

**Improving the emotional wellbeing  
and emotional literacy of pupils  
through use of 5 point scale – a whole  
school approach.**



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**September 2022**

## What are we doing?

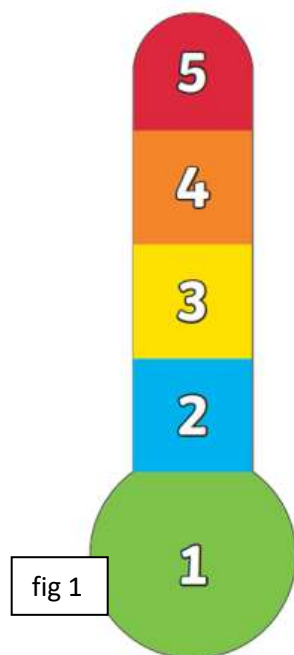
As a result of emerging patterns of need, at Zetland Primary School, we decided to implement a new approach to support emotional wellbeing across school from EYFS through to KS2. This plan is to be read in conjunction with the school behaviour policy.

The following plan has been created in collaboration with support from the Local Authority with our SENDCo, Alex Herd, working closely with Christine Sketchley (Education Psychologist).

The plan refers to a behavioural support tool known as the Incredible 5-Point Scale<sup>1</sup>, created by Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis (2003). It provides a visual representation of social behaviours, emotions, and abstract ideas. It is a simple scale used to teach social understanding. Kari stresses, that "the scale is about breaking social and emotional concepts into 5 parts. It is a teaching tool". The tool is recognised with a strong evidence base supporting its application. It has been recommended specifically in the past for people with social communication needs such as ASD, however we feel that its simplicity and clarity make it a sensible base for our whole school needs.

The main principle of our whole school approach centres around the visual of a 5 point thermometer scale (fig 1). The graphic has been chosen for its simplicity and neutral design.

Alongside the image, we need the pupils to understand and attach meaning to each of the numbers, recognising them as points on a scale that we move through with our emotional regulation. Central to this principle is that children understand that ALL people move through these stages and that they are all useful and appropriate at the right time, but that problems occur if we spend too long stuck in one of the stages. An example of the stages can be found below.



### Example of stages

5 – Emotional shutdown, unresponsive to others, crying, physical outburst, anger or aggression, loss of control , adrenaline release, unable to focus

4 – Shouting, refusal to engage, heightened anxiety, lack of focus

3- Excited, stressed, fizzy, fleeting attention, change in body language

2- Alert, ready, responsive

1-Calm, relaxed, recharging

<sup>1</sup><https://www.supportincornwall.org.uk/kb5/cornwall/directory/advice.page?id=tSXlhdoOOMc>

### **Why are we doing it?**

We know that consistency of approach is very important for children and in times of emotional need the more simple and clear the steps are, the easier they are to process. If we teach and model the same method right from the start of school then we hope this will become embedded over time where we hear both adults and children using the same language to describe how they are feeling. We will also share this with parents so that consistency can be continued at home, inviting parents to use the same language and pictures of the 5 point scale to help communicate with their child about feelings and emotional regulation. Parents may choose to create their own Wellbeing Toolkit at home around the same 5 choices as described in further detail below.

### **What does it look like in action?**

**System** – (Whole School) – scales displayed in classrooms and communal areas. Members of staff familiar with principles and model for all (not just SEND). It is important that children recognise that we ALL have mental health and we ALL have mental health needs that need supporting. All staff will be given a small 5 point scale laminated card available to use.

As a class we need to discuss this scale at an appropriate level when introducing it, sharing ideas as appropriate and pointing out both how the individual might feel and how they might look to others whilst at each stage. Children will also need to know how best to support a friend or peer if they recognise them sticking at an unhelpful point on the scale. The above work is best placed around PSHE lessons, whole class discussions where teaching moments arise and whole school assembly (i.e. focus for stars, pupil of the week, good examples of modelling). Teachers may find it useful to have smaller versions of the 5 point scales on pupil tables so that they are easily visible.

All areas (classrooms and library area) will have a 'Wellbeing Toolkit' (fig 2). The contents of this toolkit will follow the same structure but may differ in terms of content depending on the age of the children in the class. The toolkit will contain 5 choices to help a person (pupil or adult) to regulate themselves to a lower number on the scale. These choices will be labelled as 'Breathe', 'Move', 'Distract', 'Create' and 'Touch'. Time will be needed to teach children how to use each element of the toolkit successfully. The scale and wellbeing toolkit is for EVERYONE in class, and is not to be seen as belonging to an individual. This reinforces that we all, including adults, need to regulate ourselves at times.

**Group** – Some children in school may find the concept of the 5 point scale a difficult one to understand at first, requiring further time, explanation and modelling of this at a time when they feel calm and receptive. It may be beneficial for these group sessions to be led by a familiar adult with a confident approach towards the concept. This may be an area where we can draw on staff with more specialist skills. It may be appropriate for children to be grouped from across classes for this intervention.

**Individual** – It is expected that a small number of our children, most probably those with an identified SEND need, will require individual support to both understand and access the concept of the 5 point scale. For these children the scale can be completed with trusted adults who know the child well. This can then form part of a behaviour plan alongside other

SEND documentation. In this instance, it would be best for the child to have their own copy of the 5 point scale, documenting how the child feels at each of the 5 points and also how they would look to others at these times. This would allow adults to support the child as they recognise behaviours suggesting regulation time is needed. For these children, it is anticipated that further support will be required to help the child identify when they are moving through the scale and when a regulation activity would be beneficial and why.

<b>Wellbeing Toolkit</b> (example contents)	fig 2
<b>Breathe</b> (breathing exercises, bubbles)	
<b>Move</b> (action cards, walk to the bathroom, theraband)	
<b>Touch</b> (fidget, squishy, brush)	
<b>Create</b> (playdough, draw, build)	
<b>Distract</b> (watch, puzzle, listen to a song, drink of water)	

### **What will happen if a child is having difficulty regulating their emotions?**

We hope in the fullness of time that children become more confident and independent in recognising as they move through the emotional stages, and will request to use the wellbeing toolkit in these instances. However, school staff will always be alert to supporting children with their emotional needs and may prompt a child to use the wellbeing toolkit if they notice an escalation. It may be appropriate for the adult to share this verbally with the child, or it may be less inflammatory to use a non-verbal cue such as pointing to the scale image.

### **What if the child is using the wellbeing toolkit as an alternative to lessons rather than to support an emotional need?**

Praise and modelling will support children in understanding the purpose behind the wellbeing toolkit, although it is expected that children will begin with a natural curiosity to the activities/equipment available. It may be beneficial to have some sessions where children can explore the contents. If a child has chosen (or been guided to) the Wellbeing Toolkit, it is recommended that they use the equipment with a time limit e.g. "Let's try this for 5 minutes and then we can try again". It is recommended that when a child is repeatedly choosing to use the Wellbeing Toolkit that this is recorded to help identify any patterns that may be triggering this response.

### **What if the Wellbeing Toolkit doesn't work?**

At Zetland, our Willow Room is the designated space for emotional wellbeing work. The space is used for our Inside Out sessions with pupils and parents, and is also where we spend time working with groups or individuals around their emotional literacy. The reasons for this are it's quiet location at the end of school, its proximity to the toilet facilities, and most importantly it's link to our outside quiet space. We understand the benefit that the

outdoors can have in improving our mental health and want to use this space in supporting our children. If a child has found that regulating their emotions within the classroom setting is too challenging, then a familiar and trusted adult will accompany the child to the Willow Room where they can take the time they need to regulate with both privacy and dignity. Within the Willow Room there will also be a Wellbeing Toolkit to access, although alongside this there are further options linked to the outside space such as nurturing our plants or engaging in physical activity.

### **What next?**

The above steps outlined are designed to support the majority of pupils in our care, however there may be specific pupils who require more specialist support. In this case, the evidence and record keeping to show the pupil's response to the above will be helpful in seeking support from the Local Authority Resource and Support panel.