statement of</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils with SEN</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including statements)</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School deprivation indicator</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This school was considered to be leading practice due to the drive from Senior Management and the high priority given to the implementation of SEAL from the outset. The Head teacher reported a significant qualitative feedback on behaviour and whole school ethos as a result of SEAL. However, data do not indicate a relationship between SEAL and Key Stage 2 attainments in the short term. It is possible that the high priority given, within the school, to focus on social, emotional and behavioural skills impacted on the academic focus.
There is an overall decline in Contextual Value Added scores one year after SEAL is introduced, followed by a rise in both categories the following year. There does not appear to be a difference in the progress of pupils with free school meals compared to non free school meals.

The most recent OFSTED inspection was in April 2008. The overall effectiveness of the school was considered to be Grade 3. Grade 3 was given to all areas apart from ‘personal development and well being’, ‘curriculum and other activities’ and ‘care guidance and support’ which were given a Grade 2.

The following comments relate to these areas;

- *Pupils respond well to the care that the school provides.*
- Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the large majority of pupils enjoy lessons so that their application and endeavour are most evident.

- Their behaviour, both in class and at play: in some lessons it is excellent.

- Pupils have an awareness of safety of both themselves and others. They are adamant that there is no bullying in school.

- There is a good community spirit.

- Pupils are listened to and willingly take on responsibilities.

- Pupils show awareness of the needs of others in their support for those who are less fortunate.

- Personal, social and health education contributes well to pupils’ awareness of social and moral responsibilities.

- It also helps those with emotional needs to overcome difficulties and take a full part in the life of the school.

- The school promotes pupils’ understanding of social responsibility well.

- Pupils describe enthusiastically how they enjoy lessons and the other opportunities the school provides.

- Pastoral care is particularly strong.

- The school’s good arrangements for support result in the good attitudes and behaviour of pupils.

5.3.5 Hillside Special

Hillside is a special school for pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Needs due to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is situated in South Lindale and its intake is city wide. The pupils are Key Stage 2 and 3 but they have recently admitted 3 Key Stage 1 pupils. There are 36
children on roll. Due to the number of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2, the SATs and Contextual Value Added data have not been included in this section. However, SEAL has had a significant impact on the school ethos. Due to the pupils having significant needs in the area of social, emotional and behavioural skills, this school was included in the study.

As an Educational Psychologist, I was involved with the school prior to the implementation of SEAL. The school, understandably, had pupils with extremely challenging behaviour and we endeavoured to develop their skills through emotional literacy programmes. However, only small groups of children were selected at any one time, for programmes that lasted two terms.

In 2003, Hillside had established a structured reward system and also a ‘time out’ policy. Two rooms were dedicated for ‘time out’, one an empty room close to the staffroom, and the other, a larger room with soft walls and flooring. All staff were trained in restraint and this was used frequently with individuals. On visits to the school, there were often pupils occupying the ‘time out’ rooms with a member of staff supervising. Pupils were often exhibiting violent and verbally aggressive behaviour, whilst using the time out facilities.

In 2005, Hillside began their implementation of the SEAL framework. It was driven by a Senior Management team, who believed commitment to this framework would benefit pupils and staff. Although involved in the SEAL training, I was no longer the Educational Psychologist for the school. However, in 2008, I visited the school and also liaised with the Assistant Head coordinating SEAL.
She became involved in the subsequent training for Lindale schools beginning their involvement with SEAL.

Hillside school had evolved considerably over the five years and a very different approach was evident. The staff considered that the reason for the changes in whole school ethos was a direct result of SEAL. The ‘time out’ facilities were no longer considered to be necessary and the larger room with soft walls had become a pool room. Reportedly, many pupils could not recall the room as anything else.

A significant change in the approach that teachers identified was that they felt that they their role in the school had evolved. They described how they now felt like ‘professionals’ and were able to come to school in suits. Their role was to teach rather than react to challenging behaviour. Staff identified that their self esteem had improved as had their job satisfaction.

The last OFSTED inspection was carried out in November 2008. The overall effectiveness of the school was graded 2 but ‘personal development and well being’ and ‘care, guidance and support’ were graded 1.

The following comments relate to these areas;

- *Personal development is exceptional.*
- *The level of self-discipline that pupils develop is very impressive and improvement in behaviour is outstanding.*
- *Pupils quickly develop into well mannered and thoughtful young citizens.*
- Pupils make an exceptional contribution to their community; visiting a local infant school every Friday to hear readers and helping the infants develop their own vegetable patch.
- Pupils learn to understand their feelings and to control their impulses very well. This is evident in their outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school and in their calm demeanour during lunchtimes and breaks.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school very much
- The school is very calm, welcoming and harmonious.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after.
- The school is extremely successful in raising self-esteem and helping all pupils to develop their confidence as learners.
- Constant praise, reward and encouragement help pupils to make up for lost ground in their learning quickly and to improve their attendance and behaviour markedly.
- There are no exclusions in the school.
- All pupils are fully involved in setting challenging targets for academic improvement and personal development and they are given all the support and direction that they require to achieve these.

5.3.6 Summary
The case studies suggest that the schools are developing and, in some cases, excelling in the areas of ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’. However, the CVA and Key Stage 2 data do not suggest a relationship between the SEAL framework and attainments.
5.4 Overall Summary of Results

The results do not suggest that the impact of SEAL is quantifiable in terms of Key Stage 1 and 2 attainments, when all SEAL schools are compared with non SEAL schools and the Lindale average, over time. There does not appear to be a relationship between SEAL and attainments when individual case studies are considered. The Contextual Value Added scores suggest that there does not appear to be a relationship between the attainments of pupils receiving free school meals compared to pupils with non free school meals, following the implementation of SEAL.

The quantitative data do not support a relationship between SEAL and an increase in attendance or reduction in exclusions. However, the provider panel data suggest a relationship between an increasing number of schools implementing SEAL and a reduction in referrals for SEBD outreach. This implies that either behaviour has improved in schools or that teachers’ perception of children’s behaviour has improved. This is supported by the qualitative feedback provided for the JAR report and the comments made by OFSTED in the case study schools. However, the relationship between SEBD referrals and the number of schools implementing SEAL needs to be considered with caution due to the lack of information, regarding other initiatives and services involved with Lindale schools, to support pupils with needs in this area.
6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Stage One

6.1.1 Attainments

“In order to learn successfully, children must feel happy and secure within the school environment”, (Hellaby, 2004, p.28).

The assumption underpinning this research was that schools that were embedding SEAL would be developing children’s social and emotional skills, establishing a happier and more secure environment for children to learn. As a result, pupils would be more receptive to learning and, therefore, attainments would improve. This was supported by previous studies, such as Durlak and Weissberg (2007) in their meta analysis of programs to develop personal and social skills, where improvements were found in areas including attainments.

The SATs average points scores achieved by schools, implementing SEAL between 2005 and 2008, were compared to Non SEAL schools and the Local Authority average. The analysis of Key Stage 2 SATS results indicated that the initial cohort of schools, that implemented SEAL, was, on average, achieving lower attainments in their Key Stage 2 SATs results. The comparison indicates that attainments rose in the first year of SEAL implementation but, overall, these improvements were not sustained and non SEAL schools continued to be the highest attaining in the final year of comparison.
These findings do not support most of the earlier studies, where SEL programmes improved attainments, but Durlak and Weissberg (2007) explored the impact in a meta analysis of after school programmes. These are more likely to have been voluntary activities, where pupils would have chosen to attend. Therefore, the cohort measured is selective rather than whole school. The whole school analysis carried out by the Institute of Education and Science (2010) did not find that there was an improvement in the attainments of schools implementing SEL programmes compared to those who were not.

Durlak and Weissberg's findings, regarding the impact of social, emotional and behavioural programmes on attainments, were replicated in meta analyses by Pachan et al (2007), Patton (2006) and again by Durlak et al (2010). However, these were analyses of studies rather than scientific studies in themselves. Sources of bias are not controlled by this method as they only include published studies. (e.g. Borenstein et al, 2009) The 'file drawer problem' or 'publication bias' suggests that studies that show no significant results are less likely to be published and, therefore, this method is not a true reflection of the impact of such programmes. Although the 'file drawer problem' influences any review of literature, meta analyses are particularly prone to this bias, as studies which do not produce statistically significant results are less likely to be published than those that do produce a statistically significant result.

Slavin (2008) argues that only methodologically sound studies should be included whereas Glass, McGaw and Smith (1981) state that this defeats the purpose of the approach, as it should provide variance. Even if studies are only
considered, when methodologically sound, there is often limited control or insight into the fidelity of programme implementation. In this study, I did not have the capacity to ensure all schools were implementing SEAL throughout and there was inevitably variance in the extent to which the framework was embedded.

6.1.2 Attendance

Durlak and Wells (1997) suggested that teaching social and emotional skills will improve pupil attendance, as well as motivation and morale. However, their findings were not replicated in later studies. In 2007, Durlak and Weissberg carried out a meta analysis of 73 after school programmes to develop social and personal skills. They found positive outcomes in all areas measured apart from attendance. Patton et al (2006) carried out 3 large scale reviews of SEL research, involving over 320,000 children from kindergarten to eighth grade, and again found positive impacts in all areas apart from attendance.

The analysis of attendance data, in this study, suggests that SEAL does not appear to have a significant relationship with attendance in the short term, although there is some indication that the gap has narrowed slightly between attendance at SEAL schools and the Lindale average. This reflects the finding in the small group SEAL evaluation where “evidence around this area was somewhat sparse” (Humphrey et al, 2008, p. 67). It is possible that the development of family SEAL may have a positive impact on attendance, as relationships between parents and schools develop. Also, this research was carried out in primary schools only and, at this age, most children are brought to
school by their parents. A more indicative measure of the impact of SEAL on attendance may be evident in Secondary SEAL data.

6.1.3 Exclusions

Epstein and Elias (1996) suggested that schools would become more inclusive if social and emotional skills are developed.

Although the overall analysis of exclusions does not suggest a direct relationship between SEAL and exclusions, between 2007 and 2008, there were eleven permanent exclusions from all Lindale Primary Schools. Eighty eight schools were implementing SEAL in Lindale, over 80 percent, but only two exclusions were from SEAL schools. Nine exclusions were from the remaining 20 percent that were not involved with SEAL.

Epstein and Elias’ (1996) findings were supported in a later study (Elias, Turmaine, Parnavelas and Kriegstein, 2010). However, their conclusions appear to be based on ‘anecdotal’ reports from teachers implementing SEL programmes. They draw from a series of ethnographic site visits in public and private schools across the United States, where social and emotional learning programmes had been operating from 3 to 20 years. A later longitudinal study evaluated the impact on a primary school six years after a two year SEL programme had been delivered (Elias et al, 2010). However, Elias and his colleagues were invested in reporting positive outcomes as they were involved in implementing and evaluating an ‘award-winning Social Decision Making and Problem Solving Programs’ in schools around the United States.
6.1.4 Pupil referrals for SEBD outreach support

Referrals to the Provider Panel were analysed, in terms of a comparison of referrals from SEAL schools with those from non SEAL Lindale schools. There has been an overall decrease in referrals for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support since SEAL was first introduced in 2005. This would support Epstein and Elias’ (2006) suggestion that schools would become more inclusive when social and emotional skills are focused upon.

The overall number of referrals to the Provider Panel for pupils considered to require social, emotional and behavioural support has decreased year on year, in relation to the increasing number of Lindale schools implementing SEAL. The decrease in referrals from 140 in the academic year 2005/6 to 11 in 2008/9 will be discussed in terms of perceptions and impact on outreach services.

Firstly, although the number of pupils referred for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support declined year on year as more and more schools implemented SEAL, this cannot be directly attributed to the framework, as schools also received support and intervention from other services, such as BEST (Behaviour and Education Support Team) and Educational Psychology Service. However, the amount of support from these services did not increase during 2005 and 2009. In fact, it reduced in terms of time provided. Also, schools may have implemented other programmes and initiatives that have impacted on the number of referrals for outreach support.
Information was not considered in terms of the reasons schools had made fewer referrals. It is possible that they did not value the SEBD outreach support they had previously received or that the support had improved staff skills in managing pupils with needs in this area. If this was the case, the reduction in referrals could not be attributed to the implementation of the SEAL framework.

Even if the decrease in referrals for SEBD outreach support were to be attributed to the increasing number of schools implementing SEAL, it is difficult to determine without further analysis, whether pupils' behaviour has improved or whether effective management systems have been established through the techniques facilitated within the SEAL framework. It is also possible that teachers’ perceptions of behaviour have changed, through greater understanding of the child’s needs. If children are given the opportunities to share their thoughts and experiences, staff are more able to identify why they may behave in a certain way.

6.1.5 Summary

It was assumed, throughout my extensive involvement and commitment to SEAL’s implementation in Lindale schools, that the framework would inevitably have a positive impact on the proximal measures of social and emotional wellbeing. It was also anticipated that SEAL would have a positive impact on the distal measures involved in this study. The impact of SEAL on attainments, attendance and exclusions are disappointing. There doesn’t appear to be a relationship between the framework and these distal measures. There does appear to be a relationship between the number of schools implementing SEAL
and pupils referred for social, emotional and behavioural outreach support. The number of referrals decreases year on year as the number of schools implementing SEAL increases. However, any causal effect needs to be considered with caution, due to other factors that have not been measured, such as alternative initiatives and support services that may have impacted on referrals for SEBD outreach.

When it became apparent that this research did not suggest that SEAL has an impact on overall attainments, exclusions and attendance, when all Lindale schools were involved, I decided to consider 5 case study schools, from the original cohort. I had worked closely with these schools and was aware that they had fully embedded SEAL.

6.2 Stage Two

Stage 2 of this research provided some qualitative data to expand on the information gathered, regarding the impact of SEAL in schools. A Joint Area Review was taking place in Lindale and a SEAL report was requested for the purpose of providing inspectors information on the framework’s implementation and impact. Therefore, semi structured interviews with head teachers and SENCOs were carried out in 2007, two years after they had started implementing SEAL. Reports from School Improvement Partners and Healthy Schools colleagues also informed this stage. As this information was not initially collated as part of a scientific study, at the onset of this research, data were not subject to rigorous analysis at the time. The interviews and reports were only considered in 2007 and are possibly subject to interviewer bias. Although the responses were
mainly positive, they were from staff coordinating SEAL in their schools and this may have had an effect on their perception of the framework’s impact. A decision was later made to include this information in this thesis as it provided more holistic consideration of the framework’s impact. However, with more time and resources, interviews could have been carried out with a wider sample of SEAL and non SEAL schools and involved staff who weren’t SEAL coordinators.

6.2.1 Semi Structured Interviews with Head Teachers and SENCOs
The report produced by Weare and Gray (2003) stated that “problem behaviour has underlying social and emotional causes which need to be addressed in a holistic, environmental way rather than through approaches which focus on detection, containment, negative reinforcement and punishment”. They found that this view was prevalent in the case studies and all linked work on emotional and social competence and wellbeing as integral to strategies to promote good behaviour.

The feedback from semi structured interviews with head teachers and SENCOs (See 5.2.1) supported these findings and did not support the results from the first stage of the research. The responses suggested that SEAL was having a positive impact on the behaviour of pupils and ethos of the school.

Examples of these responses were;
- SEAL is having a huge impact on the behaviour of children.
- The improvement in behaviour is significant. We have had no fixed term exclusions, since embedding SEAL and have admitted two children on negotiated transfers.

- Children are far better at negotiation skills and dealing with different points of view.

- SEAL is contributing to the general code of behaviour, how staff and pupils relate to each other.

- Children are more able to negotiate and solve problems without the intervention of adults.

- Staff from the junior department noticed a difference after just one year of SEAL being implemented. They recognised that there were fewer disagreements between pupils.

These views were only taken from staff leading on SEAL in the original cohort of schools. Their decision to opt into the programme and their responsibility for SEAL within their schools may have impacted on their perception of its impact, making them subject to bias.

However, feedback from discussions with staff and pupils, Self Evaluation Forms, observations, school visits and network meetings replicated these views and suggests that SEAL has had a positive impact on the behaviour of children in primary schools. Information from informal discussions, observations and network meetings are not included in the methodology of this study, as data were not gathered systematically. However, the following themes support the stage two findings.
A common theme was that children are more likely to resolve their own conflicts and apply problem solving strategies that they have been taught. Teachers stated that having common approaches throughout the school was particularly effective as children would often refer to them in their communication. During semi structured interviews and informal discussions, many schools reported that there was less physical aggression observed in conflicts as children were more able to verbalise their feelings (See 5.2.1). It was also identified that children gave appropriate prompts to their peers, when any problems arose.

Another common theme from discussions and observations, was the increased awareness that staff had of children’s behaviour. Many teachers reported that they had no idea, prior to SEAL, of the issues children were dealing with outside of the schools setting. They stated that SEAL had encouraged an ethos where children could make the teachers aware of their feelings each day and discuss events at home. Teachers reported that this evoked a much greater understanding of individual’s ‘inappropriate’ behaviour and enabled them to be proactive and nurturing in their approach. This has resulted in children being able to express their negative emotions in a positive, more appropriate manner.

Some schools reported that the skills developed through the implementation of SEAL were particularly evident with children, described as being on the autistic spectrum. The commonality of techniques such as ‘calming down’ and ‘problem solving’ are developed from the foundation stage through to year 6. This enables children to feel secure with consistent approaches and is reported to have a positive impact on children, who may have autistic traits. Also, the visibility of
displays to convey emotions has, reportedly, enabled many children to express their emotions more effectively. There is one school in Lindale for children diagnosed as being on the Autistic Spectrum and these tend to be individuals with the most complex behaviours. This school has been implementing SEAL since 2006 and the framework is now embedded and valued.

As a result of the positive responses to the semi structured interviews, from the original cohort of schools implementing SEAL, a DVD was produced that would inform schools considering implementing SEAL in the future. A professional production company filmed SEAL lessons and interviewed head teachers, SENCOs, learning mentors, pupils and the team leading on the implementation of the framework. Pupil’s views were positive but were leading, in terms of the intention of the DVD. They included:

- *It made me happier*
- *People sit down and are calm*
- *We can talk about how we feel*
- *People have learned how to control themselves*
- *When I go outside I see little kids and big kids playing together*
- *It helps you know how other people feel*
- *You realise that people might be really upset and it's not just a game*
- *The playground is better*
- *If you say ‘it worries me’ people stop doing it*
- *It helps me learn*
Pupils’ views are not included in the methodology and results as the information was gathered by another source and in a biased context. Responses were rehearsed and teachers had primed pupils for the purpose of the DVD.

Although the themes and comments discussed were not gathered as part of this study and are anecdotal, they are included as they support the findings of stage 2 and suggest that SEAL is having a positive impact in schools.

6.2.2 Reports from School Improvement Partners and National Healthy Schools Coordinators.

The feedback in interviews was positive but there were limitations to this aspect of research, in terms of interviewees being aware that the interviewer was invested in the framework. They had been trained by the interviewer and, therefore, may have been influenced in their responses. However, the reports from SIPs and Healthy Schools colleagues were less prejudiced, as they had been not been compiled for the purpose of this study. This information (See 5.2.2 and 5.2.3) supported the findings from the semi structured interviews and suggests that, although the quantitative measures do not suggest SEAL is having a positive impact on attainments, attendance and exclusions, the framework is perceived as having a positive impact in areas such as pupils’ behaviour.

However, reports were only considered from a sample of schools in 2007. They were not considered over time and were not compared with reports from non SEAL schools.
6.2.3 Summary

In contrast to the findings of stage one of this research, stage two indicates that SEAL is valued by staff and pupils. It appears to be having a positive impact in many aspects of school life. This is supported by the data regarding referrals for SEBD outreach support. However, the stage two data was not gathered rigorously, over time, for the purpose of this research. Also, I did not demonstrate a positive impact on the distal measures involved in this research and have not evidenced the impact on children’s social and emotional skills.

Wilhelm (2005) questioned the most appropriate way to measure the impact on social and emotional skills. The complexity of measuring this area of development was echoed by Humphrey et al (2008) in their evaluation of small group SEAL, “thus, although for the most part the consensus was that the interventions had a positive impact, the precise nature of said impact was sometimes elusive” (p.64).

6.3 Stage Three

6.3.1 Introduction

The five schools selected for further investigation were from the original cohort of schools that introduced SEAL in 2005. They were considered, within the authority, to have developed best practice in this area and subsequently delivered training to other schools around their successful implementation of the SEAL curriculum and its impact.
Further analysis of data indicated that each school has a percentage of pupils with special educational needs above the national average. Four of the schools have deprivation factors considerably higher than the national average and higher than the local average. This was also the case with the percentage of children eligible for free school meals. The attainments in the 5 schools are below the national and local average. This suggests that lower attaining schools, with high deprivation factors, were more likely to value and commit to investing time in the successful implementation of SEAL. The data do not indicate the nature of children’s special educational needs but it may be that a number of these children are considered to have social, emotional and behavioural needs. This suggests that the schools initially interested in embedding the SEAL framework may have particularly valued a curriculum to develop skills in this area.

Interestingly, the one school that did not have considerably higher deprivation factors, higher percentage of special educational needs or lower attainments, when compared to the Lindale average, developed best practice in the area of involving parents. They were successful in their response to SEAL newsletters and assemblies for parents. This is an area that other schools had found difficult, despite their efforts to involve parents.

Four of the schools are mainstream but one is a special school for pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs in the area of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The pupils in the special school were mainly Key
Stage 3, with only a small number of Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils. Therefore, their Key Stage 2 SATs and Contextual Value Added data were not considered.

6.3.2 Key Stage 2 SATS
The results indicate that there is an increase in the average points scores in the first year SEAL was implemented. However, the Lindale average scores also increased over this academic year. In the subsequent 3 years, the increase was not consistently sustained suggesting that SEAL has not impacted on the Key Stage 2 SATs average points scores in the case study schools.

6.3.3 Contextual Value Added Scores
The Contextual Value Added charts do not indicate that SEAL has impacted on Key Stage one to two attainments. Results from Dutton school indicate a rise following the implementation of SEAL but then an overall fall the following year. Caldwell indicates a year on year rise in the Contextual Value Added scores for children who have free school meals and a fall and then rise for those who do not have free school meals. Beech school data indicate a decrease in all scores each year and Beeston school a decrease then rise in both categories. The overall results do not suggest that pupils who receive free school meals make greater academic progress than those who do not receive free school meals, following the implementation of SEAL. The attainment gap for pupils from less advantaged socio economic backgrounds does not appear to have narrowed despite following a framework to develop social and emotional skills. This does not support the studies, discussed in the literature review and carried out by Coghlan et al (2009), Dyson et al (2010) or Sharples et al (2011). They all
conclude that developing these skills can improve academic outcomes for children in poverty and narrow the educational gap. However, I only considered whether the gap had been narrowed within each case study school and did not compare the cohort of children receiving free school meals and engaging in SEAL with a sample of children in non SEAL schools.

6.3.4 OFSTED

The most recent Ofsted reports for the 5 case study schools were considered. The categorisation for ‘personal development and wellbeing’ and ‘care, guidance and support’ suggests that they excel in these areas. Three out of the five schools all received overall grades of ‘satisfactory’ but in the areas related to social, emotional and behavioural support, two were considered to be ‘good’ and one excellent. The other two schools received overall grades of ‘good’ but were considered to be ‘outstanding’ in the areas of ‘personal development and well being’ and ‘care, guidance and support’.

SEAL may have impacted in the areas of personal development, wellbeing, care and guidance. However, only the most recent OFSTED reports were considered and, therefore, the categorisations in these areas have not been compared with pre SEAL reports. Although the case study schools are excelling in these areas, it cannot be concluded that this is a direct result of the SEAL implementation.

6.3.5 Summary

The case studies consider schools, where SEAL is considered to have been embedded throughout the school. However, even with this level of fidelity to the
framework’s implementation, the results do not suggest a relationship between SEAL and Key Stage 2 average points scores or Contextual Value Added scores for free school meal pupils compared to non free school meal pupils. The attainment gap does not appear to have narrowed between these groups of children, despite the implementation of the framework. Although the OFSTED reports suggest that these schools excel in the areas of personal development, wellbeing, care and guidance, this cannot necessarily be attributed to SEAL.
7: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Implications

The suggestion that the SEAL framework will improve attainments, attendance and exclusions is not supported in this research. As the main focus of education, and the success of schools, is attainments at all key stages, time and resources invested in SEAL is not supported. Pressures to improve attendance are also a focus in national and local authority assessments of schools but SEAL does not appear to be related to any improvements in this area. However, extensive meta analyses of social and emotional learning programmes (e.g. Durlak et al, 2010) suggest that they can impact positively in many areas, including attainments. It is possible that sessions need to be delivered as extra curricular activities rather than embedded in all curriculum areas. The Institute of Education and Science (2010) analysis of SEL programmes also found there was no improvement in attainments or social and emotional skills, when they were embedded within the whole school curriculum. It is possible that any additional resources need to target academic areas, as Craig (2007) suggests and that the focus on SEAL may be detrimental to the teaching of core subjects.

The findings from pupil referrals for SEBD outreach support and qualitative feedback from colleagues involved with SEAL, suggest that the framework could have either improved pupils’ social, emotional and behavioural skills, teachers perceive pupils have improved in this area or that schools have become more inclusive in meeting these needs. As stated, a direct relationship cannot be assumed, due to other factors that have not been measured. However, it is possible that SEAL has impacted on the social, emotional and behavioural needs
of children and this can impact on the learning and well being of all pupils and staff. If SEAL has impacted on SEBD referrals for outreach, there are implications on local authority resources and funding. If the need for additional outreach support decreases, there should be reduced costs in this area.

7.2 Recommendations

This section considers future recommendations that have arisen from the review of literature, other research in the area of social and emotional learning programmes, the quantitative and qualitative findings in this study and my practical involvement with the implementation of SEAL, in Lindale, since 2004. The development of programmes, that include families and the community, is also discussed. It should be emphasised that, although some points are supported by this study and related research, others areas of discussion are from informal feedback and school visits. This information was not gathered systematically but represents general views of those involved with SEAL in Lindale.

7.2.1 Extra Curricular Programmes

Despite the limitations of meta analyses, the number of programmes involved in studies suggests that SEL initiatives do have positive outcomes on learning. However, the positive outcomes on measures, including attainments, were generally found when programmes were delivered as extra curricular activities (e.g. Durlak and Wells, 2007). This has implications for the students attending, particularly if involvement is voluntary.
This research considers the impact of one programme, with the intention that SEAL is embedded throughout the school, in all curriculum areas. However, this level of focus on the framework may have detracted from the teaching of core subjects and raises the question as to whether SEAL activities should be delivered as extra curricular activities. In contrast, there is evidence to support the need for a whole school framework and this is discussed later in this section.

7.2.2 Training

Training delivered to pilot schools in 2004, was less specific and explored the small group work in addition to a whole school focus. Feedback, in network meetings, from the schools who attended this training indicated that, in four cases, SEAL was only delivered to small groups of children, considered to have social, emotional and behavioural needs. These sessions were often delivered by the learning mentor or a teaching assistant. In many cases, the teaching staff were unaware of SEAL or the activities taking place with small groups. In these schools, SEAL was not a whole school focus or led by Senior Management. It tended to be an aspect of Special Educational Needs provision, delivered alongside other wave 2 programmes.

Feedback supported Weare and Gray’s findings that this area of work should be given a high profile in Local authorities and their case studies indicated that a “whole school approach is vital in effectively promoting emotional and social competence and well being,” (2003, p.6).
Subsequent training, in Lindale, provided very little information on small group work but focused on embedding SEAL in all curriculum areas and involving all staff, governors and parents. These schools were also provided with INSET training from a member of the SEAL strategic team. Schools were encouraged to include teaching assistants, governors and administration staff to these sessions to raise awareness of everyone’s responsibility to support children’s social and emotional development. The feedback from these schools, in subsequent network meetings, was that all staff were aware of SEAL and were implementing it in their classrooms. The schools visited had ‘SEAL’ displays and were delivering whole school assemblies on SEAL topics. The curriculum was a whole school priority, led by the Senior Management team.

When SEAL had been introduced as a whole school approach, further training focused on small group work. Feedback, during school visits, suggested that staff were more aware of pupils, who would benefit from small group support, once SEAL had been delivered across the school. When SEAL topics were delivered in the classroom, small group work could be supported and reinforced when individuals returned to their peer group. There was also evidence of liaison and planning between class teachers and the member of staff delivering the small group work. This recommendation is supported by the findings of Humphrey et al (2008), who stated that, “the small group work interventions do not operate in a microcosm, and school staff emphasised the need to extend the work back in class and provide further support where necessary” (p.63).
They also found that successful implementation was influenced strongly by existing work (e.g. SEAL Wave 1 and/or other general approaches to social and emotional learning) within a given school, again supporting a whole school approach in addition to small group work.

Staff from the original cohort of schools attended an introductory SEAL training course that provided the ‘lunchbox’ of materials. These materials were used during the day to give those attending (usually the head teacher and Deputy or SENCo) an opportunity to become familiar with the framework and activities and also provide a focus for planning next steps. Staff appeared much more enthusiastic when they had access to a hard copy of materials and were able to see for themselves how detailed the lessons plans and suggested activities were. Feedback during network meetings suggested that this reassured schools that the introduction of SEAL would not entail a great deal of time or require lots of planning for individual teachers.

The SEAL lunch box was also valuable during INSET for schools, as all staff were able to look at booklets corresponding to their year groups. Again, this reassured teachers that the materials would be easily implemented and not require a huge commitment of time. The availability of materials impacted on how receptive staff were to the framework, and when the booklets were provided at staff training sessions, the response appeared to be positive and enthusiastic.

The second cohort of schools were trained without a hard copy of materials as they were no longer available. All materials needed to be downloaded from the
website or schools were provided with a CD of the SEAL framework. This made some of the training activities more difficult to deliver and did not provide staff with an opportunity to explore the materials individually.

Evaluation forms, completed by staff after training sessions, suggested that presentations from Lindale schools were highly valued. Some schools from the original cohort were more than willing to present their experiences of SEAL in subsequent conferences. Their presentations were often emotive and very powerful. Feedback from staff attending the training found these more convincing than DCSF guidance. All subsequent training has involved sessions from local schools. Also, a Lindale DVD was produced illustrating examples of SEAL lessons in local schools and interviews with staff, regarding their experiences and impact of SEAL. These were distributed to all Lindale schools and were well received, according to feedback in network meetings. The DVDs were also used to raise awareness of SEAL across the authority, in all service areas. In addition, a SEAL conference was convened for officers in Lindale to attend and consider how they could support the implementation of SEAL. This was attended by a range of professionals, including CAMHs (Child and Adolescent Mental Health), School Improvement Partners, National Strategies, Educational Psychologists, Parent Partnership and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder foundation.

Weare and Gray (2003) recommended that effective work requires a multi agency approach at all levels, with the involvement of parents and the community, as well as a range of professionals, to develop a coherent framework. There was evidence that initiatives need to be accessible and special
provision be targeted at an early age. They stated that the largest determinant of emotional and social competence and well being, in pupils and teachers, is the school environment. They recommended that the DfES and LEAs ensure they work in “emotionally competent, participative and clear ways to encourage professional autonomy” (p.7).

In Lindale, colleagues from other service areas were involved in planning and training. The strategic team liaised with Parent Partnership, who produced SEAL information leaflets for parents. They also provided SEAL training sessions for parents, who cascaded this to other parents.

The ‘Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Foundation’ worked closely with the strategic team to devise a SEAL programme for pupils with ADHD. This programme was used in their ADHD groups and was based on SEAL activities. Their contribution to training events was considered valuable, according to feedback in network meetings, as were the specific materials they had developed and subsequently shared with schools.

As an Educational Psychologist working with the strategic team, I was able to inform the psychology service of developments in the city and also share materials and research findings. Individual psychologists made recommendations in reports related to SEAL and some delivered training to their schools.
Colleagues from CAMHs were very supportive of SEAL, particularly due to the evidence related to improvements in mental health. They attended training and liaised with the strategic team to incorporate SEAL into their training programme. CAMHs colleagues’ involvement seemed to raise their awareness regarding schools focus on social and emotional aspects of children’s development.

### 7.2.3 Family SEAL

The schools that originally decided to introduce SEAL in 2004 referred to home circumstances as an important factor in the social and emotional development of their pupils, during training days. Many head teachers and SENCos related to the feeling that children’s basic needs were not always met when they joined the foundation stage. They commented on the negative experiences that children were often exposed to in their home environments and the impact this has on their ability to learn. Nurturing and SEAL development was considered to be priority and feedback from staff indicated that the framework supported the principles of meeting these basic needs.

Similarly, Humphrey et al (2008) reported that:

> there were clear parallels between the atmosphere created in the small group interventions and the humanistic principles expressed by writers such as Maslow (1943). Thus, staff spoke of children needing to feel secure (in that the work provided them with stability and the opportunity to develop trusting relationships with adults and their peers), safe (in that they could express themselves freely and confidentially without fear of recriminations)
and special (in that they were part of a unique experience and had been ‘chosen’) (p.63).

The staff welcomed the materials to support the development of SEAL within the home. However, the original cohort of SEAL schools were variable in their attempts to engage parents. Some of the schools invited parents in for introductory SEAL meetings and asked a member of the strategic team to attend. These were poorly attended and one meeting had only three parents present. However, the SEAL assemblies were well attended in all cases. Feedback from parents was reported, in informal discussions with staff, to be positive but the SEAL principles were not necessarily reinforced at home, when the framework was initially introduced.

An example of good practice was a school that produced SEAL newsletters for parents, informing them of topics and how to support children at home. This school reported more examples of SEAL strategies being reinforced at home.

Overall the response from schools, during initial school visits and network meetings, was that this aspect was difficult to develop. However, after four years, many schools, in the original cohort, are reporting a positive response from parents. Examples have included one parent stating that they were “learning how to calm down and deal with situations” from their child. Other parents reported to staff that their children’s behaviour, at home, had noticeably improved and that they were using techniques learned in school. Staff are increasingly reporting positive responses from parents, regarding the impact of SEAL in areas such as
responsibility, anger management and problem solving. However, this is difficult to measure and structured feedback from parents has not been carried out in this study.

7.2.4 Monitoring
There was some informal monitoring throughout this research and self evaluation forms were gathered towards the final stages. However, it is believed that monitoring should have been more rigorous. As discussed, not all schools appeared to have implemented the framework as a whole school curriculum and commitment of staff, in all schools, was not assessed. In addition, the level of senior management support was not measured, in terms of time and resources for staff to implement the framework.

Humphrey, Lendrum and Wigelsworth (2010) found that the Secondary SEAL research did not support the literature advocating that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes can lead to significant improvements in a range of outcomes (e.g. Durlak et al, 2011). Factors considered to have contributed to these outcomes were that SEAL did not have a high level of structure and consistency in programme delivery, careful monitoring by developers or the level of resources necessary to ensure an effective SEL programme.

Their recommendations also included ensuring time and resources are available to staff and parents and carers are fully engaged if schools want to fully implement a SEL programme. Humphrey suggested that programmes should
reflect research regarding the structure and consistent delivery of programmes with SAFE (Sequenced, Active, Focused, Explicit) principles and close monitoring of fidelity. The study concludes that greater trialling of such initiatives should be carried out before being rolled out nationally.

In Lindale, the authority committed to seconding a strategic team and provided individual school funding to support SEAL’s implementation. However, this did not ensure the level of time and resources necessary for rigorous monitoring.

7.3 Critique

The qualitative findings of this research do not refute the warnings by Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) regarding prioritising the emotional curriculum over the intellectual and the need to return to the authoritarian humanist approach to education. It could be argued that the training and implementation of the SEAL framework has been a waste of time and money, as Craig (2007) warned, particularly as the DFES (2004) claimed that the development of these skills would improve attainments, attendance and inclusion. The data in Lindale does not support these claims.

Craig (2007) also criticised Weare and Gray’s (2003) report that referred to international studies to support the rationale behind SEAL. She stated that these studies are based on interventions, which are “hugely different in design, goals and methodology” (Craig, 2007, p.6). As discussed earlier, many of the reportedly successful programmes are delivered as extra curricular activities but a recent independent study of whole school SEL programmes, commissioned by
the United States Department of Education (IES, 2011), found that they did not improve attainments or skills in this area, when compared to control schools. It could be argued that Craig (2007) was correct in her warnings that there was no basis for teaching these skills as no long term pilot study had been carried out. According to Craig (2007), the DfES (2006a) “Evaluation of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Strategy Pilot” was poorly designed and made no comparisons with a control group. She also stated that feedback was mainly from teachers and could not be considered as objective. The study indicated no improvement in attendance and little impact on academic performance. As most of the evidence supporting SEAL in this study, has come from quantitative feedback from professionals involved in the framework, the same limitation applies.

Aspects of SEAL aim to improve children’s self perception and raise self esteem. However, Baumeister, Campell, Krueger and Vohs (2003) found that self-esteem, the global component of self-concept, did not impact on academic performance. Seligman (1998) also claims that grades have fallen since the American education systems have focused on self esteem. There were also reported findings by Dweck (2010) that praise may undermine the motivation to achieve. Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) warn that therapeutic approaches suggest vulnerability, where students are wrapped in cotton wool and challenges are best avoided. Although this study does not refute these critiques, it should be recognised that attainments do not appear to have decreased in SEAL schools. Therefore, although SEAL does not appear to improve learning, it is possible that
the systematic development of social and emotional skills does not detract from academic learning.

Craig (2007) questioned whether teachers are adequately trained to deal with the complexity and sophistication of the SEAL framework and it is possible that insufficient training was delivered in Lindale. This could have impacted on the results of this study. However, Craig’s (2007) claim that teachers’ workload and stress levels have risen due to an additional SEAL framework was not reported in the teachers’ feedback. However, these specific areas were not measured.

It is possible that Craig’s (2007) suggestion that rather than psychological interventions that are about emotions, they should be about thinking styles, cognitions and beliefs and that Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) warnings against the dangerous rise of therapeutic education are accurate. Also, the belief that resources should be targeting parenting skills may also be valid. However, Family SEAL had not been developed in Lindale, during this study. Therefore, the impact of the development of social and emotional skills at school and at home has not been measured.

As stated, this research does not indicate that SEAL improves attainments and attendance or reduces exclusions. However, it does not indicate that SEAL has a negative impact in these areas. The positive feedback from professionals suggests that they value SEAL and it is having a positive impact in their schools. More proximal measures may have provided greater support for the investment
of time and resources involved with the framework and this has implications for further suggested research.

7.4 Further Research

Due to the number of schools now implementing SEAL in Lindale, it is not possible to make longer term comparisons between SEAL schools, non SEAL schools and the Lindale average, in terms of the distal measures involved in this research. It would have been useful to study the impact over several years. It would also be interesting to compare gender differences, teacher assessments and SATs scores for individual subjects. If more rigorous monitoring would have been possible, the impact of schools’ fidelity in the implementation could have been measured. The implementation process, in a review of similar programmes, has been found to be an important factor in terms of positive outcomes (Durlak and DuPre, 2008).

As this research considered distal measures and, disappointingly, did not support a relationship between SEAL, attainments, attendance and exclusions, further investigation regarding the impact of SEAL on the proximal measures of social and emotional wellbeing would have been informative. This research suggests that SEAL may impact positively on pupils’ behaviour and more detailed analysis of this relationship may have produced evidence to strengthen the support for the framework.

Due to the positive feedback from pupils and staff, further research around pupil voice and teachers responses would have provided a more holistic reflection of
the framework’s impact. An evaluation of pupil and teachers’ measures of ‘happiness’ would have been valuable, as this was referred to, in discussion, on several occasions. As stated, teachers’ feedback was extremely positive in terms of their enjoyment of SEAL activities and embedding them in all curriculum areas. It would be interesting to establish if there is any relationship between SEAL and staff attendance.

This study suggested that, in general, lower attaining schools were in the original cohort. Although the reason for this was not explored, many of these schools were in the most deprived areas of the city. The schools I had previously worked with already focused on social, emotional and behavioural needs, as a result of their cohort. Many children did not appear to have their basic needs met when they joined the nursery or reception and, therefore, this may have been considered a priority, above academic learning. I am aware that many schools, in the initial cohort, had a high level of family and social care issues that are likely to have impacted on academic learning. However, this is anecdotal and it would be interesting for more in depth analysis regarding staff motivation to implement SEAL to be carried out. Further research would be useful that compared the impact of the framework on lower achieving individuals compared to higher achieving pupils. It would also be beneficial to explore the impact of SEAL on children who have significant social and emotional needs, in terms of their attainments. Similarly, an interesting study would be an exploration of the impact on children who have experienced poor parenting and attachment issues.
As Weare and Gray (2003) and Humphrey (2008) made reference to the importance of teachers’ and SEAL facilitators’ skills, it would be interesting to research if the level of staff’s social and emotional competence is related to the progress children make in these areas.

7.5 Role of the Educational Psychologist

Throughout the process of this research, it was apparent that there are implications on educational psychologist involvement in the implementation of initiatives. There are also points related to educational psychologists’ practice and SEAL in schools.

The inclusion of an educational psychologist on the SEAL strategic team, placed a greater focus on evidence based practice. The training for schools involved detailed psychological input around early child development, particularly regarding social and emotional wellbeing, attachment issues and emotional intelligence. Examples of related research were provided to ensure staff were aware of the intended impact of SEAL on all aspects of learning. This appeared to increase staff motivation to implement the framework. Related research carried out by educational psychologists in Lindale was also discussed in training and this related to the positive impact of small group emotional intelligence programmes, delivered to pupils with complex needs. Some of the schools had been involved in this research and educational psychologist’s interventions.
Throughout the implementation of SEAL, there was a focus on this research and evaluation of SEAL and schools were provided with regular updates. The training days included presentations on national and local research.

I have provided colleagues with regular feedback on the framework’s implementation, in Lindale and, when necessary, they have supported their schools in this area. They have also consulted with schools regarding pupils engaging in small group SEAL. I have also provided SEAL training and awareness raising for Senior Management teams across the authority, parents, foster carers and social workers. In terms of multi agency work, this has been ongoing. We have developed national links with the School of Emotional Literacy and Casey (SEAL Consultancy), who was involved in the development and coordination of the Primary National Strategy. She regularly supported our training events in Lindale. Local links and joint working practice has been developed with the primary and secondary strategy officers, professionals developing Social and Emotional Early Development (SEED) and Parent Partnership in their promotion of Family SEAL.

7.6 Personal Reflections

As discussed, there were positive implications regarding the involvement of an educational psychologist in the implementation and training of SEAL, in Lindale. However, there were also implications related to my additional role as a researcher. At the outset of this research, my role was that of a Local Authority officer who had an interest in this area of education. This led to seconded time to support SEAL’s implementation and the opportunity to research the framework’s
impact. On reflection, my contribution to training, and the support of related SEL research, made me an advocate for its successful delivery in schools. I had read an extensive range of SEL literature that supported an improvement in distal measures, including attainments. Therefore, there was an expectation that this would be replicated with SEAL in Lindale schools.

Although the initial intention was to analyse purely quantitative data, as this would have ensured that my role did not bias any findings, further stages were later included in the methodology. The decision to include qualitative data was as consequence of my direct involvement in the implementation of SEAL in schools and the subsequent feedback received. As I had regular contact with staff implementing the framework, I was given information supporting its positive impact. However, on reflection, this was clearly the feedback that those invested in supporting SEAL’s implementation wanted to hear. As a practitioner, invested in improving the educational experiences of children, I wanted SEAL to have positive outcomes. However, this could also apply as an unbiased researcher, measuring the impact of any intervention. Positive outcomes for those involved in any study would surely be preferred.

On reflection, stage two should have been carried out by an independent interviewer. I had supported the theory behind SEAL at initial training and the interviewees were obviously aware of this. Positive relationships had been formed between officers responsible for training and staff in some of the SEAL
schools. This is likely to have impacted on responses. Also, the staff, interviewed in stage 2 of the research, were coordinating SEAL in their schools and, therefore, also had an invested interest in its success.

On reflection, this study would have been much more objective if I, as the researcher, had not been involved as a Local Authority Officer. However, my role supporting schools gave me a much more in depth and holistic picture of SEAL’s impact, compared to a purely quantitative objective analysis by an independent researcher.

7.7 Concluding Comments

The quantitative research carried out in Lindale does not suggest that there is a relationship between the implementation of the SEAL framework and Key Stage 2 attainments, in the first five years. The study does not suggest that the implementation of the SEAL framework has an impact on attendance in Lindale schools. It would be beneficial for further analysis of Key Stage 1 and 2 attainments and attendance to be carried out in the future.

Feedback from staff and pupils, in Lindale SEAL schools, has been overwhelmingly positive. The enthusiastic response is difficult to measure and convey. In 2009, the last phase of primary implementation and training took place in the city and rather than inviting speakers from other authorities, the training was be delivered by Lindale head teachers and SEAL coordinators. An indication of schools’ experiences of SEAL is that staff were eager to share their knowledge and volunteered to contribute to future training. They had their
individual stories of how SEAL has impacted on their schools and the common theme is that this impact is positive.

Earlier, the concept of positive psychology was explored, in terms of improving individuals’ quality of life and building on strengths, such as courage, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, and the capacity for flow and insight. These are considered as ‘buffers’ against mental illness. It became apparent during this study that, although SEAL did not appear to have a significant impact on some of the quantitative measures, qualitative feedback indicated that SEAL had a considerable impact in terms of making schools ‘happier’ environments. As Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) state, “a science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless” (p.5). It is possible that the SEAL framework is achieving these goals and that quality of life is improved. As the prevention of serious problems is not considered to be achieved by the medical model, but by building competencies, individuals engaging in SEAL may be more able to avoid future problems through the building of the social and emotional skills. Seligman (1998) believes that “much of the task of prevention in this new century will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people” (p.5). Further research would be valuable in terms of how SEAL may be fostering these strengths.

Myers (2000) refers to the concept of ‘happiness’ and the idea that most parents would state that overall they wanted their children to be ‘happy’. It is possible that
SEAL is enabling pupils, and even staff, to be ‘happier’ in school and maybe future life.

Larson (2000) discusses the development of excellence in children and young people, referring to education encouraging passive adaptation to rules rather than providing opportunities for children to take initiative. SEAL aims to encourage the skills required for children to take initiative and provide opportunities for group work and problem solving.

It is interesting that all schools, from the original cohort of schools implementing SEAL, agreed that the framework has made their schools a ‘happier’ place for both adults and children. This is a unique response for an initiative that is implemented in schools and teachers and children have rarely been so enthusiastic about sharing their positive views on a curriculum.

In March 2008, Steer undertook a ‘Behaviour Review’ which included progress made towards implementing the Practitioners’ Group on School Behaviour and Discipline. This assessment indicated that considerable progress had been made nationally. It was acknowledged that developments in the Children’s Plan (DfE, 2007) reflected the philosophy of the Learning Behaviour report. Ofsted have reported that the number of schools having inadequate behaviour standards was at its lowest level ever recorded. Steer (2008) remarked that he was, “particularly pleased to note the growing recognition that the large majority of the young are well behaved and a credit to their families and their teachers.
Society needs to focus on acknowledging and promoting the positive as by doing so it reduces alienation and negativity. To demonise children is to create problems rather than provide solutions” (p.4).

The recognition that the number of schools having inadequate behaviour is at its lowest ever level is arguably related to the ability schools now have to focus on social, emotional and behavioural skills as a curriculum in its own right, irrespective of whether this is delivered through ‘SEAL’ or alternative materials. However, Steer (2008) stated that one of the areas where there has been particular progress is ‘the consolidation of the programme Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning.

‘The Children’s Plan: Building brighter futures’ (DfE, 2007) enabled Government to provide context and support but establishes that parents and teachers teach behavioural skills and can have a positive impact on children irrespective of their level of difficulty or circumstance. The ‘Behaviour Review’ states that, “there need to be clear strategies which are used consistently in behaviour management and in learning and teaching in the classroom” (p.4). The positive impact of SEAL suggests that programmes that target social, emotional and behavioural issues, rather than behaviour alone, are more effective (Wells, 2000).

The behaviour review acknowledged that there has been a focus on early intervention and support for both parents and children but further developments
are needed in dealing with pupils with special educational needs, including those with involving mental health issues.

In 2010, the change in Government and its priorities in education, resulted in the strategic team disbanding. Resources and funding were also a contributory factor. However, in Lindale, all primary schools have now been trained and the SEAL framework is on a continuum of being introduced and embedded. The original cohort of schools continued to support the training programmes delivered within the authority and areas of best practice have been established. The primary schools are now grouped in ‘consortia’ of 8 to 10 schools. The head teachers and SENCos meet regularly and discuss their most complex children. SEAL, particularly small group SEAL, is regularly one of the interventions recommended. Family SEAL is not yet embedded but it is possible that this could have had a positive impact on many aspects of home and community life.

At the outset of this research, I had a belief that ‘SEAL’ was a framework that would benefit all pupils and staff, particularly in an area with high levels of deprivation. From previous teaching experience, I was aware that many children need the opportunity to express how they are feeling and that it is important that staff understand how events at home may be impacting on pupils’ learning and general well being. Therefore, I was invested in demonstrating the positive outcomes of addressing these needs throughout schools. The lack of evidence to support SEAL’s impact on learning, attendance and exclusions, resulted in my decision to carry out stages two and three of this study. However, despite the
positive feedback regarding the framework, stage three did not result in the data I had anticipated. If this research had suggested a relationship between the framework and learning, attendance and exclusions, it would have provided strong evidence to support my belief that schools should invest in this area of children's development.

The qualitative data and reduced referrals for SEBD outreach may not be convincing in themselves to support further investment of time and resources in this area. However, despite this research and lack of Government support for SEAL, it appears to be valued by most primary schools in Lindale. I continue to believe that it is having a positive impact in schools, particularly in the area of children's social, emotional and behavioural development. Despite, the findings suggesting there is no improvement in areas such as attainments and attendance, there does not appear to be a decline in these areas either. Therefore, the investment of time and resources, on the development of social and emotional skills, does not appear to be detrimental to other areas of education. Further research is needed to identify and measure the precise impact of SEAL and what, if any, are the areas it improves.
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People Living in Poverty, Including White Working Class Boys. London: Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young Peoples Services.


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Appendix

Stage 2 semi structured interview questions;

1. Do you consider that behaviour has improved over the last two years?

2. Do you consider that SEAL has impacted on behaviour over the last two years?

3. Do you consider that SEAL has improved children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills?

4. What are staff views on the framework, in general?

5. What are pupils’ views on the framework, in general?