



**Inclusion  
*in* Practice**

**Case Study:**

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**Percy  
Shurmer  
Academy**



# How Percy Shurmer Academy implemented whole-school strategies to support all pupils' social, emotional and mental health

## *A key principle of SEND practice this case study exemplifies:*

Whole-school strategies can play a role in supporting the needs of all pupils, including those with specific learning or SEND needs.

## *At a glance*

- Percy Shurmer Academy has taken a whole-school approach to supporting pupils social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Leaders introduced the myHappymind programme, a neuroscience-based curriculum that teaches pupils how their brain processes emotions and equips them with the language and strategies to regulate their feelings.
- The programme was embedded into PSHE lessons and daily classroom practice, and over time leaders complemented this with further resources and strategies.
- Since implementing these strategies, the school has seen improvements in pupil behaviour, and teacher confidence meeting pupils' needs.



# Background information

Percy Shurmer Academy (PSA) is a two-form entry primary school in central Birmingham.



# What challenges were you trying to address?

Teachers and leaders at PSA set out to develop an effective whole-school approach to supporting pupils' social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH), as well as those with particular SEMH needs.

Their goals were to:

- Identify and implement evidence-based practice to have this whole-school impact.
- Implement an approach that was embedded in the classroom, so emotional development was a core part of learning.
- Be proactive, and anticipate and prepare for needs before they escalated.
- Sustain the approach over time with ongoing coaching and professional development for staff.





## What challenges were you trying to address? (continued)

### *How the project started:*

Staff recognised a sharp rise in pupils with particular SEMH needs following the Covid-19 pandemic. Behaviour logs and safeguarding records demonstrated an increase in behaviour-related incidents, linked to dysregulation and disengagement in pupils. Teachers and leaders observed that pupils were finding it harder to manage their emotions, and this was negatively affecting their day-to-day interactions.

Leaders gathered a range of data to better understand the underlying issues. This included baseline pupil and staff surveys, teacher observations, pupil voice, and behaviour-tracking assessments like the Antecedent Behaviour Chart and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires. Through this process leaders identified patterns:

- Many pupils lacked the vocabulary and tools to talk about their emotions or manage them effectively.
- Emotional dysregulation was particularly evident during unstructured times of the day, and there was noticeable low-level disruption, emotional withdrawal, and challenging behaviours within the classroom environment.
- Teachers had a gap in their confidence, with only 15% feeling equipped to support pupils with SEMH needs.

## What challenges were you trying to address? (continued)

### *The approach:*

The school's approach was shaped through collaboration with external specialists who were already familiar with the school's context. By engaging educational psychologists, SEND consultants, and SEMH intervention providers, leaders were able to quickly establish a trusted critical friendship that supported the shaping and quality assurance of the work .

A key influence on leaders' thinking was research and guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation, which outlines how:

- Social and emotional learning interventions can lead to an improve of up to four months in academic outcomes.
- Schools should prioritise the explicit teaching of self-regulation, embed emotional literacy in everyday routines, and take a universal approach to social and emotional learning that supports all pupils.





## What challenges were you trying to address? (continued)

### *The approach (continued):*

Based on the evidence, leaders acknowledged that targeted or isolated interventions were insufficient. They intended to develop a more ambitious, whole-school approach, which positioned emotional development as equally important as academic achievement.

Leaders explored different programmes and chose myHappyMind as the cornerstone of their whole-school approach. This aims to use a neuroscience-based specialist curriculum to help pupils understand their brains, emotions, and behaviours. The programme features content designed for children, including modules to help them understand how to manage emotions, build self-esteem, and build positive relationships. This is taught in class by teachers using a digital platform, and there is an app available for parents and carers to further support children at home. Leaders selected this programme due to the link with the evidence base and the school's values. Specifically, it:

- Focused on building self-regulation and emotional literacy.
- Has a universal design, ensuring it would support every pupil in the school, not just those with particular SEMH needs.

The programme was launched to coincide with the start of the academic year.

# What does it look like in practice?

## Professional development

At the start of the academic year, all staff took part in whole-school professional development to launch the work. Crucially, this was followed by additional training ahead of each new unit in the *myHappymind* curriculum, to ensure sustained and meaningful implementation. Sessions explored the neuroscience of emotional regulation, introduced the myHappymind framework, and demonstrated how to embed the new strategies and well-being zones into daily classroom life.

This was supported by ongoing coaching, observations, and refresher sessions intended to maintain consistency and respond to evolving pupils' needs.

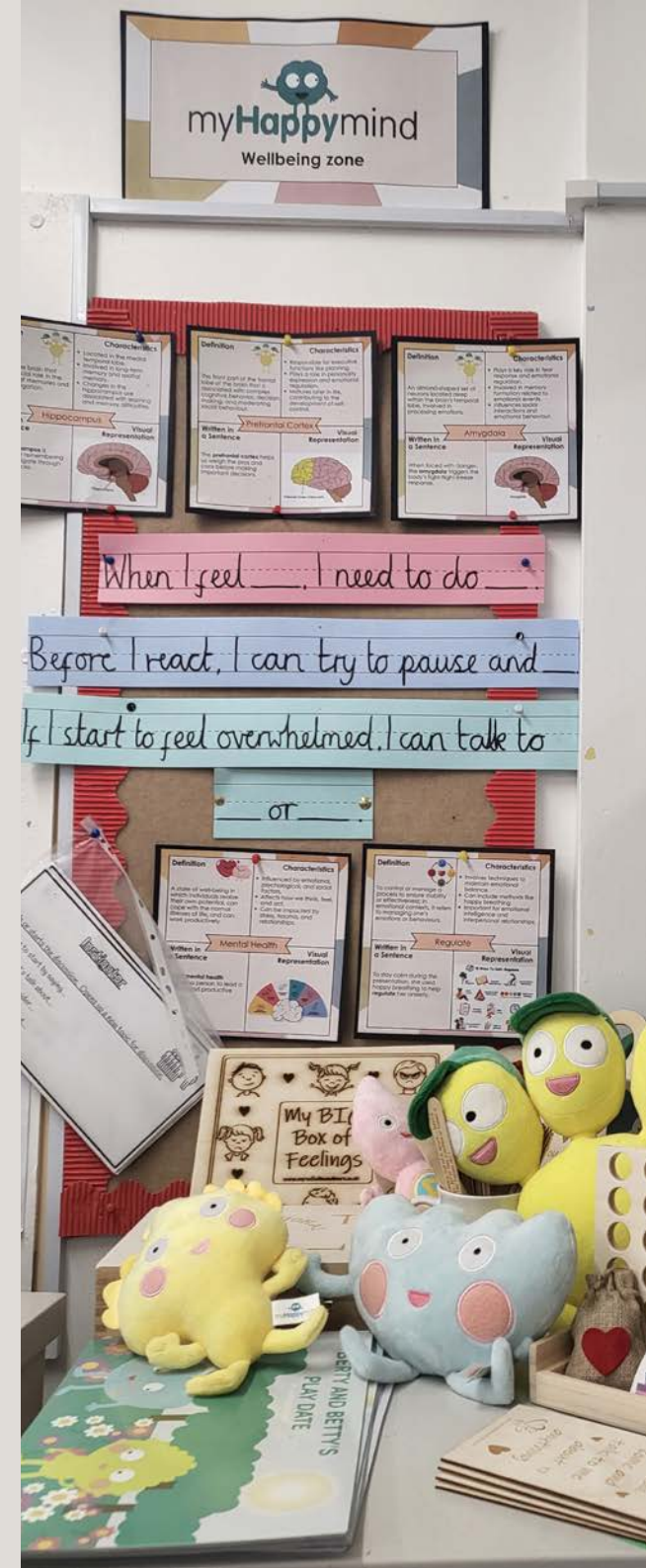
Two teaching assistants were also selected to train as Level 5 SEMH champions. Their role includes leading in-house training, modelling best practice, and supporting colleagues with implementing each new unit.

## Classroom practice

*myHappymind* is explicitly taught within PSHE lessons and continually reinforced through daily routines and adult-child interactions. This work is treated as part of a teacher's core role, so that emotional literacy and self-regulation is embedded into everyday practice.

For example, teachers explicitly teach key vocabulary related to *myHappymind*. The inclusion team recognised the vital role that key vocabulary plays in enabling pupils to fully access and engage with the programme.

Following a review of the *myHappymind* planning and discussions with the delivery team, leaders identified five essential vocabulary words that underpin the core content and concepts. To promote consistency and accessibility, leaders developed Frayer Model vocabulary sheets tailored to both key stage 1 and key stage 2, supporting explicit teaching and deeper understanding of these terms.



Your thoughts...



The strength that I have used recently is kindness because I helped a new person in our school feel welcome.

## What does it look like in practice? (continued)

### *Parental engagement*

The school focused on creating partnerships with families on emotional development. They ran parental workshops introducing the *myHappymind* programme and engaged parents with the *myHappymind* app. Leaders report that this made it easier for families to mirror and reinforce the language and strategies of emotional regulation at home.

### *Additional resources*

Additional resources provided a tangible, physical element to support self-regulation, helping to bring the underlying concepts in *myHappymind* to life in a meaningful way.

To complement the *myHappymind* programme, PSA invested in bespoke *Cup of Calm and More* kits for every classroom and key communal spaces, including the library and reception. These kits aim to offer pupils high quality sensory tools, calming strategies, and visual prompts to support independent emotional regulation.

## What does it look like in practice? (continued)

### Additional resources (continued)

Another key feature of the strategy was the creation of well-being zones across the school. These spaces were carefully designed to provide calm, structured areas where pupils could self-regulate and reflect. The zones feature:

- *myHappyMind* vocabulary to reinforce emotional language.
- Clear self-regulation strategies, including calm-down sequences and reflection prompts.
- Sensory toys such as breathing cards and different scents.
- A five-word core vocabulary model based on the Frayer Model to further support emotional expression.

### Financial implications

Funding from the Birmingham local authority enabled PSA to implement these whole-school SEMH strategies without drawing on the core school budget. Financial investment included:

- £5,388 + VAT for the *myHappyMind* programme (licences, training, and resources),
- £2,000 + VAT for the “*Cup of Calm and More*” kits (£100 per box, placed in each classroom and shared area),
- Costs associated with the development of well-being zones and emotional vocabulary resources,
- Training for two teaching assistants to be Level 5 SEMH champions.

Leaders report that many of the resources are reusable, and the in-house expertise of SEMH champions reduces future dependency on external training providers.





## What has been the impact?

**Behaviour trackers, including Antecedent Behaviour Chart logs, have recorded a notable decrease in SEMH-related incidents since the whole school strategy was implemented. This indicates that pupils are learning to self-regulate more effectively.**

This change has coincided with increased use of well-being zones and the *Cup of Calm and More* kits, indicating increased awareness of these resources among pupils.

Teachers observe pupils are using emotional vocabulary from the *myHappymind* curriculum. They report that pupils are better able to name their emotions, reflect on them, and choose appropriate strategies to help themselves feel calm and focused.

Staff surveys have shown increased confidence in supporting pupils with SEMH needs. This has risen by 15% before the approach was implemented, to 100%. This indicates every adult in the school feels equipped and empowered to respond to emotional needs effectively. Leaders have linked this result to the sustained professional development, coaching, and a clear, shared approach.



## Next steps

**Leaders are focusing on deepening and expanding their whole-school SEMH approach. This includes:**

- Providing further professional development opportunities to build on staff confidence and develop more advanced strategies for managing complex emotional regulation needs.
- Continue adding to well-being spaces, including incorporating enhanced sensory tools, for example scents to help regulate emotions.
- PSA have begun sharing their experience with local networks and SENCO groups. They are exploring scaling and adapting this approach for other mainstream schools in the region.

# The key factors that make it work

Leaders have identified the following key behaviours and content which have made this approach effective in their setting.

- **Whole-school commitment to emotional well-being:** putting SEMH at the heart of teaching and learning, and embedding emotional well-being into daily school life.
- **Explicit teaching of emotional literacy in classroom:** Leaders report *myHappyMind* has been a structured, research informed, curriculum that ensures pupils learn how their brains process emotions and practical self-regulation strategies.
- **Practical self-regulation resources in every learning environment:** Prioritising accessible, structured tools that empower pupils to manage emotions independently.
- **High quality professional development and staff coaching:** Leaders report this has made SEMH a natural and sustained part of pedagogy rather than a separate intervention.
- **Pupil agency and inclusive design:** Key to the approach has been universal strategies intending to benefit all pupils, rather than singling out those with SEMH needs.
- **Parental involvement:** Leaders have prioritised parent engagement intending to reinforcing strategies at home, and lead to home-school continuity.
- **Leadership plays a pivotal role:** Leaders aim to model emotional literacy in their own interactions and consistently reinforce the message that SEMH is a priority for every pupil, every day.





## Advice for school leaders

**Leaders at PSA have reflected on the lessons they learnt through this process, to support other school leaders exploring SEMH approaches in their settings.**

**What worked well** was embedding SEMH into everyday routines rather than treating it as a standalone intervention. This approach created sustainability. Pupils began to take ownership of their own regulation, using well-being spaces and vocabulary unprompted.

**Challenges emerged**, particularly early on, when some staff felt tension between delivering academic content and investing time in SEMH. In response, leaders revisited the research, reminding ourselves that self-regulated learners do not just behave better, they achieve more academically. Leaders report that over time teachers saw the impact for themselves, confidence and buy-in grew.

**What did not work** was expecting quick wins. Building emotional literacy, especially in younger pupils, takes time, modelling, and scaffolding. Leaders learned that patience and consistency are essential, and that even small steps forward should be celebrated.

**If they were to do it again**, they would phase the rollout more deliberately. Giving staff the space to build confidence before scaling up would have smoothed the transition. More modelled lessons and opportunities for peer observation would have helped teachers embed strategies more deeply and more quickly.

## Further reading and resources

Leaders have shared some examples of resources they consulted throughout this process, which they would recommend other school and trust leaders to consider in their own contexts:

- See [The Education Endowment Foundation's summary of emotional and social learning](#) to learn more about the impact of interventions that seek to meet pupils' particular emotional and social needs.
- See [myHappymind's website](#) if you are interested to learn more about the programme the school selected.
- See [this video from The Teacher's Toolkit](#) to find out more about how the Frayer Model the school uses to support pupils to build their emotional vocabulary.



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