



# HAPPY-CENTRED SCHOOL PROGRAMME

## A Teacher's Guide





# Introduction

**Welcome to the Laughology Happy-Centred Schools programme; an evidence-based PSHE programme that will enhance the personal, social, emotional and economic wellbeing and happiness of your school community, as well as promoting effective mental health strategies for pupils, parents, teachers and support staff.**

---

In England, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, great importance is placed on Personal, Social and Emotional Development. Along with Communication and Language and Physical Development, it is a prime area – recognised as one of the 3 building blocks which support learning in all other areas for our youngest children.

At Laughology, we believe PSHE is just as important, in fact fundamental, in supporting the further development of motivated, enthusiastic and happy learners throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.

For some years now, children in England have surveyed poorly for satisfaction with life as a whole, happiness and school experience. In 2016, the Children's Worlds survey of eight year olds ranked children in England 13 out of 16 countries for life satisfaction. We know that children's mental health services need improving and that more work needs to be done, as a society, in terms of prevention (The Five Year Forward View For Mental Health, Mental Health Taskforce Strategy 2016). Clearly there is a pressing need to address the issues that make our children feel unhappy and affect their learning.

Happy children learn more easily and are more engaged with school life. Increasing happiness in children can break the deeply ingrained, limiting beliefs and self-perceptions that stifle aspiration and hamper the ability to achieve. Launched in 2012, the Happy-Centred Schools programme (HCS) pioneered the whole-school approach to wellbeing. It is flexible, easy to use and, most importantly, it is fun.

The programme is designed to increase opportunities for all children, from the Foundation Stage to Year 6, to develop their personal, social, emotional and economic skills and work to achieve and/or maintain good mental health. Strategies are introduced in discrete, sometimes cross-curricular, lessons. Children are then encouraged to apply these strategies and skills across the curriculum, the school day and in their home lives.

# Scientific basis

The scientific study of happiness has gained traction in the past decade. The HCS programme is underpinned by data and results, from studies into happiness, from the fields of neuroscience and psychology.



The principles behind HCS are drawn from Laughology's own research.

This has been supported by research of academics such as Dr Martin Seligman, a pioneer in the field of positive psychology, and Andrew Oswald, Professor of Economics at the University of Warwick.

Happiness research and surveys repeatedly highlight common themes which people associate with happiness. These themes form the basis of the HCS programme. There are five in total and each is a vital factor in achieving happiness.

## The core themes are:

1. Self- Confidence
2. Achievement & Success
3. Positive Relationships
4. Support
5. Coping Skills

Several factors feed into each of these themes (see appendix 1: The Happiness Matrix). Each theme is repeatedly identified in studies as a foundation to achieving a motivated, positive growth mindset.

It is important to understand that the HCS programme does not deliver happiness as the ultimate 'destination'. Rather, it promotes happiness as a life skill. An individual's happiness is reliant on many external as well as internal influences. Everyone will experience sadness, anxiety, fear and other negative emotions in life. This is natural. What the HCS programme aims to do is to give individuals the key skills needed to cope with adversity and to develop a positive attitude and mindset, leading to confidence, self-belief, motivation and engagement. We feel, when explaining and talking about happiness with children, staff, parents and the wider learning community, that it is important to understand and discuss happiness in this context.

The HCS programme embeds these skills in the school by introducing ideas, thoughts and vocabulary which reflect the core happiness themes listed above and found in appendix 1. Vocabulary plays an important part in the development of behaviours. For this reason, the HCS programme relies on carefully selected words and phrases which staff, pupils and parents are encouraged to adopt and use.

# Structure

**The HCS programme is designed to run throughout the academic year, with a different focus during each of the six half terms.**

The first half term is concerned with preparing the class and school for the programme. This is done through a series of Philosophy For Children activities (P4C).

The focus of these sessions is to introduce whole class systems for building on and challenging others' responses in a respectful and thoughtful manner. They should encourage debate and consideration of other people's views, as well as providing opportunities to practise verbalising personal views and develop shared understandings. These skills will be used extensively in the following five half terms, when the core themes are taught.

After the initial set-up, the themes can be addressed in whichever order works for your setting, as content relating to each theme has been designed to be delivered independently.

While the HCS programme is a whole-school initiative, it is at your discretion whether you introduce the programme across the entire student community or in individual year groups. However, it is highly recommended that, if a whole school approach is being adopted, all year groups study the same theme at the same time. This enables a shared vocabulary and understanding to develop.

It also allows for whole school assemblies and celebrations upon the same theme.

HCS content is divided into separate lessons for each year group, from Reception to Year 6. The Reception lessons are entitled 'Foundation Stage' as there may be some ideas which Nursery staff would like to employ. There are six lessons for each theme. These are planned to last for approximately 45 minutes, however the suggestions are easily adaptable to suit the school or class timetable.

Each lesson plan comes with suggested vocabulary to teach. Whilst it is important to develop a whole school vocabulary, this list is not exhaustive and should be added to.

Similarly, some suggestions are made for differentiation and extension. However, it is recognised that school staff know their children's needs the best, so any revision to the plans will need to be class and pupil specific.

Each lesson plan provides the opportunity for teachers to reflect on how well the session went. Any annotations could be for personal use and assessment purposes, or they could be transferred to the following year's teacher for their information.

# Initial Set-Up

The set-up stage of the programme allows staff, pupils and parents to familiarise themselves with the aims and themes of the project and to prepare the school with relevant materials, posters and decorations.

Firstly, schools should identify two or three HCS Champions, whose responsibility will be to oversee the administration of the programme.

They will monitor progress, provide support and champion the project. Champions can be support staff, teaching assistants, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) or teachers with a particular interest in taking a safeguarding or wellbeing role. Champions need to have a good relationship with Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and School Leadership Teams.

Being a Champion does involve some extra work, but every effort has been made to make the programme simple, easy to use and enjoyable. Feedback from Champions has always been positive, with former Champions reporting that the experience has been rewarding and enriching, as well as providing great Continued Professional Development (CPD).

During the first half-term, Champions will make sure the school is HCS-ready. An important part of this is to ensure that every classroom delivering the core themes has a Happiness Tree in it.

The trees can take the form of colourful posters or three dimensional models and are fun to make (see various examples in appendix 2). If done with pupils, they allow the children to express their creativity and also familiarise themselves with the project. Different schools call their trees by different names; we recommend calling them Happy-Centred Trees or Happiness Trees. Initially each tree is bare, with the five core themes listed across the top. For Happiness Tree theme headings see appendix 3. Each theme is colour-coded for easy recognition.

It is also a good idea to place a tree in the school hall, main entrance and/or staff room. During the year the trees will 'blossom' with different leaves (see Resources).



We also recommend that inspirational material is posted around the school. This can take the form of photographs or phrases and each should fit with one of the five core themes (see appendix 4 for examples). These messages should include vocabulary that reinforces the theme's message. Posters can be made with the children after initial discussions about the themes.

It is a good idea to draft an HCS statement, which should explain what the school aims to achieve from the programme. The statement acts as a whole-school proclamation of intent, and focuses attention on the positive role the programme will play in school life. It should be placed near to the main entrance, where visitors and parents can also read it (see appendix 4). Choosing your own words, relevant to your school, is important.

It is also important in the set-up stage to send letters to parents explaining that the school is embarking on an exciting project and detailing what that will involve and what the benefits will be.

The letter should welcome parental support, input and engagement in the project and could also make them aware of some of the vocabulary being introduced, which they can use and discuss at home.

At the set-up stage it is essential to initiate classroom discussions with children using the Philosophy for Children (P4C) model of questioning. The aim should be to start children thinking more deeply about their emotions and about the different core themes. P4C will help them gain a deeper insight into happiness and what it means to them. P4C guidelines for teachers with recommended questions and a P4C Rules for Kids document are included with the programme. The Rules for Kids can be printed, laminated and displayed in the classrooms.

# Wider PSHE Curriculum

At Laughology, we believe that the five themes of the Happy- Centred Schools Programme underpin all other aspects of PSHE.



For example, children who have self-confidence, who know where and how to get support and who understand the difference between positive and negative relationships, are more likely to be able to keep themselves safe and less vulnerable to radicalisation or bullying.

Similarly, pupils who have healthy coping mechanisms in place, who know what personal achievement and success look like and who can identify the most appropriate people in their family and community to go to for support, are more likely to have good mental health and are less likely to turn to drugs and alcohol.

We also know that, while there does need to be direct teacher input in PSHE lessons, in particular to address any misconceptions, children often learn best from each other in peer discussions. To this end, there are additional Philosophy 4 Children questions at the end of each section to both reinforce the module and also to begin conversations related to:

## **SELF-CONFIDENCE**

- Body Image
- Health Education

## **SUPPORT**

- Cyber and Homophobic Bullying
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Human Rights

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS**

- Self-Esteem
- Emotional Literacy
- Financial and Economic Understanding

## **POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

- Sex and Relationship Education
- Citizenship
- British Values
- Anti-Radicalisation and Extremism
- Social Skills

## **COPING**

- Mental Health
- Drug and Alcohol Education
- E-Safety

We would encourage schools to use these discussion starters in conjunction with materials from a range of organisations with subject specific expertise, e.g. Childnet, NSPCC, PSHE Association, iPrevent, Forward UK (FGM).

# Philosophy 4 Children

**The first half-term of the HCS programme focuses on introducing and developing dialogic, questioning and thinking skills in the children.**

Throughout the Happy-Centred Schools programme, we want children to:

- Challenge themselves and their own thinking
- Work collaboratively with peers to develop a shared understanding
- Consider others' points of view and challenge them appropriately
- Verbalise their own opinions
- Think creatively and critically
- Make connections and distinctions
- Improve their speaking and listening skills
- Respect differences and diversity
- Solve problems and develop their reasoning
- Be reasonable, rational, reflective and open-minded
- Have great Personal, Social and Emotional skills which impact on all other learning

At Laughology, we believe that these skills need to be taught and rehearsed in discrete lessons in the first half-term, in order that children then get the most out of the five core themes, which will be studied for the rest of the academic year.

The most effective way of developing such skills, which can then be applied across the programme and the wider curriculum, is through Philosophy For Children (P4C).

During the first half-term, teachers should plan one P4C session each week. Guidelines, recommended questions and rules for delivering these sessions are provided.

Questions for each enquiry can be self-generated by the class, or the teacher can direct these. Ideally, each week's enquiry will be based on a different aspect of the five core themes: confidence, achievement and success, positive relationships, support and coping skills. This will enable the children to start investigating their ideas around the topic and, when one or more conclusions are reached at the end of the session, these can be recorded for further consideration when the associated theme is taught.

If you would like whole school training to plan and deliver P4C sessions, this is available as an additional extra, through the Laughology team.

# Whole School Opportunities

**If you adopt the HCS programme as a whole school PSHE programme to improve the happiness and wellbeing of all stakeholders, then there are many opportunities to build upon.**

---

Whole school or Key Stage assemblies are a fantastic way to launch each theme. In order to be 'in keeping' with the HCS lessons, these could have an initial question, be brought to life with photos and film clips and then include reflection time at the end. You will find an example of how to plan an assembly, and a blank proforma, in appendix 7.

At Laughology, we feel that there are endless news stories, adverts and up-to-date events which can be used to deliver fresh, relevant and exciting assemblies to capture children's imagination. For example: sporting camaraderie and success at the Olympic and Paralympic games or the London Marathon; people taking on new challenges in the face of adversity such as the Invictus Choir; determination to achieve personal aims like the Ostrich who flies in the Samsung mobile advert. These are all at the tap of a search engine button!

As well as assemblies to introduce each theme, schools often hold celebration assemblies – either weekly or at the end of each half term. This is an ideal opportunity to recognise the

achievements of children in their HCS lessons. Classes could be given the opportunity to share their PSHE work; individuals who have earned leaves could be applauded and the whole school Happiness Tree could be added to.

There are many opportunities, in each year group, for parents, carers, extended family and members of the community to be involved. For example, in the Foundation Stage, parents are asked each half term to provide photos and Magic Moment slips of their child displaying the theme's behaviours at home. Whereas, in Year 6, parents are asked to encourage their child to support people in the local community. You may like to hold a meeting for parents and carers upon launching the Happy-Centred Schools Programme to explain its purpose and their role within it. If you would like support with sessions for parents, these can be arranged through the Laughology team, as an additional extra.

# Resources



**There are resources for each theme to help enhance teaching. Some of these resources are supplied within the HCS electronic folders, some can be found on the internet, and others are commonly available objects.**

The lesson plans will notify teachers which resources are needed for each lesson.

Typically, school-supplied resources include objects such as balls and art materials. More specific HCS-themed resources, such as proformas, scripts and some stories, are supplied with the programme.

There are Happiness Tree award leaves specific to each theme. Some are blank, whilst others contain inspirational messages for helping children think about behaviours. For example, leaves for confidence include phrases such as 'make the right choice', 'believe in yourself' and 'try to help yourself'. Award leaves are colour-coded to the relevant theme. In lessons, teachers should discuss the behaviours they are looking for and add leaves to their HCS Happiness Tree accordingly. Whilst there are reminders, throughout the programme, to award leaves, this should be at the teacher's discretion. In order for Happiness Trees to flourish, we recommend that leaves are awarded generously.

You should also explore children's own ideas about other behaviours relevant to the theme. Discussing behaviours relating to specific themes with your class, and involving the children in this process, increases their learning. These class-generated behaviours and ideas can be written on the blank leaves, printed out for the relevant lessons and placed on the trees under the specific headings.

Pupils are also encouraged to award staff and volunteers with leaves, to ensure the whole school buys in to the programme and its aims.

The HCS programme uses popular culture as a stimulus and driver to engage children in PSHE - in particular the use of YouTube film clips. All clips have been carefully chosen to reinforce the lesson objectives. However, as with all aspects of the programme, there is flexibility for teachers to use different clips and images, should they so desire. Children and parents might also be encouraged to make suggestions, if they have seen something particularly pertinent to the HCS themes on the television or internet e.g. a sporting event in which one person supports another beyond expectation, a new advert which celebrates resilience and exceptional coping skills.

By noting any new film clips on the lesson plans, and by Champions storing them in a shared drive, the HCS programme will remain up-to-date and relevant, as it continually moves with the times. This will also enable the programme to be bespoke to the school's community and its interests.

Please do be mindful that, if the use of YouTube is restricted in your school, these clips will need to be downloaded off-site. There are websites which enable this.

# Lessons

The first half-term of each academic year focuses on the set-up of the programme and introducing and recapping on Philosophy For Children (P4C). The second half-term begins with lessons on the core themes.

The HCS programme folder contains lesson plans for each theme and year group. The plans provide content for weekly lessons and cover the entire school for the complete academic year.

Each lesson lasts approximately 45 minutes.

Lesson plans begin with preparation guidelines and details of required resources. Each section is clearly explained, to allow sessions to be delivered with ease. For example, the 'Direct Teaching Input' - your contribution to the learning - is explained in a simple, step-by-step way, to help guide staff through the activities.

The plans contain vocabulary lists that relate to the subject being covered. These can be sent home in the form of handouts to allow parents to engage in the process too, as it is important to encourage children to think about and use the recommended vocabulary wherever they are.

to groups and classes with a wide range of academic achievements, backgrounds and existing PSHE skills.

Some suggestions have been made for differentiation and extension. However, as teachers know their children best, they will need to decide if any other adjustments need to be made.

Within lesson plans there are opportunities to make annotations, observations and suggestions. To get the most from the HCS programme, we recommend using these sections, as they allow teachers and TAs to develop and evolve the programme to suit the school's specific needs. They also help maintain continuity from one year to the next.

The HCS programme is developed from an emotional intelligence psychology basis. However, compiling your own notes from each session will allow you to develop it from a teaching perspective. Notes allow for reflection on what went well and what could be improved. They can also be used for evaluation and feedback.

Lessons are designed to be delivered

# Outcomes

It is important to have an idea of how you will gauge the success of the programme overall, and for individuals, at the end of each theme and each year group.

Each theme is planned so that there are five taught lessons. These lessons build upon learning from the previous weeks, and previous years. Generally, these lessons involve group and paired work, hands on activities and watching short film clips to support the acquisition of skills and strategies.

The sixth lesson of each theme is designed to be more of an independent recapping task, in which children might be asked to evaluate their success against a personal target, write a letter of advice to a younger child or design a personal coping plan. These activities provide excellent opportunities for pressure-free assessments.

As we know, children are not always able to fully communicate their understanding of concepts, and acquisition of skills, through written work. School staff and parents should ensure that children are sufficiently supported to show the progress they have made through normal classroom practice such as scribing, annotating, observing, photographing, filming and recording conversations.

Some schools may like to identify children who are working at, below or above the expected level in PSHE. In order to do this, we recommend using the Happiness Matrix in appendix 1 and

the individual lesson questions as a basis for schools to devise appropriate assessment criteria, relevant to each year group and their setting. If you would like support to devise a bespoke assessment system, this can be provided by a member of the Laughology team, at an additional cost.

In terms of evaluating the impact of the programme on the whole school community, this is best done with the aid of an Outcomes Flowchart. A completed example can be found in appendix 5 and a blank Flowchart is available in Appendix 6. Identifying your desired outcomes at the beginning of the programme will help you set out your goals and illustrate for all stakeholders what success will look like.

If you would like independent support to measure and judge the impact of HCS on the whole school, a happiness audit can be undertaken by Laughology, at an additional cost. The happiness audit will gauge levels of emotional wellbeing and identify specific issues to address. It can be carried out with a specific year group or with the whole school. At the end of the year, the audit can be repeated to identify the progress that has been made and the next steps, as appropriate.

# They're happy!

The HCS programme has contributed to supporting school improvement and raised standards in a variety of areas, including end of Key Stage assessments. It underpins a school's ethos and, as such, its impact has been recognised by pupils, school staff, governors, parents and Ofsted inspectors:

'Pupils with specific learning needs thrive in a school that ensures their physical, social, emotional and academic needs are very carefully met.'  
**Kaizen Primary School,  
Newham**

'All parents who completed the online questionnaire say that their children are happy in school.'  
**Tolworth Junior School,  
Kingston**

'Teachers routinely promote good attitudes and work habits by, for example, encouraging pupils to persevere when they find the work difficult.'  
**Tolworth Junior School,  
Kingston**

'Staff work hard to ensure that all children are happy'.  
**St Matthew's Primary,  
Luton**

We hope you enjoy undertaking the HCS Programme and are sure you will see the huge benefits that other schools have gained from it.

More information about Laughology Happy-Centred Schools is available from [www.laughology.co.uk](http://www.laughology.co.uk)



LAUGHOL<sub>OGY</sub>

Suite 869, Kemp House,  
152 - 160 City Road,  
London EC1V 2NX

T: 0844 800 1701  
F: 0208 337 9262

[info@laughology.co.uk](mailto:info@laughology.co.uk)  
[www.laughology.co.uk](http://www.laughology.co.uk)