

The Beacon Pilot Evaluation: Final Report

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1. Introduction

Overview

The Beacon Pilot Project took place across a family of schools run by the Coventry Diocese Board of Education (DBE). It involved working with the renowned Mulberry Bush School (MBS) – a charity with specialist expertise in educational and psychotherapeutic support for children who have experienced significant trauma in their young lives. The aim was to establish and embed a sustainable approach to the social and emotional development, mental health, and wellbeing of children and young people, both in terms of specialist provision for individuals needing particular support and in terms of universal provision to support the entire school community.

The core components were a series of activities and professional development opportunities, designed to: consolidate and enhance staff knowledge in the area; build competencies and self-reflective awareness among staff with respect to meeting pupils' needs; and provide supervision for family support workers in schools. The pilot project was intended to build capability and capacity within the school community, rather than providing external, specialist resources for addressing the needs of individual young people.

The project included a number of inputs over 24 months, such as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) delivered by MBS, Family Support Workers (FSWs) in each school, and a systematic programme of guidance, support, and supervision through partnership visits and group. The expectation was that these would generate sustainable changes that would lead to more emotionally healthy schools that were responsive to emerging issues and more resilient to individual and organisational changes.

Five primary schools (including one junior school) took part in the project, ranging in size from 100 pupils to over 600 pupils.

It is important to note that all of the activities took place in the two years following the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the implementation of the planned Beacon project activities and the research evaluation needed to be adjusted and reconfigured as appropriate to respond to the changing circumstances and needs of the stakeholders.

Beacon Pilot Project components

The commitments required from schools in order to be part of the Beacon Pilot included:

- Mapping development and practice (e.g., interventions) for pupil social and emotional wellbeing, together with staff wellbeing
- Actively engaging governors in school development plans relating to the project, including ambitions for reflective practice
- Actively engaging the wider staff group in the school's commitment to the project
- Sharing participation in the pilot with stakeholders, including parent/carers and pupils
- Recruiting FSWs and planning appropriate induction
- Facilitating and promoting networking among headteachers in relation to the project
- Facilitating and promoting networking among governors in relation to the project.

Direct CPD inputs from MBS included:

- Training for whole staff on 'making sense of behaviour', 'attachment', and 'neuroscience and trauma'
- Emotion Coaching (x 2 sessions)
- Reflective Seminar (x 7 sessions)
- Group Supervision of FSWs (x 5 sessions)
- Group Supervision of Project Leads (x 5 sessions)
- Partner visits to each school (x 3 time points, six visits per year).

Project development inputs from DBE included half-termly Advisory Group meetings and termly Project Board meetings. Governance and accountability were ensured through coordinating the above with formal reporting by FSW and MBS on pre-agreed measures, alongside day-to-day feedback and ongoing dialogue between DBE, MBS, and the project team.

2. Research Approach

Aims and objectives

The University of Sussex evaluation of the Beacon Pilot Project involved a mixed-methods investigation that was designed to:

- describe and understand the project activities;
- characterise their impact and reach
 - considering socio-relational and emotional experience as well as changes in knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy; and
- clarify the facilitators of, as well as obstacles to, success in implementing, consolidating, and building upon the project activities.

The core research activities were developed within a co-production framework that involved working collaboratively with stakeholders in the project to ensure that the methods were meaningful and relevant for all those taking part. The key strands were:

- Developing a model for exploration and consultation on all the above research aims, arriving at a research design with suitable components for quantitative analysis (via questionnaire measures) and qualitative analysis (via interviews and focus groups);
- Providing guidance on implementing and administering questionnaire measures within schools, and assistance with analysing all data arising from these; and
- Carrying out and thematically analysing qualitative data from interviews and focus groups with practitioners, young people, and relevant stakeholders.

Conceptual background

The research evaluation drew upon the researchers' extensive body of work concerning the social and emotional development of children and young people, and the application of this knowledge to understanding and improving support for social relationships, mental health, and wellbeing in schools. Importantly, the researchers have previously demonstrated how children's patterns of behaviour are connected with their emotional experiences, their cognition about themselves and about the world, and their motivations and goals. All of these, in turn, must be considered and analysed in the context of the children's social relationships with peers and with adults in their lives. Thus, in the context of school development, it is important to consider how interventions focused on social and emotional wellbeing relate not just to the experiences of individual children with difficulties, but also to the experiences of stakeholders in the wider school community, including all children in the school, all staff (not just those with specific pastoral roles), and all parents/carers. Illustrative examples of relevant reading material concerning this work can be found in the bibliography.

3. Methods

Overview and timeline

The research evaluation involved:

- Questionnaires completed by pupils, by staff, and by parents/carers at three time points (late Autumn 2021 to early Spring 2022, Summer 2022, and Spring 2023);
- Two rounds of in-depth paired interviews with Project Leads (PLs) and Family Support Workers (FSWs) in each school (Spring 2022 and Spring 2023); and
- Site visits including focus groups with staff, pupils, and parents/carers (Summer 2023).

Ethical review was completed by the University of Sussex Cross-Schools Science and Technical Research Ethics Committee, and approval was gained before data collection started, reference ER/LMR24/10.

Questionnaire measures

Pupils

There were 227 participants at the first time point (T1), 217 at T2, and 74 at T3, and each had a unique ID number that was tracked across the three time points to allow for direct comparisons.¹ Participants were in Years 4 and 5 at T1 and T2 and in Years 5 and 6 at T3. The gender split recorded at T1 was 45.9% boy, 48% girl, and 6.1% preferring not to say.

The numbers of participants split by school was as follows:

PUPILS	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
School 1	56	50	
School 2	13		
School 3	55	55	27
School 4	49	49	47
School 5	54	63	
Total	227	217	74

¹ Note that only the numbers of pupils providing sufficient data for analysis are included here.

Pupils completed three measures at each time point:

- **School Ethos** (adapted from Banerjee, Weare, & Farr, 2014), ten items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “Pupils are caring towards each other”, good reliability (internal consistency $\alpha > .70$ at all three time points)
- **Social Inclusion** (adapted from Banerjee, Weare, & Farr, 2014), four items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “Other pupils say kind things to me”, good reliability (internal consistency $\alpha > .70$ at all three time points)
- **Wellbeing** (Stirling Children’s Wellbeing Scale, Liddle & Carter, 2015), 12 items scored from 1 to 5, e.g., “I think there are many things that I can be proud of”, excellent reliability ($\alpha > .85$ at all three time points).

Parents/carers

Participants included 31 at T1, 139 at T2, and 101 at T3. Unfortunately, it was not possible to match individuals across time points, so analyses are conducted at a cohort level, recognising that some of the participants will have been the same across various time points whereas others may have been different. In addition, due to a clerical error, the School ID was missing from Time 1 response sheets.

The numbers of participants split by school was as follows:

PARENTS/CARERS	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
School 1		18	
School 2		6	1
School 3		23	3
School 4		18	29
School 5		74	68
Total	31	139	101

Parents/carers completed three measures at each time point:

- **School Ethos** (adapted from Banerjee, Weare, & Farr, 2014), nine items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “Pupils are caring towards each other”, excellent reliability (internal consistency $\alpha > .90$ at all three time points)
- **School Support** (bespoke items adapted from staff survey, see below), eight items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “The school helps children to access appropriate support for mental health and emotional wellbeing”, excellent reliability (internal consistency $\alpha > .90$ at all three time points)
- **Sense of Community** (bespoke items adapted from measures in previous school-based evaluation work), six items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “I feel connected and part of the school community”, excellent reliability ($\alpha > .90$ at all three time points).

Staff

Participants included 76 at T1, 37 at T2, and 74 at T3. Unfortunately, it was not possible to match individuals across time points, so analyses are conducted at a cohort level, recognising that some of the participants will have been the same across various time points whereas others may have been different.

The numbers of participants split by school was as follows:

STAFF	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
School 1	15	10	4
School 2	13	1	4
School 3	14	4	18
School 4	20	8	19
School 5	14	14	29
Total	76	37	74

Staff completed three measures at each time point:

- **School Ethos** (adapted from Banerjee, Weare, & Farr, 2014), ten items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “Pupils are caring towards each other”, excellent reliability (internal consistency $\alpha > .85$ at all three time points)
- **School Awareness and Response** (adapted from Banerjee, Roberts, & Williams, 2017, and from the wellbeing framework from Anna Freud, n.d.), six items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “Staff in my school respond appropriately to pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing needs”, good reliability (internal consistency $\alpha > .75$ at all three time points)
- **Personal Confidence** (adapted from Banerjee, Roberts, & Williams, 2017, and from the wellbeing framework from Anna Freud, n.d.), four items scored from 1 to 4, e.g., “I feel confident about supporting children who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health and emotional wellbeing”, excellent reliability ($\alpha > .85$ at all three time points)
- **Wellbeing** (Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, Ng Fat et al., 2017), seven items scored from 1 to 5, e.g., “I have been feeling optimistic about the future”, good reliability ($\alpha > .68$ at all three time points).

All items from the quantitative measures are provided in Appendix A.

Interviews and focus groups

All five schools were able to accommodate paired interviews with PLs and FSWs in Spring 2022 and Spring 2023. However, note that in Spring 2023, two interviews with were FSW only due to changes of roles for the PLs, and two interviews were with PLs only due to turnover in the FSW role.

Questions in the paired interviews focused on a detailed consideration of the commitments made by the schools in relation to the various strands of the Beacon project. There was an initial consideration of existing practices and engagement with different services, and of how the Beacon project connected with these. Changes were considered in relation to the engagement of all staff, the development of the FSW role, participation of students and parents/carers, the connections with governors, and the networking among headteachers. Probes were used to consider connections and facilitators in relation to all of these. A list of illustrative questions is presented in Appendix B.

Four schools were able to accommodate site visits in Summer 2023. In two of the schools, we were able to hold focus groups for staff members, pupils, and parents/carers. One of the other schools could accommodate an interview with a member of senior leadership team, combined with a pupil focus group. The final school was able to accommodate a pupil focus group and a parents/carers focus group, but the staff focus group was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances on the day of the visit.

Questions in the pupil focus groups focused on pupils' experiences of school life overall, and the factors that they associated with helping people in school feel good, and making a positive difference when things went wrong. Specific questions about the added role of FSWs were also included. For parent/carer and staff focus groups, questions related to participants' perceptions of if and how the different elements of the Beacon project were making a difference for children and young people, for families, and for the school overall. These included questions about training and reflective practice (particular for staff focus groups) and about FSW (for both staff and parent/carer focus groups). Lists of illustrative questions for the pupil, parent/carer, and staff focus groups are presented in Appendix C.

Following transcription, the qualitative data from the paired interviews and focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis, following the stages recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), i.e., moving from familiarisation with the data and initial coding through to generating, reviewing, and defining themes, and selection of exemplars to illustrate the themes and subthemes. The analysis was primarily inductive, drawing out key themes and subthemes emerging from the data, but also included deductive elements based upon our previous research and our ongoing work with the MBS.

Please note that considerations and questions regarding practical details of project participation (e.g., arrangements for school visits) did get raised at different points throughout the pilot project, but these were reported back to the project team as appropriate and at the relevant times. The same was true of school-specific issues with staffing (most notably loss of a FSW during the pilot), which in some cases were significant matters of concern. However, notwithstanding the importance of those practical issues, the present evaluation report concentrates on the impact and reach of the project activities in relation to the social and emotional development, mental health, and wellbeing of children and young people.

4. Results

Please note that the interim findings from the evaluation were presented in Summer 2022 and reported by Coventry Diocesan Board of Education's (DBE) in their update on The Beacon Project in Autumn 2022. These are not repeated here. Instead, the focus is on the key results from the analysis of change over time with regard to the summary scores derived from the questionnaires, and the key insights from the analysis of data from the two rounds of paired interviews and the end-of-project focus groups with pupils, parents/carers, and staff.

Questionnaire analysis

As noted in the Method section above, the reliability estimates for the various measures were good or excellent for all informants (pupils, parents/carers, and staff) at all three time points. Participants were responding to the questions in a reliable and internally consistent way.

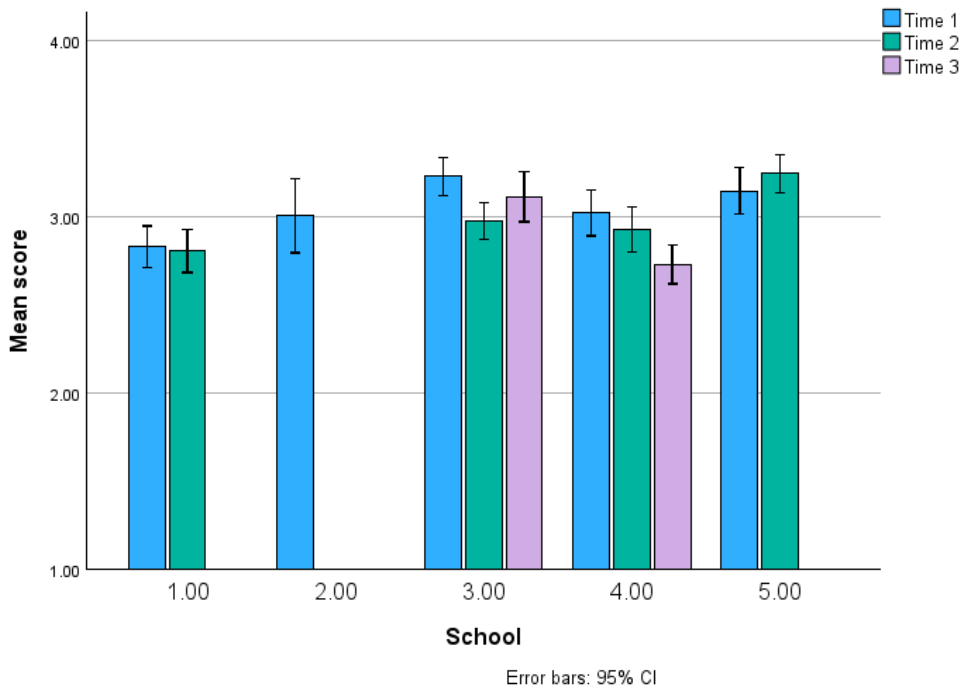
Pupils

Because pupils were individually matched across time points, we were able to undertake fine-grained analysis of changes over time to ascertain if there were overall changes in pupil experiences of School Ethos, Social Inclusion, and Wellbeing. Please note that because schools varied in if and how many pupils were able to complete questionnaires at the three timepoints, we analysed changes between T1 and T2 (data from four schools) separately from changes between T1 and T3 (data from two schools).

In all cases, we used mixed-design analysis of variance with Time (T1 vs. T2 or T1 vs. T3) as the within-subject variable, and School and Gender as the between-subjects variables. Preliminary analysis showed no interaction of Time with Gender. We followed up significant interaction effects of Time with School by making pairwise comparisons of time points within each school. As shown in Figure 1a, 1b, and 1c below, there were only modest differences between time points overall.

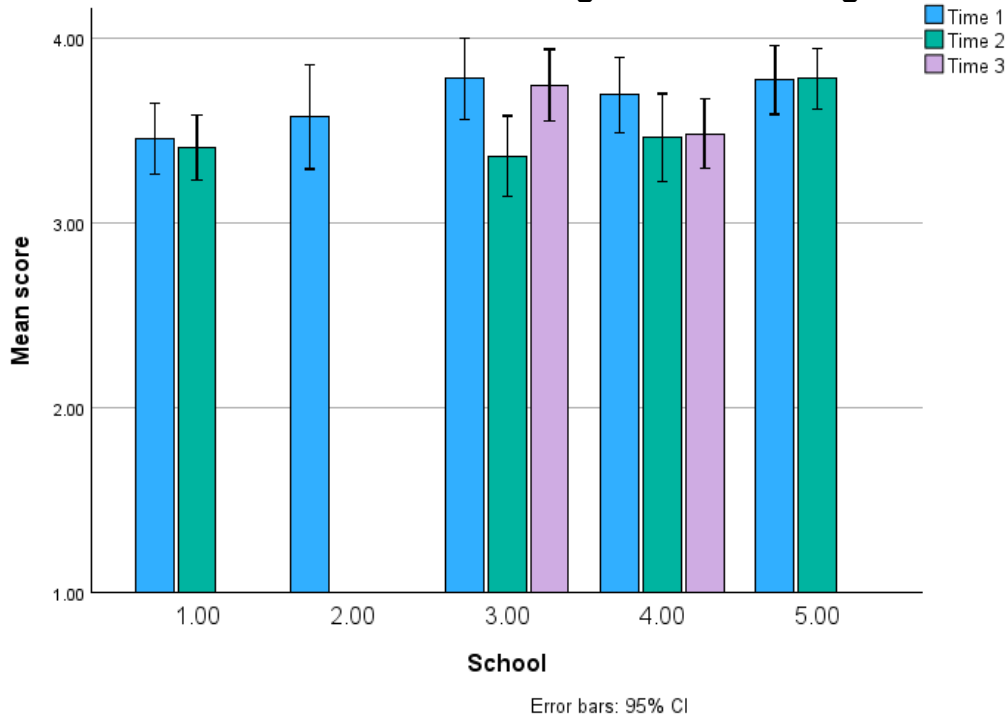
For the comparison of School Ethos between T1 and T2, there was an interaction of Time and School, $F(3, 160) = 3.87, p = .010$, with the only statistically significant pairwise comparison being a drop in School Ethos scores for School 3. For the comparison of School Ethos between T1 and T3, there was again an interaction of Time and School, $F(1, 51) = 7.81, p = .007$, with the only statistically significant pairwise comparison being a drop in School Ethos scores for School 4.

Figure 1a. School Ethos

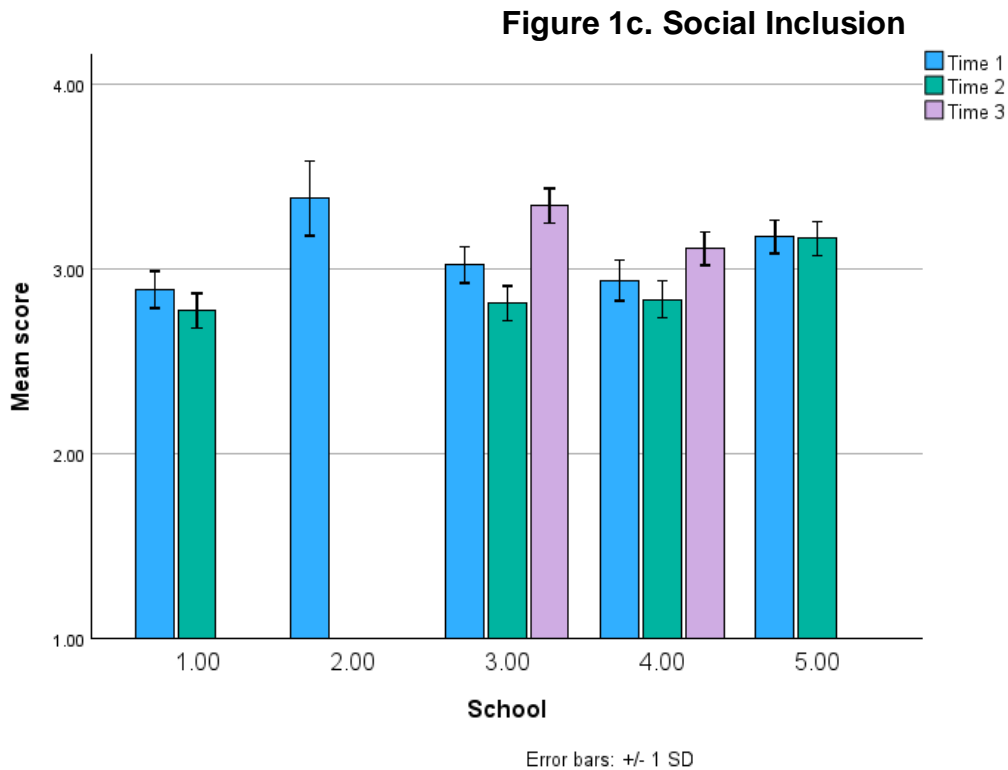


For the comparison of Wellbeing between Time 1 and Time 2, there was a slight but statistically significant reduction in wellbeing, $F(1, 157) = 4.26, p = .041$. However, the comparison between Time 1 and Time 3 was not statistically significant.

Figure 1b. Wellbeing



For the comparison of Social Inclusion between Time 1 and Time 2, there was no statistically significant difference. However, for the comparison of Social Inclusion between Time 1 and Time 3, there was a statistically significant increase over Time, $F(1, 51) = 10.52, p = .002$, and there was a statistically significant interaction of Time by School, $F(1, 51) = 4.16, p = .047$. Specifically, the only statistically significant pairwise comparison was an increase in Social Inclusion in School 3.



Interestingly, when we selected the **lowest third** of pupils in terms of scores on Wellbeing at Time 1, we found that reported scores of Wellbeing increased significantly between Time 1 and Time 3, means 2.73 (sd = .61) to 3.46 (sd = .69), $t(22) = 5.08, p < .001$. This was correlated with an additional increase in reported Social Inclusion when comparing Time 1 and Time 3 for this group, means 2.34 (sd = .71) to 3.03 (sd = .55), $t(22) = 4.72, p < .001$.

It is important to stress that the above results should be considered in the context of the broader evaluation including the insights from the qualitative analysis. Using the quantitative results on their own, without a control group of matched pupils who did not receive any intervention, it is impossible to determine conclusively the reasons for any changes at the cohort level. In addition, the positive changes for the group scoring low on Wellbeing at Time 1 may have been at least partly due to a statistical effect of regression to the mean.

Parents/carers

Because parents/carers were not matched across time points, we were unable to assess changes in perceptions and experiences at the individual level. We therefore focused on cohort level changes, recognising that the composition of the participant group at each time point was likely to be different. An analysis of variance was conducted for each of the three questionnaire scores, with Time and School as the key between-subjects variables.

Overall, there was no statistically significant effect of Time or of the interaction of Time by School for any of the three variables, all $F_s \leq 1$. As shown in Table 1a below, results tended to be positive at the start (average score above 3 on the response scale from 1-4 for all variables), and they stayed similarly positive throughout the project.

Staff

As for the parents/carers, staff members were not matched across time points, so we were unable to assess changes in perceptions and experiences at the individual level. Thus, again, an analysis of variance was conducted for each of the three questionnaire scores, with Time, School, and also the self-reported primary Role (teaching staff, teaching support, pastoral role, and senior leadership) as the between-subjects variables.

For comparisons of School Ethos and Personal Confidence, there were no statistically significant effects of Time or of the interaction of Time with School or with Role.

For comparisons of Staff Awareness and Response, there was a small but statistically significant effect of Time, $F(2, 123) = 4.36, p = .015$, but this was qualified by interactions of Time by School, $F(8, 123) = 2.41, p = .019$ and of Time by Role, $F(6, 123) = 3.34, p = .004$. As shown in Table 1b, Staff Awareness and Response was found to become slightly less positive in School 1 when comparing scores at Times 1 and 2 with scores at Time 3. Scores on the same variable were slightly less positive in School 5 when comparing scores at Time 1 with scores at Times 2 and 3. However, it should be noted that the sample size was extremely small for these schools at some time points.

In addition, further analysis of differences by role showed that the slight reductions in Staff Awareness and Response were found to be statistically significant only for Teaching Staff when comparing Times 1 and 2 with Time 3, and for Senior Leadership when comparing Time 1 with Time 2 (after which responses rose back to the starting point).

For comparisons of staff members' reported levels of Wellbeing, there was an overall positive effect over Time, $F(2, 180) = 7.32, p < .001$, with a significant improvement from Time 1 to Time 2, and no further significant change at Time 3.

Table 1a. Parent/carer questionnaire scores (means, with standard deviations shown in small text below)

School	Ethos			School Support			Community		
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
1		3.59			3.49			3.51	
		0.63			0.73			0.67	
2		3.74			3.44			3.56	
		0.25			0.41			0.31	
3		3.70	3.44		3.77	3.67		3.81	3.17
		0.44	0.96		0.45	0.58		0.28	1.17
4		3.10	3.01		2.98	3.10		2.74	3.02
		0.70	0.55		0.40	0.75		0.91	0.80
5		3.39	3.49		2.97	3.20		3.04	3.13
		0.60	0.49		0.63	0.58		0.75	0.73
Total	3.39	3.45	3.35	3.13	3.21	3.19	3.15	3.22	3.11
	0.88	0.61	0.56	0.86	0.66	0.63	0.87	0.77	0.76

Table 1b. Staff questionnaire scores (means, with standard deviations shown in small text below)

School	Ethos			Staff Awareness and Response			Personal confidence			Wellbeing		
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
1	3.50	3.64	3.05	3.59	3.45	2.78	3.47	3.33	2.83	3.33	3.93	2.86
	0.42	0.36	1.38	0.33	0.41	1.58	0.54	0.37	1.61	0.51	0.31	1.62
2	3.48		3.78	3.58		3.67	3.44		3.38	3.57		4.04
	0.41		0.10	0.41		0.14	0.54		0.14	0.64		0.18
3	3.59	3.90	3.66	3.73	3.83	3.67	3.46	4.00	3.47	3.61	4.00	3.88
	0.47	0.20	0.42	0.22	0.19	0.35	0.54	0.00	0.42	0.46	0.12	0.42
4	3.45	3.35	3.42	3.53	3.40	3.52	3.44	3.13	3.32	3.69	4.14	3.85
	0.45	0.25	0.29	0.47	0.29	0.37	0.49	0.50	0.56	0.64	0.42	0.38
5	3.33	3.30	3.28	3.56	3.31	3.27	3.23	3.45	3.13	3.30	3.87	3.60
	0.56	0.52	0.49	0.36	0.33	0.34	0.62	0.57	0.62	0.70	0.35	0.61
Total	3.47	3.46	3.42	3.59	3.41	3.43	3.41	3.39	3.26	3.51	3.93	3.73
	0.46	0.44	0.52	0.37	0.36	0.48	0.54	0.52	0.61	0.60	0.36	0.59

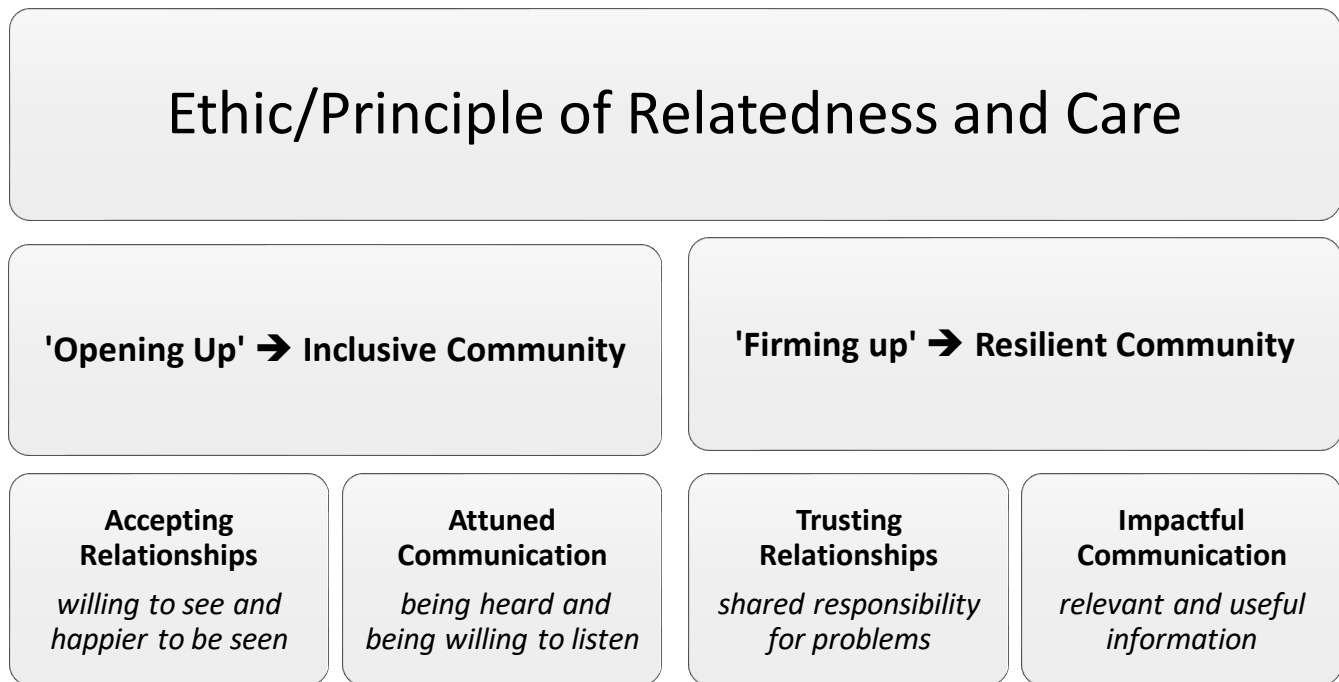
Note. Cells with < 3 respondents have been removed. In Table 1a, School ID was missing from Time 1 response sheets due to a clerical error and so only the average score for the total cohort is shown.

Qualitative analysis of interviews and focus groups

The final set of themes and subthemes was derived from both the paired interviews and the focus groups. The semi-structured interviews with FSWs and/or PLs in all five pilot schools in Spring 2023 included reflecting back on the first set of paired interviews in Spring 2022. These enabled us to explore how schools were realising the full potential of the Beacon Pilot Project. The eleven focus groups run with children, parents/carers, and staff in four of the pilot schools in Spring 2023 enabled us to explore more broadly what differences the Beacon had made from the perspective of the different participants, and the interconnections among, and facilitators for, the perceived positive impacts.

Figure 2 shows the overarching conceptualisation of themes and subthemes in a diagrammatic form. The overarching framework is rooted in the ethic/principle of relatedness of care.

Figure 2. Themes and subthemes from qualitative analysis



Each of the themes and subthemes is briefly described below, incorporating illustrative extracts from the interviews and focus groups (each identified as coming from Child, Parent, PL, or FSW).

The superordinate theme emerging from the qualitative data relates to a primary development observed through the Beacon Pilot Project, namely the emergence and embedding of an overall ethic/principle of relatedness and care. This took the form of a transformation on both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels, with personal changes experienced by both adults and children in the context of deep changes in the qualities of social relationships and the qualities of communication between people across the school community. Two major dimensions of change in school culture were identified: a process of ‘opening up’, which appeared to create a more inclusive community, particularly providing more acceptance for – and attunement to – those experiencing difficulties with mental health and wellbeing; and a process of ‘firming up’, which appeared to create a more resilient community that engendered greater trust and effectiveness across stakeholders.

‘Opening Up’ → Inclusive Community

“It’s that ‘being aware’ thing for each other”. One major theme related to the way in which staff were felt to have developed an expanded awareness of the issues that may be playing a role in the health and wellbeing of all in the school community.

It’s just a mindset of thinking about the wider context of stuff, which is definitely happening more. (FSW, School 5)

As a teacher now, you have to open up your own mind. A lot of these behaviours weren’t happening a few years ago and instead of trying to close them down, you do better when you open it up. (Staff, School 4)

Once you tune into the mindset they’re arriving with each day, you can appreciate why they’re not ‘there’ yet, and there are things you can do to help them get into their positive zone in school. (Staff, School 4)

A critical change highlighted by numerous interviewees and focus group participants was the sense of greater engagement from all staff, as opposed to only certain individuals (e.g., those with pastoral responsibilities). This meant people felt more confident that emerging problems would be identified earlier, with better engagement of a wider range of families.

The flow, everyone gets it now. How the role works in our school is it’s making things smoother all round. We’ve got a good system so things we’ve picked up earlier than they possibly would have done. (FSW, School 5)

It’s like everyone’s reading off the same page. We’re not all on different pages. So we’re knowing where we are. We’re knowing where we need to be. We’re working together on the issues. If people aren’t working together, we’re not going to get there for the child. (Parent, School 4)

They can keep a close eye at certain times and we can catch things early, get more information from home and help them if necessary to keep everyone safe... We always try to intervene before things escalate. (FSW, School 5)

There will always be hard to reach families but we're definitely getting to more of those families. There are those where we're not yet being successful but we're definitely making headway with others that fitted that description before, where a year ago there would have been no chance. (FSW, School 3)

This was felt to foster a more inclusive approach from all staff that involved taking in multiple pictures and looking at issues in the round, rather than just focusing on the immediate situation.

Anyone who sees that child now knows what's going on for them and can give that child a little bit of love, encouragement, smiles or if they notice things aren't quite right for that child, they're in a position to deal with it and share back to relevant people so we've got an inclusive picture of how things are going for the that child. (Staff, School 1)

A really important part of the impact the Beacon project has had was clarifying for us how to help those children feel settled and safe. It's looking at the whole child, isn't it? Asking, 'what do they need to access their learning?' (Staff, School 5)

Our children don't always show they've got issues. The do mask it. Together you can build up a picture and find ways to support the child but if the two sides don't even talk in the first place, the child just quietly gets lost. (Parent, School 4)

I've noticed a lot more effort going into the unpicking of things and trying to repair relationships rather than sanctions and punishment, punishment, punishment. Especially for the trickier kids, this was their experience. That widespread embedding of the training has helped staff open their eyes a little bit to different ways of thinking about situations and different ways of reacting to situations and other methods to deal with behaviour and that's had an amazing effect on some of our kids. (FSW, School 5)

Some staff have gone on a big journey with the Beacon...they've really been helped by the training to see, 'oh, I see, it's because...' and, 'I can understand why that child is acting that way, actually.' Seeing the reasons why, has been quite a journey for some staff. (Staff, School 4)

The training really brought home that our tricky children, who can be really, really tricky, were communicating something. They're not just being difficult. (Staff, School 4)

Accepting Relationships

The above changes were manifested in a move towards more accepting relationships, whereby staff appeared to be more 'willing to see' and children appeared to be more 'willing to be seen'.

A lot of that can be conveyed to children just through, 'I see you' gestures - it's so much better now that we're all behaving in the same way towards children. (Staff, School 1)

You are a human being at the end of the day and you will be questioning yourself, questioning your abilities, thinking 'I'm not capable enough to deal with this'. But when you can see a bigger picture, you can see the background around this and you can think, 'no, it's alright, I'll try this strategy to deal with it'. Instead of taking it personally as much, you think, 'what can I do for this child?' because you see the baggage they are coming with. (Staff, School 4)

My teachers know when I am upset because they know me so they can see when things aren't quite right. (Child, School 4)

Importantly, this growth in 'seeing' and 'being seen' extended to the staff and the parents/carers themselves:

You're always thinking 'what could I do better?' and [FSW] has helped me to have an insight. The little insights help you to do the best for your child because you're not burdening yourself with thinking, 'this is all my fault'. (Parent, School 3)

Especially when we show our own vulnerabilities, [parents] see we're not just perfect people or these authority figures who have it all sorted out. They see us more as human beings. Sometimes we share our own experiences too, to include them. You can offer them reassurances. Show something that makes you more relatable. We're normal people, not people to be scared of. It's nice for people to know they're not alone. (Staff, School 1)

These people [FSW and colleague] see me for who I am. I cannot express how grateful I am because they've really helped me rebuild my life. (Parent, School 3)

Attuned Communication

The more accepting relationships were accompanied by a style of communication by staff that was characterised as more 'attuned' to people's needs and experiences. Children in the focus groups particularly highlighted ways in which the FSW had helped them by being attuned to their needs and issues in a way that was highly distinctive.

The feelings I talk to [FSW] about are things I don't like. She helps me feel safe. (Child, School 5)

If something bad happens at break, it helps you focus in the lesson when you've had a chat with [FSW]. (Child, School 4)

I learnt that how I feel affects how I learn but I didn't know that when I started. When I hit Year 4 and I started working with [FSW] I realised that when I was worrying, it was stopping me from being able to focus on what I was learning because if I spoke to [FSW] it calmed me down. (Child, School 3)

I always over think things, like I was overthinking the SATs reasoning test. It's always, 'what if....?' in my head. I'm always thinking, 'what if I don't get into university because of this one test' or 'what happens if I mess up and my parents don't like me anymore'. It's all about having someone to help you get over that. (Child, School 3)

Importantly, the adults in the school community reported that this greater depth of attunement in communications had spread more widely across all relationships and interactions, and this was felt to have a significant positive emotional impact.

I've been able to have conversations with parents outside of school and relay that, they're becoming more attuned. The wider staff are learning, seeing, understanding some of the issues some of the parents are having. (FSW, School 5)

We have a lot more communication from parents and carers than even when we used to have parents pick up from the class teacher. We get feedback in passing, parents and carers come up to us when they're ready to talk. They wouldn't have done that before. Now people mention stuff and we can sort it out. We get a lot more to and from parents. And you can see their communication is getting better, they'll smile at you in the morning. You can see them beginning to feel okay having a conversation with a member of staff. You can see the barriers coming down. (Staff, School 1)

And at the end of the phone call, [FSW] said, 'And how are you doing?' And to me, that is beyond anything to have someone in a school asking me how I am dealing with a situation. Honestly, from that moment, I thought, I've got so much respect for you. (Parent, School 4)

There are other parents who feel like I do about [FSW]'s role in making us feel comfortable to say, 'you know what, I'm not okay' and not having to put on airs and graces but being able to say, 'I'm struggling'. It was so reassuring to have someone you can talk to and say how it is and not be judged for it. (Parent, School 4)

‘Firming Up’ → Resilient Community

“You’ve got that point of call”. The second major theme related to perceived changes in the resilience of the school community overall, involving a strengthened social network with a shared sense of responsibility for each other, accompanied by a greater sense of personal responsibility.

One commonly-observed pattern of change was that many people felt that they now had more options to call upon when struggling with issues. This sense of much greater support was perceived by staff as well as children.

The difference between before and after the Beacon, for me, is that you’ve got that point of call. You’ve got someone you can go to if you’ve got a problem with a child...it stops you carrying all that emotional baggage around, doesn’t it? (Staff, School 5)

As SLT, we’re now able to ask for help if you need to step away and someone else will step in and that’s not a weakness, it’s a strength. (PL, School 3)

If you’re talking one on one, you can express yourself and how you feel whereas, if you have people around you, you may feel, like, pressured about what you’re going to say and what other people may think of you, for that. When it’s just you with your adult you feel much more at ease and able to express your feelings about things. (Child, School 3)

Staff can at least now spot when to ask for that support from others who are further on or who have more time. And they’re willing to participate in the vision, and they are getting better all the time. There are times when you’ve got 31 children in front of you when you can’t do everything you’d like. When you feel overwhelmed, it’s better to ask someone to help you. (Staff, School 1)

Interestingly, this was associated with a sense of much greater knowledge and skill being shared across the entire population of staff. However, this was as much about people gaining a more realistic sense of their own learning development, recognising what they did not yet know. This suggests that what was emerging was a new culture of learning – and a realisation of a journey that is far from complete – with regard to mental health and wellbeing.

As time went on, you can see a big shift. For our staff, there was a huge change around in their thought process, or a real clarity. What was really nice was the training gave us a real clarity to say to staff, ‘this is the way we do things at [school]’ and you’ve got that really solid training that explicitly and academically makes clear exactly what we’re standing for. (PL, School 4)

Actually realizing that the early childhood development is so important has almost created a sense of frustration about the stuff that we didn’t know, and it’s given us a chance to be way more diligent in

finding out what we need to know and that's so important for us to know, about those children's experiences. (PL, School 4)

Our school has changed culture because we've had whole staff training so everyone has been exposed to understanding child development and how things can impact that development, including stuff as far back as when you're in the womb. (Staff, School 1)

We had the training about children's development and the impact of trauma which was delivered to all staff. So now you can talk to anyone and they'll understand because we're all coming from the same place. (Staff, School 1)

Overall, PLs felt that the development of a learning approach brought strength to the school community in a way that would be distributed across all members of staff (including induction for new staff). In turn, the shared sense of commitment to a role in mental health and wellbeing was ultimately seen as providing a mechanism for building strength among the pupils.

The groundwork each day goes a long way. Those incidental conversations that to an onlooker don't look like much actually mean so much. The Beacon provided us with a FSW which has enabled us to build those stronger relationships. It was a huge need and we've used it to strengthen relationships all round. That's probably the biggest impact. (PL, School 3)

We already had pockets of really good practice but what we became aware of was it wasn't enough to have pockets, it wasn't enough to have an Inclusion Team, this needed to be a whole school approach with absolutely everybody in the school following that ethos. And that, for me, has been a bit of a shift. We'd never really given it a push and said, 'this is the way we do things here' and we could roll that ethos out to all the new staff members in a realistic way so that everyone could be introduced to that way of thinking together. (PL, School 3)

There's just that deep sense of care and a deep sense of community feeling that's fostered across our school that translates into the wellbeing of students and the wellbeing of adults. Despite the fact that our schools sit in an area where the level of mental health concerns and SEMH issues is significantly higher than national average. But we're able to kind of strengthen the children, resolve in school some of the fallout, because of this culture of care, the genuine feeling at school. (PL, School 4)

This progress during the Beacon project was also perceived by the wider groups of staff in the participating schools.

Because of the Beacon, we can sustain our culture of developing social and emotional awareness as a whole school approach. I reckon we'd be five years behind on our vision if we hadn't had the Beacon

to support reaching out into the community. We can't do that without [FSW]. That role is crucial for reaching into the community. (Staff, School 1)

If you don't feel you're meeting all the needs of all the children it can be quite hard. We've found it really useful to have the Beacon as a sounding board and to have someone in school who can help you develop an approach to meet the needs of all the children in the school. (Staff, School 5)

The staff have been very grateful for the support they've received, particularly from [FSW] and what she's brought to the school. From being there for them to being there for the families and the children, that resource in school which was coupled with a whole school approach, has developed this whole learning community. (Staff, School 5)

One PL also commented on the importance of these developments for recovering from the significant setbacks to education in the COVID-19 period.

What the Beacon has done is accelerate our return to what we need to be able to offer, accelerated our recovery and helped us offer what we need to offer post Covid, which is really important to acknowledge. (PL, School 4)

Trusting Relationships

A major subtheme here is the development of greater trust in relationships within the school community. This was perceived by staff, parents/carers, and the children themselves.

You can always get time to talk about feelings with [FSW]. There's always someone to trust. (Child, School 5)

As a school we've had to rebuild relationships with parents. I think we lost the trust of parents through the pandemic. Because they weren't coming onto site, we lost the relationship. It became a very digital relationship which isn't the same. We've needed to rebuild the trust. FSW has been an important resource for us in that. (PL, School 3)

Schools only see what happens 9am to 3 o'clock. But there's so much more going on in a child's life that needs that extra attention. That whole approach [became] 'we're not just here for your child, let us help you'. I feel like [FSW] role was massive in making that difference in my opinion (Parent FG, School 4)

Now, I don't focus on the behaviour, I don't take it personally. I dig in a bit deeper and want to keep that relationship with the child and find ways to extend that to the parent as well to help the child.

Trusting relationships happen when you focus on the positives. After an incident, you think about moving on, having a fresh start. (Staff, School 4)

This clearly fed into a sense of being part of a community in which people felt both trusted by, and trusting towards, others. For staff, training and supervision were seen as critical components that facilitated this change.

But just having this network of other parents is really helpful because I don't have anyone else really to talk to. Being closer to the school has given us community and friendship, like a little family. (Parent, School 1)

The reason we can have responsive relationships with children is because we're there for each other in a safe environment. We have supervision where we can offload. You're not going to be judged for the things you feel or say. That processing with each other helps us get on with our difficult jobs. (Staff, School 1)

Because all our staff have had the training and an understanding of children's social and emotional development, they've got deeper relationships with children, so the right people are in the right place to deal with social and emotional difficulties. (Staff, School 1)

As the class teacher, I have to have difficult conversations and some of what I have to say can be quite negative for the parents. Having [the FSW] there for them really helped them stay with the positives and helped keep their trust. (Staff, School 4)

Notwithstanding the perceived overall improvements across the whole staff group, it is important to stress that having FSWs with dedicated responsibilities was seen as crucial. Many children in the focus groups reported that relationships with FSWs were unique and distinctive in the way that they were rooted in a genuinely strong sense of trust. They reported feeling more at ease in their interactions with FSWs, and better able to have an open style of talk where they felt able to express how they felt, without too many questions.

It's easier to talk to [FSW] but when it's teachers and TAs you see every single day, I feel like I can say some things to them but the things I really wanna say, I feel like I can't really say because if I tell them they're gonna tell someone else. Or else, I feel like they're going to think, 'there's that weird kid that told me that thing one time.' (Child, School 3)

So I like it when the teacher takes you outside and you have a private chat. Otherwise people might make fun of you. I don't really like when everyone's looking at me. Talking in private makes me feel more comfortable. (Child, School 4)

The main difference is you wanna be in control. If teachers say, 'I'm here if you need me', you feel more comfortable to go near them. It doesn't help when you're really worried that people keep asking questions and questions and questions (Child, School 3)

When you're really worried, the right balance is when they let you speak. If they ask the questions that helps you get it out, then that's easy but if you get halfway through a sentence and they're asking another question and it keeps on happening and you don't really get to speak about how you actually feel, then.... [pause]... you're not going to feel safe going to that person anymore. (Child, School 4)

When you are not okay, a teacher can understand if you actually say 'I'm okay', and then they let you choose when you want to say 'I'm not okay'. Your friends just keep asking and asking. (Child, School 3)

Children did recognise, however, that FSWs were busy seeing large numbers of children, and the implication is that increasing the total amount of time and space available for open communication is an important priority.

[FSW] does get around to speak to everyone. Sometimes she doesn't get enough time and I feel like maybe they need more people around to help for the whole school. Sometimes you want more time with her, and she has to go and see someone else because she's got so many people she has to zip around. (Child, School 3)

Impactful Communication

One major facilitator for the increased resilience in the school community was the development of much more impactful communication, with greater clarity around roles, shared responsibilities, effective use of time and space to talk, and well-organised scheduling of discussions.

With [FSW], she arranged for me to have a quick chat and that's all I needed. I know lots of parents who have got the help quickly without having to wait 6 months with an unhappy child at home. (Parent, School 1)

Now we share things we've noticed about children or groups of children. We're sharing that responsibility with each other. And then we plan what strategies we'll try to uplift these children. (Staff, School 1)

Not all of our parents are open to sharing things with us. For us, building trusting relationships with parents is key to getting relevant information we can use to help their child learn. More recently, I'm finding parents are open with us sooner. Even when we have to act on some information in a

procedural way, they keep working with us because they know we've got their child's best interests. We include the families in 'our family', not just the child and that really helps people. (Staff, School 4)

In particular, the resilience of the school was enhanced by systems of communication that gave people much greater confidence that everyone was working together for a common purpose, to support the wellbeing of all.

With attendance, we've got new strategies in place. [Beacon leadership support] showed us that first contact about attendance needed to be supportive, to communicate that we've noticed your child hasn't been in, what can we do to support you to help you bring your child to school. The Beacon helped us flip around that message from telling people what to do to asking people what we could do to help them. The parents are much more likely to work with us now. Perhaps it's less threatening. (Staff, School 5)

We have [regular meetings] about problems that are coming up. Without that, people can't get around to those conversations or do it in a fragmented way on email and perhaps in the meantime things get bigger and bigger that could have been gently teased apart earlier. (Staff, School 5)

When we're filling in forms or doing a social services meeting where they're like, 'let's put 7 years of trauma into a half an hour meeting' and [FSW] can help me order my thoughts and help me include what's relevant to that meeting or that form. (Parent, School 3)

Here, you are speaking to a real person. You know that person is getting to know you, they're going to remember, they're going to tell other people who need to know and then action it. (Parent, School 3)

Resilience was seen as being built because the professional development of the staff was being mirrored in the communications with parents/carers and with children. Staff expressed how this increased the likelihood that everyone could have a positive role in resolving difficult situations, rather than relying on escalating the problem to higher authorities.

The other element of the Beacon that's helped staff is they've got guidance about what to say if there's been a behavioural incident and the questions to ask and eventually that guides the children to resolving their own issues with each other, so it doesn't even come to you. Higher up the school, staff don't have to get involved in smaller incidents that children can resolve with a simple question process with each other. The incidents that do occur, staff know how to keep calm which is the most important thing. If you can keep calm, because you know what to do and where it's likely to go, you're more likely to calm the child. (Staff, School 5)

The Reflective seminars were very helpful. When a particular child keeps cropping up, or the teacher is quite concerned, we discuss it at the reflective seminar. And we follow the structure and try and keep the positives in mind. It's very structured talk but with all the relevant people there to contribute and learn from each other. Often the positive things are forgotten and keeping those upfront has been really helpful. [MBS] modelled it to us and we've kept that model. (Staff, School 4)

There's a lot more teaching about emotions now. [Incident happened] the other day, and we turned it into a teaching point by having a discussion. The children this year are a lot more aware that there are all these different emotions and they're all okay because we talk about it. (Staff, School 1)

5. Summary and recommendations

Overall, the evidence of this research evaluation presents a positive picture of developments arising from the Beacon Pilot Project, with strong indications that the inputs from the MBS and project management structure were seen positively by multiple stakeholders including school staff, parents and carers, and the children themselves. It is important to stress, though, that the positive changes came through more consistently and strongly in the in-depth insights from the interviews and focus groups, in comparison with the summary scores from questionnaire measures at the three time points of the project. This suggests that while many individuals could perceive substantial changes in the school community, this had not (or not *yet*) been translated into substantial positive shifts in the characteristics measured in the standardised questionnaires.

The qualitative analysis points to an increasing breadth and depth in the development of an ethic/principle of relatedness and care across the participating schools. This was seen in terms of both: a) an 'opening up', that led to a more inclusive community founded on more accepting relationships and more attuned communication; and b) a 'firming up' that led to a more resilient community characterised by trusting relationships and benefitting from more impactful communications. A thread running through the qualitative analysis was the sense that when things were difficult – when there might be concerns about mental health and wellbeing – there was a much stronger sense of a shared commitment to working together to find solutions.

This is consistent with the evidence from the questionnaire analysis not only that children reporting low levels of wellbeing at Time 1 improved in wellbeing by the end of the project, but also that this improvement was linked to a much greater sense of social inclusion among those children. As mentioned earlier, this could at least partly be a statistical artefact (regression to the mean), but triangulating these results with the qualitative analysis, it seems clear that staff, parents/carers, and children had all seen significant benefits during the project period in how schools dealt with problems.

The questionnaire results also pointed to increases in pupils' overall sense of social inclusion from Time 1 to Time 3, although sufficient data for these comparisons was only present in two of the five schools. Staff also reported improvements in their own levels of wellbeing during the project period, which also fits with insights emerging from the thematic analysis of interviews and focus groups regarding the much greater sense of social support that staff reported from each other, alongside greater knowledge and skills in handling difficult situations.

One pattern from the analysis of questionnaire data that seemed surprising at first was the finding that reported levels of staff awareness of, and response to, mental health issues tended to decrease during the project period, at least in two schools. But as one project lead pointed out explicitly, an important part of the learning process for staff was identifying more about what they *didn't* know, not just acquiring new knowledge. Indeed, while the drop noted in the questionnaire results might be seen as negative, closer

attention to the data shows that what was happening here was probably that initially high levels of 'strongly agreeing' with statements about staff awareness and response were becoming more realistic.

Nonetheless, there were other changes in questionnaire results that were more difficult to understand in terms of overall project effects, such as drops in pupils' positive responses to questions about school ethos or personal wellbeing in specific schools at specific times. Without a control group of matched pupils, it is difficult to determine whether these changes are due to project-specific issues, or any number of other issues, from school-specific developments to age-related changes in the maturation of the pupils. Unfortunately, reports from parents/carers on the overall school ethos, sense of community, and perceived school support could not shed light on project-related changes because these were generally positive at the start of the project and stayed similarly positive throughout the two-year period.

But what clearly came through from the qualitative analysis was a sense that FSWs had a highly distinctive role to play in the schools, which was related to a concurrent transformation of relationships and communication across the whole school community as the entire body of staff engaged with the training, supervision, reflective practice, and wider school improvement approaches being implemented in the participating schools. Children, parents/carers, and staff all reported positively on the significant contributions made by FSWs, and the unique role they played in fostering a supportive and strengths-based approach that was more attuned to the needs and issues of children and their families.

Based upon the mixed-methods evaluation of the Beacon Pilot Project – with the above indications of changing patterns of behaviour, cognition, emotion, motivation, and social relationships in the school community – we propose the following five recommendations:

1. Continue to invest in the roles of Family Support Workers to ensure that children, parents and carers, and staff can all benefit from the dedicated time and space for addressing issues with mental health and wellbeing.
2. Ensure that the learning from the Beacon Pilot Project is fully disseminated across all stakeholders in the school community, and particularly ensure that the mutual sense of commitment to supporting wellbeing is sustained even when (or especially when) there are changes in staff and/or leadership. Ongoing engagement with governors will be crucial for this.
3. Ensure that the effective practices of professional development, reflective practice, and supervision can be maintained in order to preserve and strengthen the culture of learning.
4. Continue to engage with research evaluation techniques to ensure that both quantitative and qualitative analyses can be undertaken to monitor and test the impacts of further innovations in practice in this area. It would be helpful to build in additional capacity to ensure that

questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups can be consistently accommodated, as this would allow for more complete (and therefore more reliable and valuable) datasets.

5. Maintain strong partnership working within and between schools, and with external organisations (including other services in public and voluntary sectors), in order to maximise the spread of learning from this work.

6. Appendices

Appendix A. Items from questionnaire measures

School Ethos

Completed by pupils, parents/carers, and staff

Scored from 1 (almost never) to 4 (nearly all the time)

- Pupils are good at working in groups with each other*
- Pupils enjoy coming to school
- Everyone tries hard to help each other
- Teachers get on well with each other
- Pupils are caring towards each other
- Everyone feels safe at school
- Pupils are really interested in learning
- People pay attention to other people's feelings
- Pupils at school can trust each other
- Everyone feels proud about the school

*This item was only included in the measures completed by staff and by pupils.

Social Inclusion

Completed by pupils

Scored from 1 (almost never) to 4 (nearly all the time)

- Other pupils say kind things to me
- Other pupils choose to spend their play time with me
- Other pupils help me when I'm upset or hurt
- Other pupils let me join in with what they are doing

Wellbeing

Completed by pupils

Scored from 1 (never) to 4 (all of the time)

- I've been feeling calm
- I've been feeling cheerful about things
- I've been feeling relaxed
- I've been in a good mood
- I've been getting on well with people
- I enjoy what each new day brings
- I think there are many things that I can be proud of
- I feel that I am good at some things
- I think good things will happen in my life
- I can find lots of fun things to do
- I think lots of people care for me
- I've been able to make choices easily

School Support

Completed by parents/carers

Scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)

- The school has support available for the mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils
- The school helps children to access appropriate support for mental health and emotional wellbeing
- The school staff know about a wide range of mental health and wellbeing issues
- The school promotes and support mental health and emotional wellbeing of children
- The school is willing to be involved in the care and recovery process of pupils with mental health and emotional wellbeing needs
- The school takes effective steps to respond to pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing needs
- Staff develop effective relationships with parents
- Staff respond appropriately to pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing needs

Sense of Community

Completed by parents/carers

Scored from 1 (almost never) to 4 (nearly all the time)

- My child feels connected and part of the school community.
- My child can get support in the school for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- I feel connected and part of the school community.
- The school communicates with me when things are going well for my child e.g., to acknowledge my child's progress and achievements in all areas
- The school communicates respectfully with me, if issues arise
- I have the opportunity to express my views of my child's feelings towards school and their own wellbeing

Staff Awareness and Response

Completed by staff

Scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)

- Staff should be involved in the care and recovery process of pupils with mental health and emotional wellbeing needs
- Staff in my school are aware of the risk factors and causes of mental health and emotional wellbeing issues with children
- Staff in my school take effective steps to try and prevent pupils from developing mental health and emotional wellbeing difficulties
- Staff in my school are aware of the support available for mental health and emotional wellbeing for pupils within school
- Staff in my school respond appropriately to pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing needs
- Staff in my school develop effective relationships with parents

Personal Confidence

Completed by staff

Scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)

- I feel confident that I would recognize the signs that a pupil needs additional support for their mental health and emotional wellbeing
- I feel confident about supporting children that are experiencing difficulties with their mental health and emotional wellbeing
- I feel confident about talking to children about their mental health and emotional wellbeing
- I feel confident about talking to parents and carers about the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in my school

Wellbeing

Completed by staff

Scored from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time)

- I have been feeling optimistic about the future
- I've been feeling useful
- I've been feeling relaxed
- I've been dealing with problems well
- I've been thinking clearly
- I've been feeling close to other people
- I've been able to make up my mind about things

Appendix B. List of illustrative questions from paired interviews with PLs and FSWs

- What other social and emotional programmes are there in school? (e.g., THRIVE, Nurture, Healthy Schools) How is the Beacon work integrated with these? To what extent is the Beacon model providing a sustainable approach to supporting S&E development?
- How has support for families changed? What impact has this had for children/ parents/ staff wellbeing?
- What other services and professionals are there working in school? (e.g., Educational Psychology Service, CAMHS, Mental Health Support Teams) How is the Beacon support integrated with these external specialist services?
- What is your referral pathway for children and their families who are experiencing difficulties? How is need noticed and communicated in school? Can they self-refer? Typically, who do they turn to first? What difference has it made to have one person families can go to? Why is that?
- What is your approach to problem solving when you see something may need to be done for a child/ family? What is your system to triage? Who is involved? How do you feed back about what may be helping and what may not be so helpful? How have your processes changed, as a result of being part of the Beacon project?
- How is the social and emotional wellbeing of school community shared as a priority? Has involving whole staff in training helped in supporting children and families?
- Is there supervision in school for staff (peer group support or one to one) to support containment? How are these responsibilities delegated? What difference has the reflective practice made?
- How has the FSW role been developed in your school? Has sufficient time been allocated for Induction? How will the responsibilities of the FSW be delegated when/if they are unavailable?
- Are there regular opportunities for student voice and parent/ carer engagement and feedback? How do you let parents and carers know what support is available / or that you are providing? How are you learning from children/ families what's helpful? What kinds of things are they saying?
- How are governors involved in the Beacon? How have governors supported your implementation of the Beacon? How are the relationships between governors and headteachers fostered in each individual school? What happens when a new governor is appointed? Who else supports you? How are you supported by your wider network? (including volunteers, Church, PTA, etc.)
- How is the plan for headteacher networking being actioned? Is there any other informal networking? How is SLT leading on integrating the Beacon model? What difference does that make?

Appendix C. Lists of illustrative starting questions from focus groups

Pupils

- Because this is the first time I've been to your school, I want to learn from you what it's like to come to this school from your point of view. Can we all start by thinking about a time when you felt good in school? What are some of the things that people can do for each other here to help someone feel good?
- What else improves how someone is feeling? What do you find most enjoyable? Why is that, do you think?
- Now I want to ask about times when things get in the way of feeling good. It happens for all of us. What could someone do to make those times a bit better, do you think?
- I'm really interested in what helps people get on with each other in school. I know things can change a lot in one day. If it's not going so well one day, what kind of things might help to make it okay?
- What kinds of things do teachers here do to help in those tricky situations? Are there things that get in the way of them helping?
- Can you tell me a little bit about what it's like having [name of FSW] in your school? Does that help you? How? When do these things happen most? Where do you think they help the most?

Parents/carers

- What was it like for you to have FSW in school?
- What did you find most useful/ relevant? Why?
- What things, if any, got in the way of something working well?
- What may have helped, in that situation?
- What things, if any, really stand out to you from about having FSW in school? Why?
- Now I'd like to ask you a bit more detail about different parts of the project. How did having a FSW in school change support in school?
- Have you noticed any changes in teachers' skills and knowledge during the Beacon project? Why?
- Now I'd like to ask you a bit more detail about the possible benefits for children. What difference has this made for the children and young people, if any? Why?
- What difference has this made for the families, if any? Why?
- How well do you think people here deal with things relating to mental health and wellbeing? Why? What else could improve that?

Staff

- What was it like for you to be part of project?
- What did you find most useful/ relevant? Why?
- What things, if any, got in the way of something working well? What may have helped, in that situation?
- What things, if any, really stand out to you from the experience of being part of the Beacon in this school? Why?
- Now I'd like to ask you a bit more detail about different parts of the project. How did having a FSW in school change support in school?
- Did the CPD develop your skills and knowledge? How? Why?
- What parts of the CPD, if any, have you used in your practice, or engaged with since the training?
- How did the reflective seminars change your practice, if at all?
- How has your outlook changed, if at all, as a result of training and reflective practice? Why?
- Now I'd like to ask you a bit more detail about the possible benefits for children. What difference has this made for the children and young people you work with, if any? Why?
- What difference has this made for the families you work with, if any? Why?

7. Bibliography

Note this includes sources cited in the Method section as well as background reading related to the researchers' previous work on social and emotional development.

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