



Building Emotional Strength Together

BEST Summary of Findings



232
participants

Took part in our creative guided reading programme.

BEST is an early intervention programme aimed at improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children on the autism spectrum aged 4-7 years. This programme uses the power of storytelling and psychology to address specific challenges faced by autistic children. Using a model of creative guided reading, stories are read to the children and discussion breaks are taken where psychologically informed questions prompt reflection around different themes.



Our BEST programme was separated into two strands:

Strand 1

Enhancing understanding and awareness in schools

This strand focuses on addressing the lack of understanding and awareness about autism in schools. The aim is to reduce instances of bullying, social isolation and stigmatisation experienced by autistic children.

Strand 2

Building resilience and emotional coping skills

This strand is designed to help autistic children learn how to cope with and manage their emotions effectively. The aims are to help children build resilience and develop essential emotional coping skills.



Here are the key results from Strand 1 6-7 year olds:



Main Finding:

Overall a **significant improvement** in attitudes was observed between the pre- and post-assessments. Participants showed better understanding and inclusivity after the intervention.



After completing our programme:

90%

of children said they would ask someone to play if they were sitting alone.

86%

said it's okay that some children need more help from the teacher than they did.

82%

would ask a teacher for help if someone was upset.

73%

know why some children like to be by themselves sometimes.

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Results

Primary 1 and 2 data collection required a completion of an end-of-programme feedback sheet where teachers read aloud statements, and children were invited to colour in whether they agreed with the statement or not. The children highlighted things they had learned from the programme and how they felt after hearing the stories. The feedback indicates the programme was successful in fostering understanding and positive emotions among young children.



84%

Of all the participants said they feel happy or calm after hearing the stories showing the positive emotional impact.



What 4-6 year olds students learned from the programme:



89%

To ask a teacher for help if someone was upset



82%

That it is ok that some children need extra help



82%

To ask other children to play with me



80%

To be kind to everyone



What teachers and children said they learned from the programme:

Teacher Feedback



"I feel the programme was very good at introducing autism to early years children".



"At the end of the programme I could see a big improvement in the children's confidence when using language to talk about Autism and when describing different behaviours and traits"

Keywords students learned:



Unique

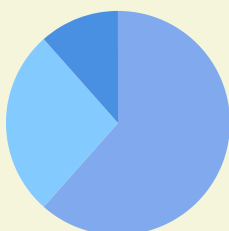


Non-Verbal



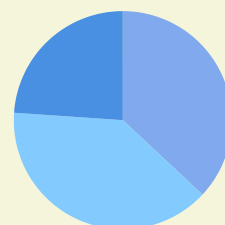
Autism

Favourite Stories



- Pablo and The Noisy Party (61.54%)
- Through the Eyes of Us (26.92%)
- Benji, the Bad Day and Me (11.54%)

What did you enjoy most about the stories?



- Listening (36.96%)
- Images (39.13%)
- Talking about the story (23.91%)

Strand 2 Results

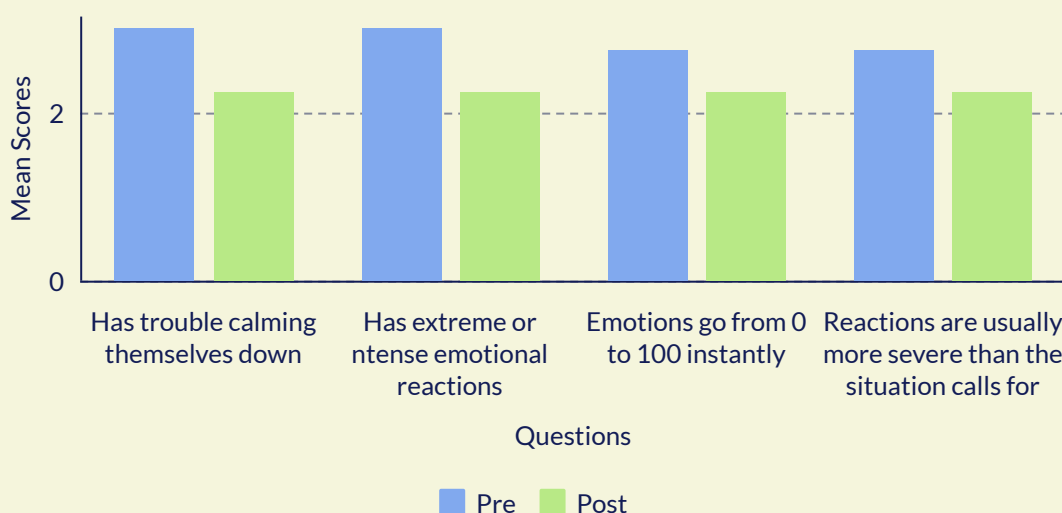
The data for this programme evaluation was collected through pre- and post-programme assessments completed by teachers working directly with children with autism. These teachers, who are familiar with the children's needs and behaviours, provided feedback on the children's emotional regulation and social skills before and after participating in the programme. Teachers were also asked to reflect on the children's enjoyment of the programme activities and stories, as well as their observed improvements in confidence and emotional well-being. This approach ensured that the data captured the programme's impact in a meaningful and practical context.



Our programme worked

A large and statistically significant improvement in emotional regulation was observed, showing the programme's effectiveness in helping children with autism manage emotions better.

Comparing pre and post programme scores



Improvements teachers noticed in the children

- Child enjoyed all our sessions. I notice slight increase in confidence
- Has become more supportive with peers, more patient
- Child has developed emotional literacy
- 100% Would agree that the child is better able to recognise and manage their emotions

Teacher Feedback

- 100% Enjoyed delivering the programme to the children
- 100% Thought the child enjoyed the stories, activities and overall programme
- 80% Would do the programme again
- Very well thought through programme