

**Annual Enquiry 2005  
Case study**

# Organic Learning Partnership NLC

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The Organic Learning Partnership (OLP) learning conversation at the Networked Learning Communities (NLC) Annual Conference 2005 drew a large audience. At the heart of this conversation lay the network's stated aim:

Giving pupils the language of feelings [and] emotions and strategies to raise self-esteem, confidence, empathy, and develop relationships in a positive way.

How the network is doing this already was the focus of the day, and it was clear that its members believed its strategies worked for them and their children and would work for others. Looking at the crowd around them, it was easy to see that their passion and enthusiasm were infectious.

### **Impact on children: attainment**

This case study is largely based on the experiences and insights of three research associates from three of Organic OLP's schools that have focused on emotional intelligence and emotional literacy. Meeting them, it is quickly apparent that they are enthusiastic about what is happening: they can see changes in their classrooms. This success at classroom level is connecting teachers and heads in the network. While passionate belief and aims are not enough to impact positively on educational standards, in Organic OLP they do seem to be powerful ingredients. This report aims to examine the ways in which the network's emotional literacy and emotional intelligence initiatives and experiences have brought about changes at school level that have led to improvements in pupils' engagement, achievement and attainment.

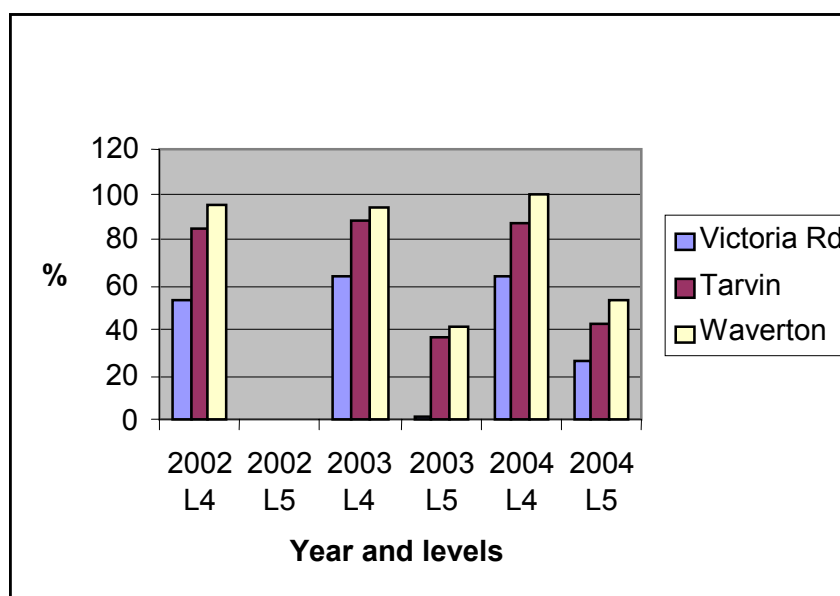
The three schools in question have varying socio-economic settings. Victoria Road Primary School, whose headteacher was the network co-leader, is in an area with high socio-economic needs; Tarvin Primary School and Waverton Community Primary School, where the new network co-ordinator teaches, are not. While levels of attainment vary enormously across the schools, reflecting their different socio-economic backgrounds, all three have shown increases since their involvement with the network. This is particularly noticeable at the higher levels, as for example the results for the Key Stage (KS) 2 standard assessment tests (SATs) in English demonstrate (Table 1 and Figure 1).

**Table 1:** Percentage of pupils achieving KS2 SATs results at Levels 4 and 5 in English, 2002-2004

School	2002		2003		2004	
	Level 4+	Level 5+	Level 4+	Level 5+	Level 4+	Level 5+
Victoria Road Primary School	53	-	63	2	63	26
Tarvin Primary School	85	-	89	37	87	43
Waverton Community Primary School	96	-	94	41	100	53

Value-added data from the Fischer Family Trust over the past three years also shows an improvement across the network at Level 4+ in English that is significantly higher than for similar pupils in similar schools. The rapid improvement at Level 5+, particularly for girls, is especially noticeable, though not for pupils entitled to free school meals. There are other factors related to the network's strategies that have contributed to the improving results, such as changes in teaching style and taking the differing needs of each cohort of children into account.

**Figure 1:** Three network schools: percentage of pupils achieving KS 2 SATs at Levels 4 and 5, 2002–2004



## Impact on children: attendance and attainment at Victoria Road Primary School

At Victoria Road Primary School, the intake of pupils is essentially from an extremely socially disadvantaged area. “The children face massive social, economic and family-related problems”, explains the head, who grew up in the community and came to the school as an infant.

Having been judged by Ofsted to have serious weaknesses in 2001, the school was placed in special measures three weeks after the headteacher had taken up her new post in 2002. This head went on to be co-leader of Organic OLP. By 2003, the school was described by Ofsted as ‘having increasing success in ensuring that the pupils achieve their potential, including the most able’. The report also said that ‘pupil behaviour is a strength of the school’.

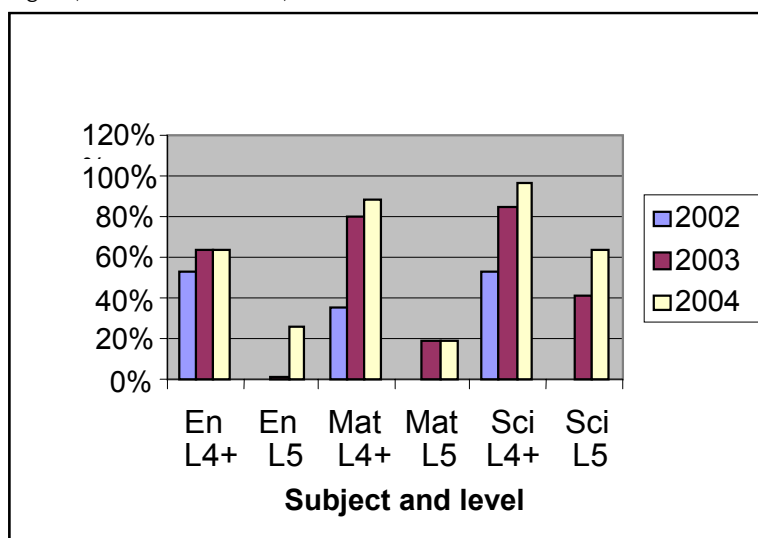
Attendance has varied between 93 per cent and 95 per cent over the past four years. In 2004 it was 94.5 per cent and it has since increased to 95 per cent with the help of family link workers. “SATs have gone up because of improved attendance”, states the head. SATs results have gone up since 2002, when the school first became part of the network, not only in terms of the number of children reaching Level 5 in English. Equally noticeable is the increase in the number of children reaching the national average and above in mathematics and science (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Victoria Road Primary School: percentage of pupils Key Stage 2 SATs at Levels 4+ and 5+, 2002–2004

Subject and level	2002	2003	2004
English Level 4+	53	63	63
English Level 5+	–	2	26
Maths Level 4+	36	80	89
Maths Level 5+	–	20	20
Science Level 4+	53	85	97
Science Level 5+	–	41	63

Waverton Community Primary School’s scores have also risen in all three subjects at Levels 4+ and 5+. Tarvin Primary School has maintained high levels.

**Figure 2:** Victoria Road Primary School: percentage of pupils achieving KS2 SATs at Levels 4+ and 5+ in English, maths and science, 2002-2004



The school’s positive impact on pupils can be seen in areas other than attainment. The headteacher reports a parent saying: “I feel this school has increased my son’s confidence.” Poor behaviour by a small number of pupils was one of the issues raised by Ofsted in 2002. At the time, the school put a lot of energy and effort into developing and changing self-behaviours, as the following cases indicate.

## Case 1: Year 4 pupil

### **Situation as described by the class teacher and assistant:**

*"Mother had four daughters and S ... [he'd] been uncontrollable ... demanding ... mum didn't know how to handle him."* In school he was disruptive and annoyed other children constantly: *"wound up others all the time"*. *"He could not take any criticism, was constantly tired, very upset, over-emotional. Mum was very negative; she 'wanted him to be taken away by social services'. She asked the headteacher to have him."*

### **Actions taken:**

S joined the nurture group most mornings and developed relationships there. *"Later he was able to go if and when he felt he needed it."* The school worked with mum, although this took quite a time, staff used techniques for focusing on the positive that were gained from the network training. Informing his mother of the smallest positive he had done they *"eventually persuaded her to use the positive rather than the constant negative"*. A vast range of positive reinforcements was used in the classroom, and awards were given for specific, small-step targets.

### **Outcomes:**

*"Mum doesn't want him to be taken away by social services any more"* (Year 5 class teacher). At the end of the year: *"He could go a day without you knowing he was in the class ... he could access his own work independently ... [there was a] vast improvement in his relationships with other children ... relationship with mum 110 per cent better ... mum wanted to come into school ... [it] became a haven for mum rather than another institution to battle with."*

## Case 2: Pupil now in Year 6

### **Situation as described by the deputy head:**

*"J has dyslexia. Throughout his time in school he found it difficult to mix and was aggressive to other children, hitting them ... complex family problems. Because of his anger people often thought 'not bright'."*

### **Actions taken:**

Outside team anger management used: *"problem-solving activities, alternative answers ... ways of responding when angry. Twice a week he goes to the Acorn room [a nurture room]. This is the time for him to talk about any problems."*

### **Outcomes:**

*"Now he takes on many responsibilities, is able to control his anger better, knows how to walk away, takes time-out sessions, far better relationships with others. Achieved Level 5 in science and mathematics, Level 3 in English ... [it] would previously have been Level 2 in English, Level 3 in mathematics and Level 2 in science."*

There have also been changes for children with less extreme behaviour patterns. The deputy head talks about a Year 6 pupil who was nervous, lacked self-esteem and did not like doing anything in front of others. Her self-esteem improved through being given responsibility, as a playground pal, peer mentor and by helping at lunchtime clubs: *"she will now perform in front of others"*. A Year 4 pupil was shown how to take responsibility for his behaviour and is now able to give himself a mark for his playtime.

Similar changes can be seen in younger children, as an interview with the Years 1 and 2 teacher and her pupils demonstrates. One little boy has *"huge problems with parents at home"*, explains the teacher: *"[the] first thing he does in feelings time is to say, 'my tummy is really*

tight ... my fists are". The teacher talks about him writing his name under 'angry' on the red leaf on the feelings tree. The same teacher has noticed over time how her class "can talk things through more calmly as to why things have happened [and] question themselves about why they've done things". This is confirmed by one of her children: "Miss asks us whatever we're feeling and we say why". They are learning how to talk about their feelings and understand why they are experiencing them. At the same time, as the class teacher explains, by regularly saying positive things about each other, they have moved on from making simple statements such as: "Olivia is nice" to being able to say why: "Olivia is kind; she helps me with my work".

## Impact on children: engagement at Tarvin Primary School

Dealing with emotions is "making a difference ... to children's self-esteem and confidence", says Tarvin Primary School's headteacher. It is giving them the "confidence to go to high school" and "tackle different situations", adds the deputy head, who goes on to give specific examples of dance as a tool for exploring emotions. Using New Zealand rugby Haka warriors as a stimulus, particularly to engage the boys, she got her pupils to create their own Haka dance as part of their project work on New Zealand. Their welcoming performance for the New Zealand team at the Manchester Commonwealth Games is an indicator of the high level of their achievement. As a result of this and as an outcome of work in the network, another group went on to perform to acclaim an 'emotions dance' (based on the emotions Year 6 children experienced at primary school) at the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) Annual Conference 2004.

The success of the emotions dance, the deputy head believes, had a very positive impact on the children's SATs results, particularly the lower-attaining pupils who "exceeded expectations due to a boost in confidence". The children achieved Level 4 in all but 7 of the 19 core subjects for which it had been predicted they would reach Level 3. More pupils also got Levels 4 and 5 than was predicted (see results in appendix 1). "I do believe this was the result of the new-found confidence in many of the pupils", the deputy says, giving specific examples (Cases 3 and 4).

### Case 3: Year 6 pupil

#### **Situation:**

*"Had a statement for multiple learning difficulties and a behaviour plan [and] he was due to be disapplied for all tests."*

#### **Action taken:**

Involvement in emotions dance for public audiences.

#### **Outcome:**

*"Became more disciplined and worked as part of a team ... co-operated in his table group and as a result was entered for mathematics and science. Target Level 3 mathematics and science; he got Level 4 [in both]."*

#### Case 4: Year 6 pupil

**Situation:**

*"The joker of the class who disliked getting things wrong, so consequently he didn't try. He regularly refused to accept help."*

**Action taken:**

Involvement in emotions dance.

**Outcome:**

*"After being praised highly for his contribution to the dance ... [he] started to believe in himself, accepted help and tried; he exceeded expectations in his SATs."*

Four girls also did better than expected: "four very quiet girls, reluctant to take risks or ask questions, but after the dance took risks and asked for help whenever necessary. Their shyness decreased."

Tarvin Primary School has emotional intelligence and mind-friendly learning built into its school development plan, and the emotions dance performed by its children was one of the most successful activities. "The mindset of attempting everything was improved directly as a result of the dance, and confidence was gained", states the deputy head.

#### Impact on children: achievement and engagement at Waverton Community Primary School

Similar successes can be found in Waverton Community Primary School, where SATs results have risen over time in core subjects at both Levels 4 and 5. As for Victoria Road Primary School and Tarvin Primary School, the school has had successes at an individual level. One teacher, the network co-ordinator, talks about a girl in her class and the impact that the 'words matter' project work had on her (Case 5).

#### Case 5: Year 6 pupil

**Situation:**

*"Always had a poor self-image, victim in attitudes, unsure of herself."*

**Action taken:**

Used words matter over the course of six months.

**Outcomes:**

*"Totally different child ... took a major part in the school play. ... Her parents noticed the difference ... academic work soared, estimated as borderline Level 4 or 5, but achieved Level 5 in every subject."*

Through the network's words matter project, "children got the language of feelings", explains the network co-ordinator, who also talks of improved pupil behaviour and fewer playground incidents in her school. She observed that the approach gave a child with special needs in her class a new way of thinking: "She was enabled to join in class activities through this". Using Eva Hoffman's Learn to Learn questionnaire, she monitored improvements in the self-esteem and self-perception of her pupils over six months. For example, four pupils in the cases described above responded with "no" to the question: "Do you remember most of the time that there are people who love you and care about you?" After six months of ongoing positive feedback, the same pupils responded with "yes". Other responses changed too for these children, for example "yes" responses were given to: "Do you think that you are basically OK; good at some things, not so good at others?" and to: "Do you think that most people who meet you like you?" Previously the pupils had answered "no".

Comments taken from the year 1 project evaluation (Keating and Johnston, ) suggest that those involved in the project in the wider network have also experienced positive changes in attitude and behaviour at classroom level.

*Children are now using much more user-friendly and positive language. (p 10)*

*Children in Year 4 are more positive about their strengths. They speak to each other in a positive way and are more accepting of each other, they pay each other compliments. (p 9)*

*The self-esteem of the children and staff who have taken part is visibly improved and continuing to do so. (p 11)*

These changes have also had a positive impact on pupils' learning: 'pupils have a more positive attitude to work and persevere longer in trying to find solutions' (pp 9-10).

In Waverton Community Primary School, the words matter project on classroom dialogue has taken off, and through this and other initiatives "children have got the language of feelings" and are "learning how to handle their emotions". The words matter questionnaire illustrates the low self-esteem of some children. This has shifted over six months of weekly activities about building positive language, the network co-ordinator explains. Work on words, which enables children to have conversations about feelings, is moving children from "I can't" to "I can", for example, "but I just need more time", she states.

Again the year 1 project evaluation indicates that this approach is seen as being valuable and effective in the schools involved in the words matter project.

*With regard to the pupils, the initiatives we have implemented have had a very positive effect. Particularly the language that the children are now using – much more user friendly and positive. This has also impacted with the staff (most of them) and has generally had a very wide reaching, pro-active effect on the school as a whole.*

Keating and Johnston, pp 11-12

Waverton Community Primary School also makes good use of poetry for talking about emotions and personal qualities, such as 'How does that word make you feel?' Again, staff are working on words that enable children to have conversations about feelings. This work has led to pupils being involved in writing poems that have been published by the network, eg *I'm a Soft Blue Flame Inside* (OLP, 2005b), a children's poetry anthology written by Year 5 and 6 pupils from the network.

## **School processes: what contribution has the network made?**

At Victoria Road Primary School, the focus on emotional intelligence arose from the school being placed in special measures: "Something different needed to be done ... Low aspirations, low self-esteem and confidence of both children and staff needed to be tackled", states the head, explaining that previous intervention projects had not had an impact.

The head describes how, when she wanted help, she spoke to colleagues in similar schools, one of whom was to become the other co-leader of Organic OLP. They met "to discuss, learn, share passions" and "to do something other than exclude children". In doing this, they became a self-help group with a collaborative approach, a common ethos and a determination to learn how to deal with pupils' emotions. It is here that the roots of Organic OLP lie. Starting with adult learning from external sources to explore the theory behind emotional intelligence and strategies for implementing it, it became a network collaborating on how to deal with pupil and staff emotions.



By the group's second year, her school had become "manageable and the staff more stable"; she explains: "Teachers leaving was no longer an issue and there were fewer behaviour issues ... [and] behaviour was removed from the 'key issues' list quickly". The "attitude of parents to school improved immensely", she states, adding that: "Staff relate well to parents." A parent interviewed during the research praised the fact that her daughter, who has special educational needs, was able to go to the teachers and tell them how she felt. Two Year 6 pupils interviewed also voiced that teachers were approachable. If pupils had problems: "they will help us" and "they listen to you when you're angry".

The network is beginning to use the school as an example of good practice in emotional intelligence. Once seen as a failing school, its staff are now giving their expertise to other schools, which is having an enormous impact on the staff in terms of their own emotional intelligence, explains the head. They feel valued: "It has raised their self-esteem and their confidence." How did they achieve this?

### **Nurture groups**

Inspired by a course on nurture groups, the group went on to introduce nurture rooms in its schools. At a time when behaviour had been a significant issue in Victoria Road Primary School's Ofsted report, the nurture room was set up and strategies put into place to manage any inappropriate behaviour. A warning against doing this from a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) only made the headteacher more determined to continue: "After the comment I was walking down the corridor really upset, but then I knew I was going down the right path." For a year, one hour a day was given to personal, social and health education (PSHE). This was a risk, she states, given the government's pressure for higher standards to be attained in SATs.

The nurture room in Victoria Road Primary School is furnished as a home and is timetabled for classes to explore ways of interacting socially in home situations. It is also equipped as a time-out place for children who are experiencing social and emotional problems. The nurture group has continued and the school has now moved to developing a nurturing environment.

Today there is also a breakfast club. The leader of the club talks not only about children coming who are really hungry but also of their need to "get things off their chest" before they go into class. Teachers, she says, notice the difference in the children's mood from when they used to come in straight from home hungry, tired and stressed: "not going into class wound up". Parents are also appreciative. The confidence to embark on this initiative came through meeting and discussing the issues with other network heads.

### **Peer mentoring**

With the move to a nurturing environment, peer mentoring has become important in the school. Year 5 pupils and teachers have been trained by an educational psychologist in setting up a support system where pupils support other pupils. A pupil mentoring DVD is used for training by other network schools. Now in Year 6, these pupils are on duty in pairs every playtime and lunchtime and are identified by the bands they wear. Encouraged to talk to pupils and pupils to them, issues around home, bullying and pets dying come to the surface. Though confidential, the Year 6 pupils know to pass on things too complex for them, such as violence at home. For example, "one boy was very angry because his dad committed suicide ... This issue was passed on to staff who arranged counselling support", explains the deputy head. Year 6 pupils are also buddies to the children in Reception and this, the deputy head notes, is having a positive impact on "unruly Year 6".

## PSHE curriculum

The PSHE curriculum has broadened, although there is not a planned rolling programme of activities across the school. Asking the Years 1 and 2 teacher, who is newly qualified, how she knows what to do, she replies that she has peer support. The Year 5 teacher (the associate) is her mentor and works with her on circle time and feelings diaries. The Year 5 children have also helped her children with their feelings diaries. The focal point is children's feelings, she tells me: "I get to know at circle times from the children ... where they are at." Many of the activities are repeated daily for children to capture emotions as they occur, as with 'star of the day'. Here children say positive things about one of the children, who can choose five people they want to respond. Another day-to-day activity is the feelings tree: "We have a [picture of a] tree in our classroom with feelings on, sad, jealous, angry ... Whatever your feelings, you write your name under that ... That way, they can talk about their emotions", explains the teacher. This practice occurs in all classes in different forms, with older children being encouraged to be aspirational, as the dream catcher project illustrates. The dream catcher experience in Year 5 involved the teacher "listening to what you want to do", said one of the pupils. She then set up half-day work experiences in the children's chosen areas. This was thought to be "dead cool".

## Network characteristics

### Context

Organic OLP began in September 2002, its development based upon the existing partnership of a learning circle, that is, a few schools collaborating on a common need meeting regularly over the previous year (Keating and Johnston, ). The original 12 schools (11 primary and 1 infant), all from different settings in Cheshire, have now reduced to 9 schools and there have been 6 changes of headteacher in that time. Its core aim is 'to develop the emotional literacy of our children, which then impacts on their learning and behaviour in a positive way' (OLP, 2005b). Some headteachers still need convincing of the value of the network and its emotional focus.

### Sharing strategies

Across the network, emotional intelligence strategies targeting pupil improvement are being developed and shared: "Then each school develops things in their own way" explains the network co-ordinator. Ideas are embedded in classrooms and individualised. Circle time is used to look at emotions and feelings with children and at how they impact on their work. In one school, children put into a box ideas that they want to talk about from lunchtime. This gives them a voice on what is to be discussed. Thinking books and thinking diary approaches are being used as a means of tracking shifts in attitudes and where help is needed. For example, the deputy head of Tarvin Primary School reported that one child wrote in the think and reflect book: 'You wrote "well done" but I don't know what to do'. The teacher now knows there is a problem and is able to address it. Ideas for playtime books and happy playtime noticeboards for recording feelings at playtime are being shared across the network, and playground pals are being established. This enables children to have their say: one child has requested a friendship bench. Worry books, boxes or bags, for example, may highlight what happens in a fight. Compliments books or walls may build self-worth: "Whenever I'm angry I look at my picture" (a photo with four or five personal strengths), said one pupil, while discussion groups are used to encourage children to tackle and deal positively with emotions. A variety of self-esteem activities including 'I can' books, boxes or displays also aim to raise self-esteem. There is also the OLP resources box, a stimulus for discussion that can be 'used by all year groups' (Keating and Johnston, p 10).

One of the most powerful activities for staff and children seems to be the bring and brag sessions that happen across the network. These aim to develop confidence and sharing and to

address the self-esteem of adults as well as children through ‘sharing excellence, encouraging staff to try out examples in their own classroom’ (Keating and Johnston, p). Confidence is gained through taking things, and a lot of ideas come from it: “Different staff go ... and feed back” said Year 5 and Years 1 and 2 teachers from Victoria Road Primary School. Teachers share practice and get praise: “It’s a joy to be with people who’ve got the same passions ... It’s given us the idea that there is time to talk.”

## Empowering and valuing individuals

The steering committee meets half-termly, and the co-leader sees it as a critical friend. Along with its higher education institution (HEI) partner, Manchester Metropolitan University, the leadership, which is made up of former headteachers and deputies, believes in empowering people. The committee has progressed to become a mix of headteachers and teachers, and the network’s co-ordinator is a full-time teacher. Non-teaching staff have led conference sessions and training opportunities are sought that value people. The network evaluates its actions by taking note of comments about how people feel.

Positive relationships are seen as one of the network’s strengths, along with its practice of professional development through bring and brag: “an effort to value people” says the head of Victoria Road Primary School who is also co-leader of the network. Teachers talk about how their professional development has been enhanced. The success of this activity is partly reflected in the following comment: “One of the greatest effects of being in the network [that] we have achieved is teachers staying in the job” remarked the network co-leader and head of Victoria Road Primary School).

Victoria Road Primary School and Tarvin Primary School have recently hosted an afternoon school conference for Key Stage 2 children from different schools. Eight pupils attended from each school and set up a stall of ideas they are using to develop emotional literacy. Here the children are practising and improving their ability to speak to and interview peers they have not met before and are building up their confidence to explain their work on feelings, as well as to ask questions of others: ‘It was brilliant to see the children sharing ideas and experiences so confidently.’ (OLP, 2005a p).

The enthusiasm of the people in the network, seen during the NLC Annual Conference and this research, is extremely high, as is their commitment to the network’s purpose: ‘providing a dynamic exchange of ideas, support and learning about how to achieve this vision for children and staff in a creative way, with an emphasis on developing practical strategies in the classroom’ (OLP, 2005c p). They have experienced the changes that the focus on emotional intelligence and literacy - the network focus - have made in classrooms.

## Accountability

Accountability comes in the form of “always thinking about where we’re going”. It is the nature of people, the steering group, to ask, “Is this good enough? What’s the quality like?” When inviting people to speak “someone checks them out first ... Does it meet our needs?” (co-leader). The journey of the first year of the project has been captured on a video, *Bringing Learning to Life*, which involves five schools and captures moments where members ‘listened – shared – debated’. Examples of successful learning and thinking about what helps to make this a positive experience are captured in the OLP booklet *Who You Are Makes a Difference* (OLP, 2005d). These sources provide evidence of self-evaluation through supportive, reflective practice.

## Enquiry

Early on, the network brought in international experts in emotional intelligence in order to learn about the theory behind emotional intelligence and strategies for implementing it. Now it also provides a lot of opportunities for discussion. For example, the protocol for emotional intelligence strategies has been discussed across the network. Responses to the learning taking place at these meetings have been positive.

*“I have felt uplifted after each of the meetings I have attended. They left me with a positive attitude and a feeling that there was some really good stuff going on within the county. There is often a lot of very negative talk about children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties but this project is an extremely valuable resource to be used to tackle issues and support both the children and staff.”*

Keating and Johnston, p 11

The network also uses an enquiry approach. The co-ordinator has worked with and used Eva Hoffman’s *Words Matter*, which looks at the negative language teachers and children use. Words matter classroom materials are soon to be published by the network for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. These are based on case-study research (12 teachers, 3 Key Stage 2 and 3 Key Stage 1 schools) and are designed to develop the use of positive language and build self-esteem in the classroom.

## Building capacity

While the recent blue sky thinking day, led by Sir John Jones, re-energised teachers and gave them time to reflect, there is also evidence of significant capacity-building and support through school-to-school learning.

*“After attending the Leading Change in your School workshop [I] became more focused on my style of leadership and the importance of reflection. This was disseminated at staff meetings.”*

*“The talk by someone from Ashton Hayes [school] on using compliments inspired the Year 2 teacher, who has used this very successfully.”*

The emotional learning strategies have had widespread impact, and practices are becoming embedded now as teachers in classrooms see their value. Network meetings have actively influenced this change of practice in schools. Staff see something working in one school and change their practice as a consequence. For example, the deputy head of Tarvin Primary School visited Waverton Community Primary School to see its lunchtime arrangements. She chatted with the children and asked how they felt about the move to family groups where Year 6 children were responsible for setting the agenda. She talks enthusiastically about the changes made to the way lunchtime is organised at her school as a result of her visit: “Now the children are in family groups and through the buddy system Year 6 pupils are looking after younger pupils. This is having a positive impact, it is improving pupil behaviour.”

The emotions dance project described above is also being used to develop practice throughout the network. The success of the work in Tarvin Primary School, with its link to the Commonwealth Games, was repeated at the school the following year. Target assessments at the start of the year, compared with actual attainment, show positive pupil impact. This success is now being extended to other network schools and the deputy head is working in other schools to train staff and work with children on similar dance projects.

Network schools are also working together on other projects. Two books have recently been produced. *Laszlo Lost and Found in Budapest*, a Key Stage 1 storybook, produced by the OLP, deals with feelings: ‘Laszlo knew that the most important thing in his life is to be loved by

someone and know that he is special' (OLP, 2005c p 19). The book about a lamb's adventure in Hungary is based on the experience of a group of Cheshire teachers on a British Council visit to Budapest in 2004. The purpose of their visit was to look at good practices in primary schools and think about 'ways to improve their own classroom practice' (Nexus, Summer 2005). The visit made a significant impression; they saw what was "achieved there on emotional education", and "this made them even more determined to go down that route on their return" said the network co-ordinator from Waverton Community Primary School. Another shared publication project was the writing of *I'm a Soft Blue Flame Inside* (OLP, 2005b), made up of poems written by pupils in Years 5 and 6 from three schools: 'The child's voice resounds with astonishing clarity and honesty in all areas of life if given the language to do so' (Nexus, Summer 2005 p).

## Sustainability

Its recent relaunch reiterated Organic OLP's firm belief in its sustainability: "The network is continuing to grow and the shared vision is as strong as when the network evolved", states the network co-ordinator. She offers evidence of this: "The schools on the periphery are now taking a lead in some new projects. Professionals from other disciplines [have] found inspiration, including a district school nurse who works in a cluster of schools in a high-stress area. She has taken many ideas away as the staff needs and children's problems could be directly addressed by [emotional literacy] strategies." An educational psychologist echoed these comments.

There is evidence of systems leadership too: "At a recent conference, two members of staff led two workshops sharing our emotional well-being activities for both pupils and staff" reported a Year 5 teacher from Victoria Road Primary School. Opportunities to lead sessions are occurring both inside and outside school. Staff are leading staff meetings in other schools. For example, the deputy head of Tarvin Primary School led a staff meeting at Victoria Road Primary School, and teachers are going into other schools to teach classes. Victoria Road Primary School's Year 5 teacher was a peer mentor, supporting a newly qualified teacher in another school by using a collaborative approach and demonstration. This practice, she says, raises teachers' self-esteem and encourages risk-taking. There is also network-to-network learning taking place with Manchester's CHILL Educational Partnership Network: they link for specific activities such as developing leadership.

## Conclusion

*"It's the little things that seem to make the difference."*

Network co-ordinator

As those critical of the emotional intelligence agenda have argued, children are not simply 'learning to learn' but, as Organic OLP is demonstrating, the agenda is a powerful tool in assisting learners to learn. With its origins in a self-help group and in schools failing to show sufficient progress in children's learning, as outlined in Ofsted reports, the network has gone on to demonstrate that by helping pupils to recognise and manage their emotions and related negative behaviours, pupil engagement, achievement and attainment can be improved. They have achieved this through a combination of factors: a belief in collaboration, enquiry and personalised learning, pouring huge amounts of energy into raising the self-esteem of children and adults, and a real passion to meet the needs of their children more effectively.

## Methods and sources

- Three visits were made to the network in June and July 2005, with Sara Beech, Beverley Dolman and Sue Buckley acting as research associates.
- A series of interviews was held with associates from three schools in the network (Tarvin Primary School deputy head, Victoria Road Primary School Year 5 class teacher, Waverton Community Primary School class teacher and network co-ordinator).
- Additional interviews were held with the head of Victoria Road Primary School, a parent, learning mentor, a small group of children and the leader of the breakfast club.

## Data available electronically

Plan

Summary of impressions: initial thoughts (GP/DH)

Summary of impact

Summary of process

Summary of network

Annual Conference Learning Conversations 23 June 2005 evidence base (GP)

Evidence base: summary of documental evidence (GP)

Research questions (GP)

Interview with three associates, 21 June 2005 (GP)

Interviews with staff at Victoria Road Primary School: head (DH), Year 5 teacher, Years 1 and 2 teacher, two Years 1 and 2 pupils (GP), 20 July 2005

Interview with network co-ordinator, 20 July 2005 (DH)

Interviews with two associates, learning mentor, leader of breakfast club, parent, Years 1 and 2 teacher without and with two Years 1 and 2 pupils, headteacher of Victoria Road Primary School (DH)

## Hard copy data

SATs data for the past three years for seven of the network schools at:

[www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk](http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk)

SATs data from NCSL technical support and data co-ordinator

Extracts of schools' Ofsted reports between 2000 and May 2005, where available

Photographs of : Victoria Road Primary classrooms and network members

NLG electronic documents, eg Year 1 review: traffic lights, development and finance plan

2004-2006, activity record; self-assessment record, network-o-gram

Fischer Family Trust data on attainment and value-added for the network

Timeline of what has been achieved or planned for 2006

*Nexus*, Summer 2005 p 32

Examples of children's work on feelings: Tarvin Primary School and Waverton Community Primary School

Network artefact: learner guide template, NLC Annual Conference 2005

Sample of words matter questionnaires

OLP website: [www.salt.cheshire.gov.uk](http://www.salt.cheshire.gov.uk)

Recent OLP steering committee agendas

OLP video *The Journey of the First Year of the Project*, 2003

Peer mentoring DVD

Tarvin Primary School development plan

OLP, 2005, children's poetry anthology *I'm a Soft Blue Flame Inside*

OLP infant reader: *Laszlo Lost and Found in Budapest*, OLP, 2005

*The OLP Evaluation Year 1, 2000/2003* by Dr Iris Keating and Michaela Johnston, Manchester Metropolitan University

Observation of NLG Annual Conference: Organic OLP's Learning Conversation, 23 June 2005

## References

- Keating, I and Johnston, M, *Organic Learning Project 2002/3, an Evaluation*, Manchester Metropolitan University  
*Nexus*, Summer 2005, p 32  
OLP, 2005a OLP Newsletter 5  
OLP, 2005b, *Children's Poetry Anthology: I'm a Soft Blue Flame Inside*,  
OLP, 2005c, *Laszlo Lost and Found in Budapest*,  
OLP, 2005d, *Who You Are Makes a Difference*



## Appendix 1: Pupil performance in Key Stage 2

**Class: BD**

**Year group: 6**

Name	English						Maths		Science	
	English overall target	English overall SATs	English (reading) SATs	English (writing) SATs	English (reading) target	English (writing) target	Maths SATs	Maths target	Science SATs	Science target
A	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
JB	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5
SB	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
JBr	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	5
TB	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
JC	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4
RC	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
CD	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
ZD	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4
ME	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
RE	2	D	D	D	3	2	4	3	5	3
SF	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
CG	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
AH	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
VH	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
PH	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
CH	2	3	N	3	1	3	4	3	4	3
LH	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4
V	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	3
BH	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
RK	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
LL	3	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	4	3
ML	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4
AM	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	3
GM	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
T M	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4
J M	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4



<b>CO</b>	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	3
<b>FP</b>	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>RR</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>CR</b>	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3
<b>ZS</b>	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4
<b>ST</b>	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>SW</b>	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>JW</b>	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
<b>LW</b>	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>OW</b>	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>VW</b>	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

### Class target

	<b>L2</b>	<b>L3</b>	<b>L4</b>	<b>L5</b>
English (reading)	1	4	18	15
English (writing)	2	3	22	11
Maths	0	5	19	14
Science	0	7	21	10

### Class result

	<b>No level</b>	<b>L2</b>	<b>L3</b>	<b>L4</b>	<b>L5</b>
English (reading)	2	0	3	11	22
English (writing)	1	0	4	27	6
Maths	0	0	0	25	13
Science	0	0	0	19	19