

Learn to manage your own emotions before you help pupils to do the same, says **Nick Morrison**

Teach from the heart

Emotional intelligence may seem like just the latest fad. Too “touchy-feely” for some, nothing more than common sense for others, while its terminology can come across as so much jargon. But that hasn’t stopped three-quarters of teachers wanting coaching in how to manage their emotions, according to one survey.

Research carried out by John Pritchard, a primary head turned training consultant, revealed a pressing desire among teachers for support in dealing with their emotions, in order to be able to teach their pupils to do the same. But few felt their school paid enough attention to this aspect of teachers’ development.

The study, carried out in conjunction with the University of Greenwich, surveyed 100 teachers in one London borough about their attitudes towards emotional intelligence, generally understood as the ability to manage emotions, either your own or other people’s. Although the teachers reported using a variety of techniques to help develop this skill in their pupils, including circle time and role-plays, there were few opportunities for them to discover it for themselves.

“Teachers would relish the opportunity for reflective learning and practice, but they just don’t have the time for it,” says John, who taught in Bromley, south-east London, before setting up Enlighten, his leadership and management business. “But if teachers can understand their own emotions, they can apply that to help their pupils lead more fulfilling lives.”

The survey found that 74 per cent of teachers felt they could benefit from coach-



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ing in how to understand and deal with their emotions, with three-quarters of those ranking the need as between three and five on a scale where one was the least need and five the greatest. But less than a third (29 per cent) said this area was adequately covered in their school improvement plan.

John says that many teachers saw emotional intelligence as particularly important

in managing pupils’ behaviour, but that it also had relevance to anger management, relationships with pupils and other teachers, and to achieving a satisfactory work-life balance. However, he says it was often only applied to deal with issues as and when they cropped up, rather than being part of the school’s ethos.

He says one option would be to establish networks in which teachers could can each other. “It’s clear that teachers feel that understanding their emotions would help them teach more effectively, but it is also clear that this is a need that is not being met.” ■

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