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SECONDARY SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SKILLS (SEBS) PILOT EVALUATION

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Introduction

In 2005, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)¹ to evaluate the secondary Social, Emotional and Behavioural skills (SEBS) pilot. The aim of the pilot was to encourage secondary schools to take a whole-school approach to developing social, emotional and behavioural skills amongst staff and pupils and to integrate it in to their existing work. Six local authorities (LAs) were selected to take part in the pilot comprising just over 50 schools.

One of the main aims of the evaluation of the secondary pilot was to provide evidence as to how to develop the programme in the future. More specifically, it aimed to consider the effectiveness of the different modes of implementation (at local authority and school level), and to gather perceptions of the barriers and facilitators to effective implementation.

The evaluation of the SEBS pilot took place between October 2005 and May 2007 and was carried out in two phases. Both phases comprised of interviews within pilot local authorities, case-study visits to ten pilot schools and the administration of a school survey. The final report presents the findings from both phases, provides examples of good practice and outlines key recommendations for policy and practice when considering the future roll-out of the programme.

Key Findings

- the SEBS pilot was well received by pilot schools and LAs and staff valued and were committed to the underlying principles of the pilot programme.
- a clear steer within the local authority regarding the SEBS pilot was important. This meant identifying the range of personnel that needed to be involved, outlining the purpose of their involvement and highlighting how the pilot fitted with and complemented existing local authority priorities and ways of working.
- LAs found it useful to allocate time to provide feedback to colleagues in their own and in other services viewing this as an important component in keeping everyone briefed on the latest developments above the pilot and providing opportunities for collaborative work. In particular, it encouraged a multi-agency approach to the delivery of the pilot which was felt to be key to delivering a coherent message that would support whole-authority commitment to SEBS and a whole-school approach.
- The implementation of the SEBS programme appeared to be '*a dynamic process*', with schools gradually developing and expanding the SEBS work they had undertaken. Most school staff viewed the SEBS programme as a long-term project that would develop and become more embedded in the school over time.

¹ On the 28th June 2007, the Department for Education and Skills became the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

- Schools were positive about the support they had received during the pilot. The main sources of support for schools appeared to be the Behaviour and Attendance (B&A) consultants and the local network meetings for pilot schools. The local network meetings provided schools with the opportunity to meet other pilot schools and exchange ideas and good practice, while the B&A consultants provided schools with more targeted support in particular areas of the implementation of the SEBS pilot, either through visits, or remote contact.
- In considering how the programme could best ensure impact in the future, interviewees highlighted a number of factors they felt may be important. These included: maintaining a whole-school approach, changing cultures and attitudes, involving the right people, commissioning resources and linking with the bigger picture.

Methodology

The evaluation comprised of two phases carried out between October 2005 and May 2007 in the six pilot local authorities. Both phases consisted of:

- **Telephone interviews** with local authority staff in the six pilot local authorities, including B&A consultants and strategy managers. A total of 17 interviews were carried out with local authority staff during phase 1 and a further 14 telephone interviews were carried out during phase 2.
- **Case study visits** to ten schools in five of the six pilot local authorities comprising face-to-face interviews with school staff and pupils. Just over 150 interviews were carried out with school staff and pupils during phase 1 and a further 35 interviews with school staff during phase 2.
- **School questionnaire** administered to teachers and teaching assistants in the ten case study schools. A total of 234 questionnaires were completed during phase 1 and 85 questionnaires were completed during phase 2.

Other findings

The findings have been broadly divided into five core areas: managing the pilot; implementing the pilot; elements of the pilot; impact and outcomes; and future developments.

Elements of the pilot

Schools and local authorities were asked about the different pilot elements, including: the pilot materials, the Behaviour and Attendance consultants, local and national network meetings, funding and action plans. The findings from this section were:

- The B&A consultant role had developed from the B&A Strand of the Secondary National Strategy and Core Day 4 training. As a result the B&A consultant role had expanded to incorporate the additional responsibility of the SEBS pilot. This meant that the introduction of the SEBS pilot had not had a significant impact on the nature and remit of the B&A consultant role but had increased their workload.
- At the beginning of the pilot the role of the B&A consultant focused more on introducing the pilot and associated materials, supporting schools to understand what the pilot was about and providing support with action planning. As the pilot developed so the B&A consultant role adapted to suit the changing needs of the schools with more of an emphasis on monitoring and review.
- Each local authority arranged network meetings for their pilot schools. The purpose of the meetings was to provide regular opportunity for B&A consultants and schools to disseminate information, share practice, and discuss issues and challenges.
- Network meetings were viewed extremely positively by the B&A consultants and schools who attended them, not only because they facilitated regular opportunities for communication, exchange of practice and networking but also because of the invaluable support they provided to schools.
- All schools were required to write a SEBS action plan before embarking on the pilot

programme. In some instances, action plans were linked with school improvement targets and monitored as part of the schools' annual review cycle. In the main, whilst all schools had completed action plans at the beginning of the pilot, further reference and review during the course of the pilot was minimal.

Managing the pilot

Schools and LAs were asked about how the pilot was managed and coordinated at both local authority and school level. They were also asked about the aims and objectives of the pilot within schools and LAs, how the pilot had been assimilated within existing school and local authority strategies and how it complemented local and national priorities. The findings were:

- A clear delineation of roles in relation to the pilot was important in assigning key responsibilities to secondary strategy managers and B&A consultants in local authorities. This ensured tasks were not overlooked and importantly it laid the foundations for the effective management and coordination of the pilot programme from the start. This approach could be further enhanced by establishing formal systems and structures for teams to communicate, share information and feedback and monitor and evaluate the pilot programme. Key to ensuring this included having regular team meetings and line management meetings, ensuring relevant personnel were copied in to emails, and systemising the provision of formal reports.
- Having a system in place that supported dialogue between local authorities and nationally was valued. This was an important method for keeping local authorities informed about the pilot, its relevance to national policy and any additional information local authority teams felt they needed access to in order to manage the pilot effectively.
- The overall strategic management of the pilot within local authorities tended to be within the remit of the secondary strategy manager. Their responsibilities included: line management of

B&A consultants; advising on strategic level issues in relation to the SEBS pilot; monitoring the progress and development of the pilot and ensuring the pilot was commensurate with national guidelines. The management and coordination of the pilot in schools was the responsibility of the SEBS coordinator. This tended to be a member of the senior leadership team. It was felt that the coordinator role needed to be based within the senior leadership team in order to drive the pilot forward, provide a steer and support a whole-school approach to the implementation of the pilot.

- It seemed important that schools and local authorities facilitated a joined-up approach to establishing the aims and objectives of the pilot in order to ensure not only that they reflected the overall ethos of the SEBS programme but, also that they complemented existing whole-school and local authority aims and objectives.

Implementing the pilot

Schools and local authorities were asked about how the pilot had been implemented, including: how the pilot was introduced, the different approaches to implementing the pilot, the training and support provided throughout the pilot, and monitoring and evaluation activities. The findings were:

- The introduction of the pilot varied between schools. Most schools made explicit reference to the pilot and its terminology, however some schools chose to 'drip-feed' information to staff without referring to the pilot explicitly.
- Most schools had adopted a combination of approaches to the implementation of the pilot. Some had targeted certain year groups such as Year 7, others had targeted certain members of staff, some had opted to deliver the pilot across the curriculum and others had targeted initial implementation of the pilot in subjects such as Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship.
- Although there was little dedicated formal training in SEBS for LA staff, on the whole, B&A consultants reported that they felt well-

supported in their role of implementing the SEBS pilot and that they received sufficient support and guidance from their colleagues, through strong line management and regular opportunities to meet with the secondary strategy manager and other B&A consultants within their authority.

- The extent to which school staff had received training related to the SEBS pilot appeared to vary across schools. Most of the training school staff had received in relation to this area of work was not specifically linked to the SEBS pilot.
- Schools and local authorities used a range of methods to monitor and evaluate the pilot. These included: local network meetings; feedback to and from the B&A consultants as well as more formal monitoring such as school action plans and written reports.

Impact and outcomes

Schools and local authorities were asked about the impact and outcomes of the pilot programme, to consider whether the pilot had made any difference in schools and local authorities and the potential impact of the programme in the future. The findings were:

- Whilst many schools and local authorities felt the SEBS pilot had made a difference they also found it difficult to attribute any impact and outcomes directly to the pilot itself. Respondents felt, rather, that any change was the result of a combination of factors including other programmes of work and local and national initiatives.
- School and local authorities considered potential future impacts of the programme to include: raising standards of achievement; creating a more positive school environment; improving pupil behaviour; improving interactions between pupils and staff; and improving attendance.

Future Developments

Schools and local authorities were asked to consider the future of the programme and outline any plans they had for developing the programme. They were also asked to outline any areas for consideration in the future roll-out of the programme. The findings were:

- The most frequently-identified factor for the future roll-out of the SEBS programme was 'staff training', identified by well over a quarter of school survey respondents, closely followed by the related area of 'staff understanding', identified by just under a quarter of respondents.
- Three key factors identified as important areas for consideration in the future roll-out of the programme were: time; resources, and having the support of the senior management team.
- In the main, interviewees were keen to develop or expand SEBS provision in their school in some way. Anticipated developments ranged from the closer incorporation of SEBS into PSHE, expansion to other year groups, the incorporation of SEBS principles to other subjects in the curriculum through to, at the broadest level, expansion of SEBS awareness to all pupils, parents and the wider community.

Additional Information

Copies of the full report (DCSF-RR003) - priced £4.95 - are available by writing to DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.

Cheques should be made payable to "DfES Priced Publications".

Copies of this Research Brief (DCSF-RB003) are available free of charge from the above address (tel: 0845 60 222 60). Research Briefs and Research Reports can also be accessed at www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/

Further information about this research can be obtained from Sarah Baker, 6D, DCSF, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.