

Calm & Caring Children

Improving Personal, Social & Emotional Outcomes for Children aged 3 – 5 years old

Personal, social and emotional development (PSED) supports children to learn to get on with others and make friends, understand and talk about feelings, learn about 'right' and 'wrong', develop independence and ultimately feel good about themselves. In Early Years, PSED underpins everything we do, and ultimately, if children's PSED isn't nurtured and supported, the other areas of learning will be also be greatly affected. We know a range of different factors in a child's life can adversely affect their PSED. Neuroscience shows us that 'normal' brain development in early childhood is dependent upon environmental input including warm and loving interactions with others and living in a safe context in which they are nourished and nurtured. This provides a foundation for how they develop relationships with others & how they view themselves. Unfortunately the recent Covid 19 pandemic may have disrupted normal development in this area with some children missing out on some time in their education or having negative & stressful experiences during this time.

Did you know? Children can become stressed if they do not have their emotional and physical needs met. Their bodies will release cortisol at times of stress, affecting the brain by impeding the development of connections between brain cells. It is these connections that are needed for successful future development and learning.

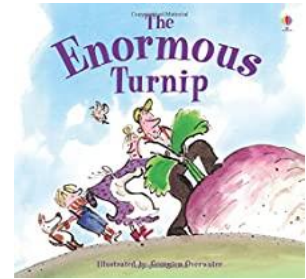
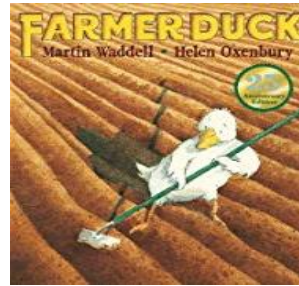
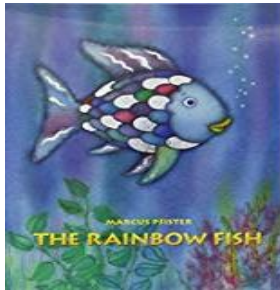
We can create a positive emotional 'climate' in the classroom through the development of our relationships with each individual child as well as with the class as a whole. Having consistent, positive, calm and nurturing relationship with each child will enable them to develop positive ways of engaging with us and their peers. Research shows the importance of building strong & trusting relationships with children and the positive impact this can have on supporting PSED (EEF 2019).

Did you know? Children's brains develop something called 'Mirror Neurons' which means they are primed to copy the actions & words of those around them. Therefore all adults should be modelling the positive types of behaviours they want children to learn & develop through the ways you respond to children's emotions & behaviours. If you consistently show children understanding & empathy in the context of a trusting & nurturing relationship, they will also learn these crucial social & emotional skills.

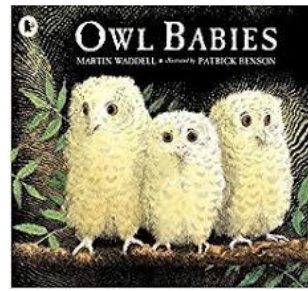
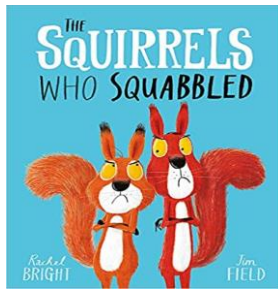
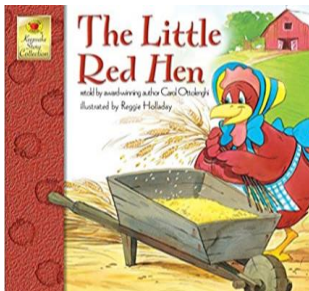
In their early years, children are learning how to regulate their emotions. When a child is anxious, part of the brain is activated which can prevent that child from being able to take in information; to think, to plan and to operate on it. They may then respond with fight, flight or freeze responses and what we may see is some confrontational behaviour where a child becomes unable to follow instructions. This is not deliberate but is a reaction triggered by chemicals released in the brain as a response to perceived threat or stress. Children who are highly stressed can become easily alarmed or worried which is then communicated through their actions or behaviours. We can respond by helping the child/ren to understand these emotions & learn more appropriate ways to deal with these 'big' feelings.

Talking about feelings and emotions: It is important to talk about what we are feeling (even as adults) in order to understand our emotions and to work out how to deal with them. This needs to become "normal" and part of everyday interactions. Talking about emotions when they happen for children alongside exploring this area through play & reading stories, will help the child to recognise emotions and build a library of healthy responses to deal with them. It is important to role-model healthy emotional responses and using stories is an effective way of starting these discussions.

Examples of Good Quality Story Books that Support PSED

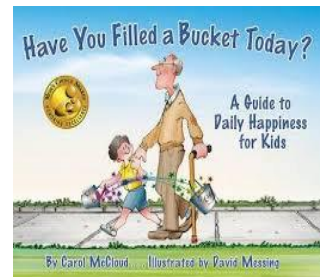
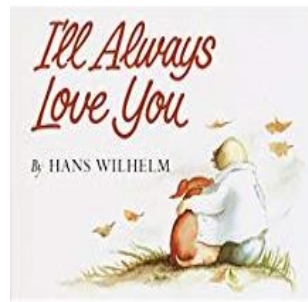
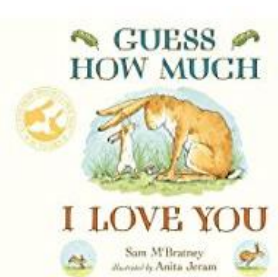
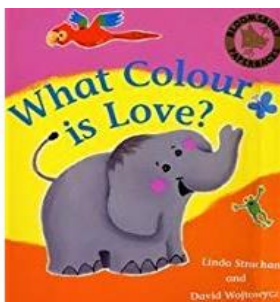


These books deal with issues around sharing, taking turns & cooperating with others

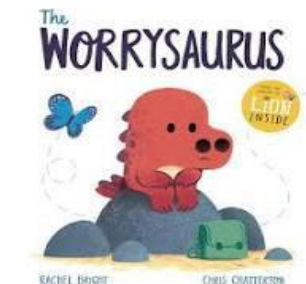
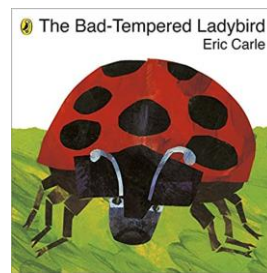
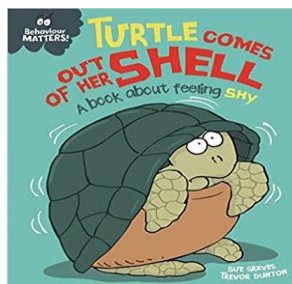
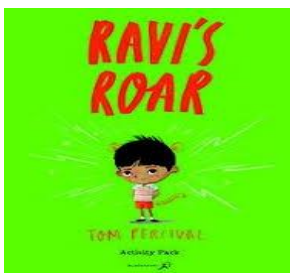


These focus on getting on & falling out

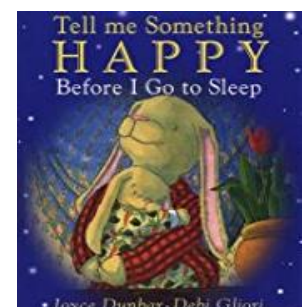
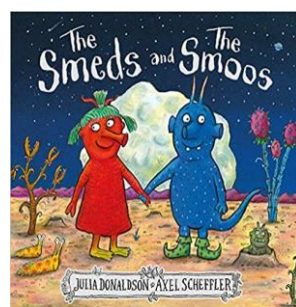
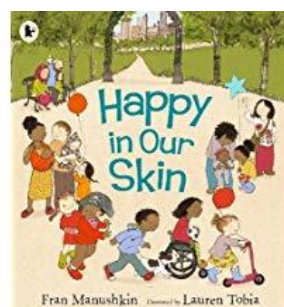
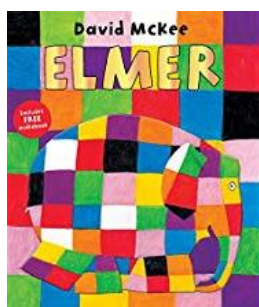
These explore separation anxiety



These look at the emotion of love, friendships & relationships including being kind to others



These explore common emotions such as anger, temper tantrums, shyness & anxiety



These deal with similarities & differences between us as well as different types of friendships

For a more comprehensive list of books please speak to one of the team who will send it to you.

Key Strategies to Support All Children's PSED

- Establish a clear daily routine to ensure there is structure and predictability throughout the day as this is essential in helping children to feel safe & secure. Although there will always be some flexibility in these routines, generally the daily routine should remain the same to allow children to understand what will be happening next and help them to adjust to any changes to the routine, to the physical environment or any new expectations of them.
- Build in lots of group time where the class/bubble come together for shared activities that are familiar to the children such as song/rhyme time and story time. This will help children to reconnect with the others in their class/bubble and feel part of this 'mini community' which is paramount to helping them feel safe & secure.
- Provide opportunities and resources for children to express their feelings and re-live their recent experiences through their play and activities e.g. role play, small world play such as dolls houses, drawing materials etc. Some children may need these opportunities to process and make sense of experiences they may have had in recent times and these are also good opportunities to teach and model key social skills e.g. taking turns or working cooperatively.
- Allow lots of opportunities for physical movement and outdoor play as children need to expend their energy in purposeful ways in order to experience the feeling of calmness at other times.
- Be observant of the children's behaviours/actions in order to assess and meet both their emotional and well being needs to enable them to thrive.
- Appreciate that all behaviour is a form of communication so try and respond to children's behaviour by understanding the emotions that may be driving that behaviour and respond accordingly.
- Respond to children's expression of emotions in calm & nurturing way and use the situation as a teaching opportunity to help them to develop their PSED. One possible approach to this is:

EMOTION COACHING - Tuning in to children's emotions

This approach is based on empathetic engagement where the child's emotional state is verbally acknowledged and validated, promoting a sense of security and feeling 'felt'. This activates changes in the child's neurological system and allows the child to calm down, physiologically and psychologically.

Five key steps are involved in Emotion Coaching:

1. Be aware of the child's emotions - read the emotion the child is trying to express
2. Recognise the emotion as an opportunity for teaching
3. Listen empathetically & validate the child's feelings - let them know it's ok to feel that feeling
4. Help the child find words to label the emotion - provide the correct word if they are unsure
5. Explore strategies to solve the problem at hand - give them ideas of how they can calm themselves down and then discuss options of how to solve the issue that has caused this emotion.



You can have a huge impact on children's development by making the most of your every-day interactions and using these as a teaching point as outlined above. However, some children may need some targeted support to catch up in their PSED. Below are some specific programmes or approaches that can be used with the whole class/group or delivered in small-groups for those children who would benefit from a more targeted approach.

[Some examples of evidence-based whole class and small group planned programmes](#)

SEAL (social & emotional aspects of learning) Red Set is a pre-planned programme that aims develop social and emotional skills. It can be delivered as a whole class or in small groups. The skills taught are grouped under five aspects of learning: self-awareness, motivation, managing feelings, empathy and social skills and the sessions can be carried out in small or large groups.

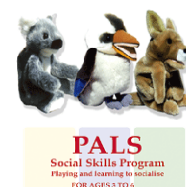


https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110812101132/http://nsonline.org.uk/node/66363?uc=force_uj

ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) has a pre-planned 'Friendship & Social Skills' intervention programme which is a 6 week, pre-planned programme which can be run with small groups. It addresses common themes such as emotions, social skills, self-esteem & relaxation techniques. <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/downloads/friendship-and-social-skills-intervention-eyfs-item-100/>



PALS programme (Playing & Learning to Socialise) is a 10 week intervention that uses puppets & stories to teach basic social skills such as turn taking and asking for help as well as emotional literacy skills such as identifying feelings and managing frustration. It can be delivered as a whole class approach but was designed to be used in small groups. ([Contact us for information about sourcing the resources](#)).

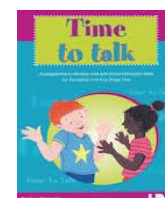


Incredible Beginnings program is a teaching resource comprising of a manual & resources to support children's social & emotional development using methods such as social/emotion coaching & positive behaviour management strategies. It is usually used as a whole class approach but could be adapted for small groups.



<http://www.incredibleyears.com/programs/teacher/incredible-beginnings-program/>

Time to Talk is a pre-planned programme aimed at developing social interaction skills. It is more suited to Reception aged children but could be adapted for Nursery. It teaches skills such as taking turns, sharing, following instructions and playing cooperatively. The sessions are all pre-planned and uses a puppet called Ginger Bear.



<https://www.ldalearning.com/product/communication-and-interaction/speech-and-language/teaching-resources/time-to-talk/agmt00498>

Cosmic Kids Yoga provide video yoga and mindfulness sessions for early years children, some of which can be accessed through youtube for free.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

Useful website for information : <https://www.annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/>

* Please note, the information shared above represents a small number of interventions and approaches that are available and although some of these resources can be accessed free of charge, others need to be bought and prices vary. None of these are endorsed specifically by our team.

This information is aimed at children who may be delayed due to their life or educational experiences, if you have concerns about SEN follow your schools usual SEN processes & procedures.

If you would like further information on any of the elements included in this information sheet, or training / further support in your school please feel free to contact the Early Years Quality Team

alinnane@hillingdon.gov.uk

shyndy@hillingdon.gov.uk (Team Manager)

cmustill@hillingdon.gov.uk