

PATHS TO SUCCESS

www.pathstosuccess.info

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Dear colleague

I am writing to invite your school to participate in an exciting research project called 'PATHS to Success'. Our project will evaluate the effectiveness of a primary school based intervention called Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS). PATHS helps children manage their behaviour, understand their emotions and work well with others. It is a 'universal' intervention in which all children in a given class take part. PATHS is supported by a very strong international evidence base. It consists of a series of lessons that cover topics such as identifying and labelling feelings, controlling impulses, reducing stress, and understanding other people's perspectives. It is designed to be delivered by teachers for about one hour per week (usually 3 x 20 minute sessions). Our project is designed to assess the effect of PATHS on children's mental health, behaviour and academic attainment.

Our research will use a 'randomised controlled trial' design - this is the gold standard method for testing if an intervention works. We will randomly allocate primary schools to an intervention group or comparison group. The intervention group schools will be trained to provide the PATHS intervention. Their teachers will then use the intervention materials to deliver lessons over a two year period to pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 (the comparison group schools will continue their usual practice during this period). Members of our team will work with and support these schools to ensure that PATHS is implemented well, and we will record any changes they make to see if this affects later outcomes. At the end of the two year period, schools will be free to continue (or, in the case of control schools, start) to implement PATHS. Further information is available at www.pathstosuccess.info

There will be benefits for **all** schools that participate in the project. All schools - regardless of the group to which they are randomly assigned (see above) - will receive the following in relation to pupils in Key Stage 2:

- Payment of £100 towards teacher cover for survey completion at each annual wave of data collection
- Bespoke InCAS/PIPS (Performance Indicators in Primary Schools) feedback (pupil, class and school level) will be provided on an annual basis. InCAS/PIPS is a standardised assessment system that provides information on pupils' reading and maths levels, in addition to their academic potential. See more at www.cemcentre.org/pips
- Bespoke aggregated (class and school level) feedback about the behaviour, social skills and health-related quality of life of pupils, derived from established, gold-standard surveys (e.g. the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) will be provided on an annual basis. This will be presented in a straightforward, accessible format so

that it can be used to inform school policy, planning and practice, in addition to providing useful evidence for the new OFSTED framework (e.g. Behaviour and Safety).

- An opportunity to be involved in a piece of cutting-edge research that has the potential to shape future educational policy and practice in England.
- An opportunity to explore and develop social and emotional learning practice as part of a network of schools in Greater Manchester

Schools randomly allocated to the intervention group will receive the PATHS curriculum package, as follows:

- Initial and follow-up training for Year 3, 4, 5 and 6* class teachers
- PATHS curriculum materials for Years 3, 4, 5 and 6*
- Ongoing technical support and assistance from an assigned PATHS psychologist (e.g. coaching, modelling, feedback)

*Training and materials for Year 6 will be disseminated at the start of the second year of the project.

We are able to offer all of the above to participating schools at **no financial cost**. However, we do need a commitment to fulfil our data collection requirements in relation to the target cohort of pupils (one class each in Years 3, 4 and 5 at the start of the 2012/13 school year). All schools will be asked to complete school, teacher, parent and pupil surveys, in addition to the PIPS assessments, on an annual basis in the summer term (e.g. June/July). In schools in the PATHS group, we will also need to collect data relating to implementation (in the form of brief surveys, observations and interviews) during 6 fieldwork visits in each of the two years of the project. These visits will be arranged on dates that are convenient to the schools.

We hope that this project is of interest to your school. A member of our project team will contact you by telephone to follow up this invitation and answer any queries you may have in the next few days. In the meantime, please feel free to visit our website, **www.pathstosuccess.info**, where you can find further information about the PATHS programme and our research project.

Yours sincerely



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