

## THE DECIDER LIFE SKILLS AT AMHERST PRIMARY SCHOOL, GUERNSEY

All the teaching staff of Amherst Primary School participated in a half-day The Decider Life Skills workshop led by Charlie Cox and Emma Cusack of The HUB, Guernsey, in the February half term 2017.

### Teaching the children

All the staff were enthusiastic about teaching the children, and they immediately gathered a "NED's Tool Box" for every classroom in years 2-6. The boxes contain the books (all children have a handbook each) and props for teaching the skills. NED stands for Never give up, Encourage others, and Do your best, and has been used by Amherst School for some years.

Each teacher taught their class 3 of the skills a week over 4 weeks. The children responded very positively. The staff have aimed to embed the skills into every day life at school – in the classroom and playground. They gave numerous examples of the practical use in dealing with situations, and also in the everyday language of the school.

The school hears about how the children are using the skills at home: One child told about how his parents were arguing one evening, so the child put his hand up and shouted "STOPP", take a breath etc. It worked! The parents then asked the school about it.

### Family sessions

The school thought a few of those families needing more support would benefit from the parents also learning the skills. This took place on Wednesday evenings for 4 weeks, again 3 skills per week on average. These sessions were initially challenging, but both parents and children engaged well.

Both children and parents were asked to complete questionnaires on the first and last sessions.

They're now on their second parent/family course. Each child "graduates" at the end of the course. They're given a certificate and a small "crystal clear" crystal. They take family photos of the graduation ceremony.

One parent sent an email to the headteacher describing the benefits of The Decider Life Skills for her son. She said he was very resistive at first, refusing to engage. However, by week 4, there was a noticeable difference. She said "he's used Opposite Action twice tonight!"

Quotes from parents include:

- "I have noticed a big change in behaviour over the last 2 weeks. I put part of this this down to him understanding the Decider Skills"
- "I have found this very useful and I feel it will be of help as we learn to use it in our day to day life"
- "I would say doing it with the children was a very good idea. It was good for them to learn together"

### Feedback from the Headteacher:

*"The children's responses were so positive- all noting substantial changes in their capacity to manage emotions. Wow!*

*The strength and value in this is having a whole school language for children to articulate their feelings. It is used across the school, in managing situations. One playground incident involved dealing with a fight. On speaking to one child he commented "my fizz is a 1- I'm ok. His fizz is a 10- you'd better go to him!"*

*The HUB have been amazing supporting us by delivering training, guiding us through the skills, providing answers to our endless questions and enabling us to deliver a programme that really makes a difference."*

### The future

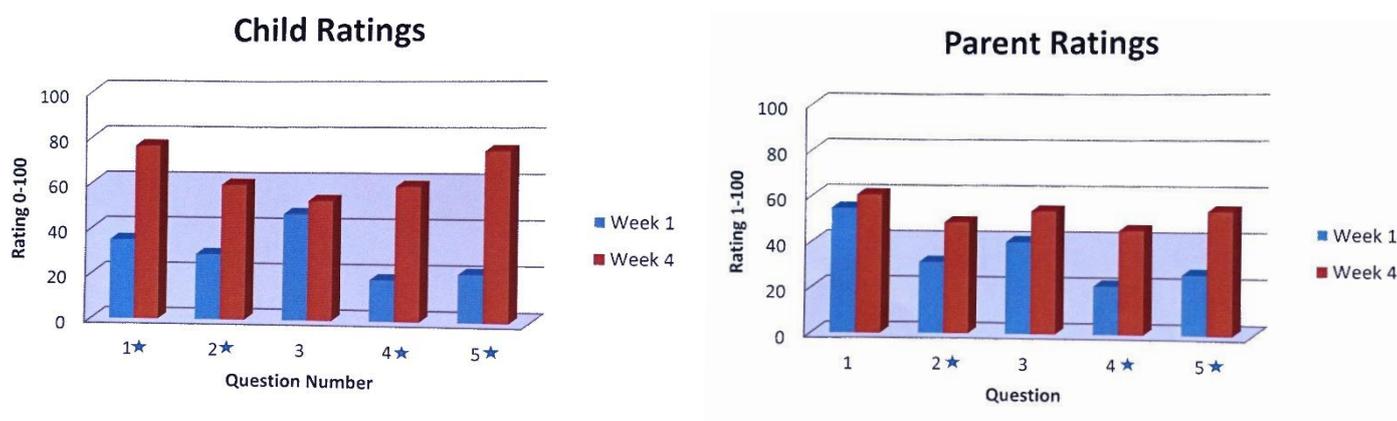
Initially, the school felt Reception and Year 1 children were a little young, but they now plan to introduce STOPP skill by just teaching them the first 2 steps of Stop, and Take a breath and also Right Now skill.

The school have started producing short videos of a child explaining the skill, which they plan to add to the school website in response to parents requesting information. There are also plans for a parents information evening.

### Analysis of the Questionnaire completed by Dr James Murray, CAMHS, Guernsey

The Decider Life Skills training provided for 6 children appears to have increased perceived ability to manage and control feelings, understanding of actions and knowledge of positive actions to take.

Below are two graphs to show the questionnaire ratings by both children and parents at week 1 and week 4. A star next to the question number indicates that we can be confident the change is likely to be due to The Decider Skills training and not errors of measurement or other factors. However, this increase may be wrongly estimated due to a small number of pupils.



Below are a table and description for each question. The scales were converted into scores of 0-100, corresponding to how much the participant agreed with the statement.

Question 1 (“I/they can talk about my/their feelings with someone”) was rated as higher by both the child and the parent after the 4 weeks. However, only the child ratings were statistically significant.

Q1		Week 1	Week 4
Child	Mean	34.9	76.3
	Range	(1-55)	(22-100)
Parent	Mean	54.6	60.6
	Range	(20-98)	(37-94)

Question 2 (“Things feel too much for me/them to manage”) was rated as higher by both the child and the parent after the 4 weeks. Both were statistically significant.

Q2		Week 1	Week 4
Child	Mean	28	59.3
	Range	(1-46)	(45-75)
Parent	Mean	31.1	48.7
	Range	(12-46)	(24-73)

Question 3 (“I/they understand why I/they act the way I/they do”) was rated as higher by both the child and the parent after the 4 weeks but this was not statistically significant.

Q3		Week 1	Week 4
Child	Mean	46.7	52.6
	Range	(35-78)	(8-100)
Parent	Mean	40.1	53.7
	Range	(15-78)	(35-77)

Question 4 (“I/they feel able to control my/their feelings”) was rated as higher by both the child and the parent after the 4 weeks. Both were statistically significant.

Q4		Week 1	Week 4
Child	Mean	18.1	59.0
	Range	(0-45)	(20-100)
Parent	Mean	21.1	45.4
	Range	(1-46)	(9-81)

Question 5 (“When my/their feelings get too much, I/they know what positive actions to take”) was rated as higher by both the child and the parent after the 4 weeks. Both were statistically significant.

Q5		Week 1	Week 4
Child	Mean	21.0	74.7
	Range	(0.47)	(45-100)
Parent	Mean	26.3	54.0
	Range	(4-56)	(27-74)

The Decider Life Skills are proving to be an effective and adaptable model for use in schools for teachers, pupils and families. Clearly, more clinical data would be useful but feedback so far is extremely promising.