Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning

Good to be me Theme overview

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Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning

Good to be me
Theme overview

Headteachers, teachers and practitioners in primary schools, middle schools, special schools and Foundation Stage settings
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Theme overview

About the theme

This theme is the first of two focusing specifically on feelings. It explores feelings in the context of the child as an individual, developing self-awareness and helping the child to realise that it really is 'Good to be me'. The theme is about understanding our feelings as well as considering our strengths and weaknesses as learners. It aims to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in three key social and emotional aspects of learning: self-awareness, managing feelings and empathy.

The theme focuses on:

Understanding feelings, and why and how they lead us to behave the way we do – particularly the feelings of being excited, proud, surprised, hopeful, disappointed, worried and anxious.

Self-awareness – feeling good about myself, taking risks.

Managing my feelings – relaxing, coping with anxiety.

Standing up for myself – assertiveness, standing up for my views.

The theme consists of the following materials:

Assembly/Foundation Stage group time

Red set (Foundation Stage)
Blue set (Years 1 and 2)
Yellow set (Years 3 and 4)
Green set (Years 5 and 6)
Purple set (staff development activities)
Gold set (activities for children to do at home with their parents or carers)
Silver set (small-group activities for children who need additional help with the social, emotional and behavioural skills relevant to this theme).

Suggested whole-school/setting focus for noticing and celebrating achievement

Using the school/setting's usual means of celebration (praise, notes to the child and parents/carers, certificates, peer nominations, etc.) to notice and celebrate children (or adults) who were observed:

Week 1: Doing something to be proud of
Week 2: Responding in an assertive way
Week 3: Helping someone with a worry
Week 4: Stopping and thinking when they were angry
Links and crossovers

Work associated with this theme also addresses the following:

*National Healthy School Standard (NHSS)*

To meet the NHSS standard for emotional health and well-being (EHWB) schools need to demonstrate, among other things, that they ‘openly address issues of EHWB by enabling pupils to understand what they are feeling and by building their confidence to learn’.

*Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*

Personal, social and emotional development, especially self-confidence and self-esteem, behaviour and self-control and sense of community.

*PSHE/Citizenship*

**Key Stage 1**

Children will be taught:

1c) to recognise, name and deal with their feelings in a positive way;
4a) to recognise how their behaviour affects other people;
4b) to listen to other people, and play and work cooperatively;
4d) that family and friends should care for each other;

**Key Stage 2**

Children will be taught:

1d) to recognise, as they approach puberty, how people’s emotions change at that time and how to deal with their feelings towards themselves, their family and others in a positive way;
2c) to realise the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities;
2e) to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people’s experiences;
3e) to recognise the different risks in different situations and then decide how to behave responsibly, including judging what kind of physical contact is acceptable or unacceptable;
3f) that pressure to behave in an unacceptable or risky way can come from a variety of sources, including people they know, and how to ask for help and use basic techniques for resisting pressure to do wrong;
4a) that their actions affect themselves and others, to care about other people’s feelings and to try to see things from their point of view;
4c) to be aware of different types of relationship, including marriage and those between friends and families, and to develop the skills to be effective in relationships;
4d) to realise the nature and consequences of racism, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours, and how to respond to them and ask for help.
Work associated with this theme can also be addressed through published schemes which you may already be using, for example, PATHS, Second Step, Family Links and whole-school systems such as peer mediation schemes.

Points to note

A focus on feelings may give rise to a number of potentially sensitive issues. Teachers/practitioners are advised to read the section in the guidance that deals with this issue before beginning work on the theme (see the Guidance booklet from the whole-school SEAL resource: Appendix 3 ‘Guidance on the teaching of potentially sensitive and controversial issues’).

What children will know, understand and be able to do following the successful completion of Theme 5

All the themes offer a range of opportunities for children to learn and put into practice the strategies they have learned for social problem solving (including the crucial first step of calming down) and feeling identification. Previously-taught skills are revisited and built on throughout the materials. Described below are the additional knowledge, understanding and skills developed specifically in the Good to be me theme.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowing myself</strong></td>
<td>I can tell you the things I like doing and the things I don’t like doing. I can say how I feel when I am feeling proud.</td>
<td>I can tell you about my gifts and talents. I can tell you something that makes me feel proud. I know when I learn best. I can tell you what I have learnt. I can tell you the things that I am good at and those that I find more difficult. I can tell when I am being impulsive and when I am thinking things through. I can tell when a feeling is weak and when it is strong.</td>
<td>I know about myself and how I learn. I can extend my learning. I can tell you the things I am good at. I can recognise when I find something difficult and do something about it or cope with how that makes me feel.</td>
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<td>Understanding my feelings</td>
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<td>I can tell when I am feeling excited.</td>
<td>I know more names for feelings than I did before.</td>
<td>I can tell you what feeling surprised is like.</td>
<td>I can tell the difference between showing I am proud and boasting.</td>
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<td>I can tell or show how I feel when I am excited.</td>
<td>I can use more words to express my feelings.</td>
<td>I can tell you whether I like surprises or I like things to stay the same.</td>
<td>I know that boasting can make other people feel inadequate or useless.</td>
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<td>I can say and show you when I am feeling good and happy.</td>
<td>I can tell when I am feeling worried or anxious.</td>
<td>I can explain what hopeful and disappointed mean.</td>
<td>I can explain how I am feeling even if I have mixed feelings.</td>
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<td>I can tell or show what feeling proud looks like.</td>
<td>I can tell you some things that make me feel anxious.</td>
<td>I understand why we sometimes fight or run away when we feel threatened.</td>
<td>I understand that sometimes the feeling part of my brain takes over and I might make mistakes.</td>
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<td>I can help another person feel proud.</td>
<td>I can tell when I am feeling proud.</td>
<td>I know why it is sometimes important to stop and think when we feel angry or stressed.</td>
<td>I can understand how my strong feelings might build up and how I might be overwhelmed by my feelings.</td>
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<td>I can tell you something that makes me feel proud.</td>
<td>I can stop and think before I act.</td>
<td>I can recognise when I am beginning to be overwhelmed by my feelings and can use a calming-down strategy.</td>
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<td>I can explain how I am feeling even if I have mixed feelings.</td>
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<td>I know that if I have once been overwhelmed by my feelings I might easily ‘lose it’ again another time.</td>
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<td><strong>Managing my feelings</strong></td>
<td>I can stay still and quiet for a short time. I can relax with help.</td>
<td>I can be still and quiet and relax my body. I know what it feels like to be relaxed. I can show or tell you what relaxed means. I know what makes me feel relaxed and what makes me feel stressed. I can tell you what places help me to relax. I can explain some things that help me stop worrying. I can change my behaviour if I stop and think about what I am doing.</td>
<td>I can think about my worries and decide what I might do about them. I can tell when I should share a worry. I know that most people have worries. I can stop and think before I act. I can recognise when I am beginning to get upset or angry and have some ways to calm down. I can use strategies to help me cope with feelings of disappointment and feelings of hopelessness. I can choose when to show my feelings and when to hide them. I can tell if I have hidden my feelings. I can tell when it is good to relax. I can relax when I want to.</td>
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<td><strong>Standing up for myself</strong></td>
<td>I can say what I need.</td>
<td>I can tell when it is right to stand up for myself.</td>
<td>I can choose to act assertively.</td>
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<td>I can stand up for my own needs and rights without hurting others.</td>
<td>I know how to stand up for myself.</td>
<td>I know how to be assertive.</td>
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<td>I can express myself assertively in a variety of ways.</td>
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<td><strong>Making choices</strong></td>
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<td>I can use the problem-solving process.</td>
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The assembly

You will need:

Music – the suggested music is ‘Strong’ by Desiree or any upbeat, feel-good music the children suggest. This will help the assembly to begin on a positive note.

Pictures to support children’s understanding of the assembly story. You will find these on the CD-ROM in the pack. They can be copied onto acetates or used with a data projector.

A flipchart and pens. Write the word ‘Special’ on the chart.

Introduction

Note: For children in the Foundation Stage you will want to use your own judgement as to whether a whole-school assembly, class/group gathering, or a mixture of these, is the more appropriate place to introduce the theme.

Tell the children that this assembly is about them, every single one of them, because each of them is special. Ask the children to tell you what they think the word ‘special’ means. (For the purpose of this assembly, special means excellent in some way, different from others, unique or in a class of its own.) Write their ideas down on the flipchart. Tell the children that every time a baby is born, that baby is special, never in the history of the world has a baby quite like that one been born before. Say that each one of them is absolutely special. Even though there are millions and millions of children all across the world, no two of them are the same. Each of them has something special that makes them who they are.

Ask the children to say some of the ways in which each of them is different from others. Encourage them to think of characteristics like being kind or hard-working, as well as some of the more-obvious differences. Chart some of these responses. Use what they say to point out that every child has a different way of being special. It isn’t only about what they look like, or what they are good at, each child is unique and special in his or her own particular way. Sometimes it is hard to remember how special each of us is. Sometimes we think that others can do things so much better than we can. Sometimes, when we feel bad, we forget what our special gifts are.

The story the children are about to hear tells of some of the animals that live in the forest. Of all the animals, it is Mouse who has forgotten that she has her own special gift. The children are going to try and help Mouse to believe in herself. Every time Mouse says, ‘I’m no good, I’m only a mouse,’ some of the children are going to whisper: ‘Believe in yourself, believe in yourself’ several times to help her to remember that it is good to be who she is.
The story

Mouse was feeling sad. She was the smallest and weakest animal in the forest.

‘I don’t want to be a mouse,’ she said. ‘I wish I didn’t have this little body and short legs and thin tail.’

Mouse went to see Lion. He was king of the forest. When he roared everyone did just what he said. Mouse knew that Lion was a great leader and wished that she was a great leader too. She looked up at him and said,

‘I would like to be a leader like you, Lion.’ But Lion just laughed.

‘I am strong,’ he said in his great voice, ‘but you are too small and weak.’

Mouse hung her head and walked sadly away.

After a while she met Gazelle. Gazelle could run faster than the wind. Mouse gazed up at her and said: ‘I would like to be able to run like you.’

Gazelle laughed a soft and gentle laugh.

‘Poor little Mouse,’ she said, ‘I can run fast because of my long legs. Look at your little legs.’

Mouse felt sadder than ever. Her shoulders sagged and her eyes turned down.

‘I’m no good,’ she said, ‘I’m only a mouse.’
Here, the Year 1/2 children should whisper very quietly, ‘Believe in yourself, believe in yourself.’

But Mouse was sad. She walked on through the forest until she met Monkey. Monkey was swinging through the trees. He used his tail to dangle down in front of Mouse.

‘I would like to be able to climb like you, Monkey,’ said Mouse. Monkey cackled.

‘I can climb because of my elegant tail,’ he said. ‘Look at your skinny little tail. Why, it doesn’t even curl.’ And Monkey swung back into the tree and away through the forest.

Mouse’s heart sank even more. A tear formed in the corner of her eye.

‘I’m no good,’ she said, ‘I’m only a mouse.’

Here the Year 1/2/3/4 children should whisper a little more loudly, ‘Believe in yourself, believe in yourself.’

But Mouse was too unhappy to hear anything. To her it seemed that all the other animals in the forest were special in their own way and she was just a silly, unimportant little mouse. She wandered on through the forest until she found a small hole and hid inside it. She felt so bad that the tears fell from her eyes.

All of a sudden, Mouse heard a terrible noise. It was such a loud, scary noise that it made her heart beat loud in her little chest. It sounded to Mouse as though all the animals in the forest were calling out at once, as though they were all calling for help. She could hear Lion roaring and Gazelle crying and Monkey shrieking.

‘What can I do?’ she thought. ‘I’m only a little Mouse, how can I help all these great animals?’

She put her nose out of the hole. She was very frightened but she knew she had to find out what was wrong. As she scurried through the forest the terrible noise got louder and louder. Suddenly, she came to a clearing. All the animals were there trapped inside cruel cages. Hunters had come to the forest and caught them.
‘Help us, help us!’ cried the animals desperately. ‘Please help us, Mouse.’ But Mouse said sadly, ‘I’m only a little mouse. I can’t lead like you, Lion, or run like you, Gazelle, or climb like you, Monkey. I’m sorry but I’m not good enough to help you.’ Mouse turned and walked away. The animals called after her. ‘Help us, Mouse, help us.’ Mouse felt so miserable. She wished there was something she could do to help them but all she could say to herself was, I’m no good. I’m only a mouse.‘

Here all the children should say a little more loudly, ‘Believe in yourself. Believe in yourself.’

Mouse stopped. What was that? In her heart she thought she heard faint voices helping her to remember that she had her own special gift. As she stood there listening, a wonderful thought struck her. She remembered that the cages were tied with string. ‘Go back, Mouse,’ she said to herself, ‘go back. You have fantastically sharp teeth that are good for chewing.’

Mouse turned around and ran back to the cages. In her little mouth she took the string that tied each cage and chewed and chewed until, at last, the doors fell open. The animals were free. Lion picked up Mouse gently in his strong jaws and lifted her onto Gazelle’s back. The animals ran and ran until they were far away from the cages.
When they felt they were safe, they stopped. Gazelle lay down and Lion carefully lifted Mouse from her back and placed her on the ground.

First Gazelle, then Monkey came to Mouse and thanked her for rescuing them. Lion was last. ‘You are a hero, Mouse,’ he said, ‘you saved us from the hunters. What can we do to thank you?’ Mouse thought for a moment then she said:

‘You have already given me everything that I could ever want. You have shown me that it is **Good to be me!**’

**Conclusion**

Ask the children to think of the different things that made each of the animals special. Ask them why they think that Mouse found it so hard to believe in herself. Remind them that some people have special gifts that are easy to see and others are special in a much quieter way like Mouse was. Point out that when you are feeling bad about yourself, it’s hard to remember that you have your own way of being special.

The children should then try to think of one special thing about themselves. It could be something they are good at, or perhaps something thoughtful or brave they have done. When they have thought of something that makes each of them special, they should keep that thought in their heads for a minute or two. Remind the children that they helped Mouse to remember that she too was special. Sometimes they may need to remind themselves or each other. Before they leave, ask the children and adults to whisper out loud ‘It’s good to be me.’
Follow up assembly to be held at the end of the theme

Start by reminding the children about the theme ‘Good to be me’ and the story of Mouse. Ask if they can remember how they helped Mouse to believe in herself.

Now children from each year group present some of the work they have done in class. The class teacher should choose the social and emotional learning the class will give feedback on but some examples are set out below.

Foundation Stage: The children tell or show the things that make them proud.
Years 1 and 2: The children show their work from the *Our gifts and talents challenge*, and their personal profile.
Years 3 and 4: The children share their work on turning hopeless thoughts into hopeful thoughts.
Years 5 and 6: Using a bouncing ball to introduce their work, the children talk about the strategies they thought of to help them bounce back when things go wrong and they are feeling useless and inadequate. They should encourage the younger children to question them.

Finish the assembly by asking the children to think quietly about what they have learned about themselves and each other over the last few weeks. Ask them to think about the special gifts each of them has and how they might use some of those gifts to be the best they can be, and to help them when they are sad or afraid or hopeless as Mouse was.

Finish the assembly by asking everyone, including the adults, to say out loud, ‘It’s good to be me.’ Ask the children to keep these positive thoughts in their heads as you play the music and they leave in silence.

Variations on the assembly for subsequent years

In subsequent years you might like to involve children in Years 5 or 6 in presenting assemblies. They should use the original story and agree what the moral of the story was. They should then write their own assembly story that illustrates the same moral. Ideally, this will include audience participation. The chosen class should lead the assembly. Alternatively, they might use one of the outlines below to write their own version.

The Sparrow

Sparrow is feeling low. It seems that all the birds are better than he is. He looks at Peacock and thinks about how drab his own feathers are in comparison with Peacock’s beautiful tail. He looks at Eagle and thinks about how pathetic his small wings are in comparison with Eagle’s strong and elegant wings. He listens to the nightingale and tries to sing but realises how tuneless his song is in comparisons with Nightingale’s beautiful song.

Disaster comes to the forest when a wicked spirit creeps into the forest and steals Wren’s only chick from her nest. The spirit takes the little chick and hides it in his lair in the highest clouds. Wren is devastated. The other animals try to help. They each set off in turn, but come back unsuccessful. They can’t fly so high without tiring. At last Eagle agrees to go. Everyone is hopeful, but he comes back unsuccessful. He almost reaches the spirit’s lair but is too exhausted and has to return to earth before he gets there.

Sparrow hasn’t volunteered to help but a little voice inside him tells him he has something to offer. Eagle says he will have one last go but he doesn’t think it will be any good. Sparrow hides himself in the feathers on Eagle’s back. When Eagle tires, Sparrow leaves the Eagle’s back and flies the last little bit to rescue the baby wren.
He returns to earth with Eagle and the baby wren. When asked what he wants as a reward he says: ‘You have already given me everything that I could ever want. You have shown me that it is Good to be me!’

*The Nightingale*

Nightingale loves singing but she doesn’t believe in herself. She hears all the other animals and birds singing during the day and thinks that they are more tuneful than she is. She doesn’t have the confidence to sing during the day because she thinks that all the other animals will laugh at her singing. It is only at night, when she thinks that nobody is listening, that she sings.

In the palace, there live the king, the queen and the princess, their young daughter. The princess wakes one night and hears the nightingale. She thinks this is the most beautiful sound she has ever heard. The princess falls ill and says that the only thing that will cure her is to hear that beautiful singing again. The animals take it in turn to sing for the princess but each time she becomes a little more ill. The nightingale doesn’t dare to come forward. Everyone is weeping. A voice inside gives her strength. She comes forward even though all the other animals are laughing at her.

She opens her beak to sing. The princess hears her and starts to feel better immediately. When the king offers the nightingale anything in his kingdom she says: ‘You have already given me everything that I could ever want. You have shown me that it is Good to be me!’