



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Reintegreat School Toolkit

Developing Emotional Intelligence in Pupils

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognise, understand, express, and manage emotions appropriately, while respecting the feelings of others. It is a vital life skill linked to:

- Positive behaviour and relationships.
- Improved self-regulation and resilience.
- Greater academic success and problem-solving ability.
- Long-term wellbeing and employability.

Children can learn emotional intelligence skills at any age, but they need **consistent modelling, vocabulary, and opportunities to practise**.

2. Core Skills of Emotional Intelligence

Based on evidence-informed approaches, EI is built on five key areas:

1. **Self-awareness** – recognising one's emotions and their impact.
2. **Self-regulation** – managing emotions constructively.
3. **Social awareness** – understanding others' feelings and perspectives.
4. **Relationship skills** – building healthy, respectful connections.
5. **Responsible decision-making** – making constructive choices.

3. Building Blocks for Emotional Literacy

A. Labelling Emotions

- Use emotional words daily ("angry", "disappointed", "proud", "excited").
- Model identifying emotions: *"It looks like you feel sad – am I right?"*
- Build a broad emotion vocabulary: help children distinguish between *sad, disappointed, upset*.
- Use visual supports: emotion fans, posters, photo boards.

B. Showing Empathy

- Draw attention to kindness and how it made them feel.
- Use books, films, and real-life examples to explore how characters feel.
- Validate feelings – avoid dismissing: *"I understand you're upset we can't go*

out yet – it's hard when things don't go our way."

- Use WIN prompts: *I Wonder... I'm Imagining... I'm Noticing...*

C. Modelling Appropriate Expression

- Adults should narrate their own emotions appropriately: *"I feel frustrated when I lose something, but I take a deep breath to calm down."*
- Encourage children to use "I statements": *"I feel upset when you shout at me."*
- Offer alternatives to aggression: drawing, talking, using calm spaces.

D. Teaching Coping Skills

- Breathing strategies (bubble breaths, 5-finger breathing).
- Calm Boxes with sensory items (stress toys, blankets, colouring, cards).
- Movement breaks or mindfulness exercises.
- Reflection strategies: *"What could we do differently next time?"*

E. Problem-Solving

- Guide children to brainstorm multiple solutions.
- Weigh up pros and cons before choosing.
- Coach, don't solve: build independence in resolving conflicts.

F. Everyday Practice

- Discuss feelings in books, films, and class experiences.
- Use reflection times: *"How do you think that made them feel?"*
- Celebrate kindness and empathy alongside academic achievements.

4. Classroom Strategies

Positive Environment

- Use calm, non-confrontational tones (no finger pointing, wagging, or intimidating postures).
- Demonstrate the difference between being *complimentary* and being *patronising*.
- Create classroom displays with emotive words and images.

Tools & Activities

- **Emotion Fans** – allow pupils to show feelings non-verbally.
- **Emotions Alphabet Game** – think of emotional words for each letter.
- **Kind & Caring Jar** – children write acts of kindness/emotion words and add them. Review as a class.
- **Photo Wall of Emotions** – pupils act out emotions for visual prompts.
- **Daily Check-in** – start the day with the emotions jar or quick mood check.

Empathy Development

- Encourage children to notice changes in peers: *“Have you seen James looks quiet today – what could that mean?”*
- Highlight when children use emotive language: *“I like how you explained you were ‘frustrated’ instead of just saying ‘mad’.”*
- Use “I understand” phrases to show empathy.

5. Staff Guidance

- ✓ Label emotions explicitly in everyday routines.
- ✓ Model emotional expression and regulation.
- ✓ Validate and empathise with children’s feelings.
- ✓ Use visuals and tools for children who struggle verbally.
- ✓ Provide structured opportunities for kindness and empathy.
- ✓ Teach and rehearse coping skills in calm moments, not just crises.
- ✓ Praise emotional literacy as much as academic progress.

6. Useful Frameworks & Resources

- **CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning)** – SEL Competency Framework.
- **DfE Mental Health & Behaviour Guidance.**
- **YoungMinds** – strategies for supporting emotional wellbeing in schools.
- **Anna Freud Centre** – Emotionally Based School Avoidance Toolkit.

