



The Big Think

The Big Newsletter Volume 28

Building Belonging in Primary Schools



Laying the Foundations of DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)

The Big Think (TBT) is a PSHE programme for ages 5 to 11 which explores human relationships through the lens of 5 BIG human values and develops 5 BIG Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills. Our holistic approach uses Silent Sitting meditations for **Self-Management skills**, Real-World stories for **Social Awareness skills**, Values Inquiry for **Responsible Decision-making skills**, The BIG Feelings Compass for **Self-Awareness skills** and a range of safe dialogue practices to build **Relationship Skills**.

TBT's approach has been created to build Belonging in all pupils and staff because we know that a stronger sense of Belonging in pupils leads to higher performance in all areas.

But when working with Primary schools to embed a whole-school PSHE approach, we are regularly faced with this pressing question from Early Years practitioners: "*But what about us?*"

If we truly want to create a climate of inclusion, equity and celebrated diversity – where EVERYONE (pupils AND staff) feels a strong sense of Belonging – then we must lay the foundations of DEI with the whole school community and start with more serious intentions, and with evidence-based practice, in those precious Early Years.

To this end, we have recently started collaborating with a range of Early Years settings such as The Mulberry House School in West London and Exhall Cedars Infant, Nursery and Pre-school in Coventry, to start together at the beginning and build Belonging in the Early Years from ages 2 to 7.

Building Belonging in Early Years Settings

The Headteacher at The Mulberry House School, Victoria Playford, leads with the vision: *‘Born curious, live curious, stay curious’*. A prep school in West Hampstead for ages 2 to 7, she wanted to bring to life their PSHE curriculum through their school values and ensure key social and emotional learning skills were being developed throughout the school.

Exhall Cedars Infant, Nursery and Pre-school in Coventry is a vastly different context serving an area of high deprivation. However, it is laying the very same foundations as The Mulberry House School. Headteacher Sharon Hillyard and PSHE Lead Bex Episcopo were keen to build Belonging in their pupils aged from 2 to 7 through self-regulation skills and oracy skills. They figured that if their children had time to understand themselves more deeply and were able to label their feelings and talk about them, they would feel a stronger sense of Belonging and be able to access learning more readily.

In response to this national need, our new Early Years resources will focus on developing Self-Regulation and Oracy skills. Early Years children and staff deserve access to high quality, evidence-based resources to support them in the vital work they do in establishing strong foundations on which to build learning and belonging for life. Excitement is mounting as we get started.

[Full Blog post here – Building Belonging in Primary Schools](#)





Belonging seen as key part of Ofsted Personal Development

***'Pupils' attitudes are infectious.
They truly reflect school values such as love, peace and
community. Pupils are tolerant, inclusive and accepting.'***

A message from Headteacher Li-Juan Ellerton, Waltham St Lawrence Primary School which has been using The Big Think for the past 5 years.

*The impact of The Big Think cannot be overstated. It has positively affected the lives of our children at WSL, helping them develop important values: **Love**, **Truth**, **Peace**, **Responsibility** and **Community** and many related values such as empathy, respect, integrity, patience, courage, etc. These values are crucial for their personal growth, academic success, and future contributions to their communities and society.*

The Big Think programme has empowered us to continue fostering a positive and inclusive school culture, where children learn not only academic skills but also the values that will continue to guide them and have a lasting impact on their future lives.

It is with enormous pleasure that I write to share the fantastic news that our school has once again, for the second time, been rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, the highest grade, following the intensive inspection in February 2023. The final Ofsted Report was published in late April 2023.

As you may be fully aware, it is extremely difficult for any school to maintain the highest judgement of 'Outstanding'. We are the only school so far in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to maintain a grading of

*Outstanding under the new framework.
I am delighted that Ofsted has recognised all the excellent work going on here at Waltham St Lawrence. The inspectors noted how we have maintained an Outstanding Quality of Education, effective Safeguarding and continued to drive improvement across the school, since our last inspection in February 2017.*

The Ofsted Inspectors commented that:

“Pupils’ attitudes are infectious. They truly reflect school values such as love, peace and community. Pupils are tolerant, inclusive and accepting.”

TBT team know that Ofsted need to adjust their process to always be supportive of schools and collaborative, but we are still proud of the 'infectious attitudes' of the WSL pupils - although in our programme we replaced the value of tolerance with 'openness', 'non-judgement' and 'celebrating difference' (as tolerance just isn't good enough!)

Empathy Day 2023

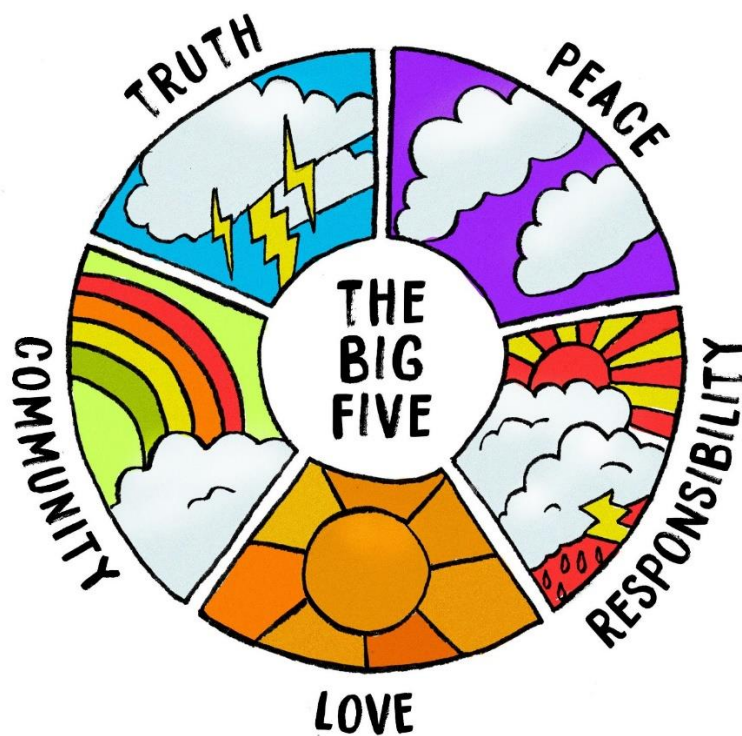


If you want to Build Belonging in your school community, make sure your school joins the fabulous line-up on **Empathy Day 8th June 2023!** You can meet The Big Think Lead Author Maisie Chan and learn how listening to others has helped shaped Maisie's writing journey and you can find out what her Empathy pledge is.

You can also download The Big Think free Empathy Assembly and Lesson Kit with a Silent Sitting Meditation, a Big Story, a Song and Big Talk scenario to explore.

Go to our Home page and scroll down to the footer to access free resources

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