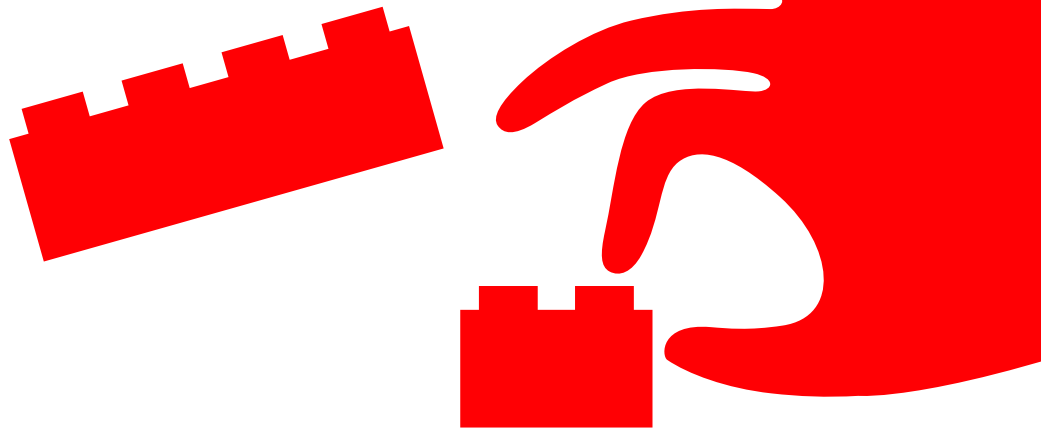


PLAY
INCLUDED



Boosting children's wellbeing

Brick-by-Brick[®]

Michelle is an Assistant Education Mental Health Practitioner at Cambridgeshire Community Services which supports the emotional wellbeing of children across 40 schools in the region.

Supporting social and emotional wellbeing

With an increasing number of teachers reporting low self-esteem, confidence and poor communication skills among their students, many schools are looking for additional ways to support children's emotional wellbeing.

Michelle and her colleagues deliver workshops and interventions that aim to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff in primary schools. The Cambridgeshire Community Services recognised that Play Included's Brick by Brick programme could help children learn how to express their feelings and feel more confident. Michelle's team therefore decided to enhance their provision by training in the Brick-by-Brick programme methodology as an engaging way to support the development of children's social and emotional skills through LEGO brick based therapy.

Implementing the Brick-by-Brick programme

After completing the Certified Facilitator e-learning and the Advanced Facilitator training with the founder of Play Included, Dr Gina Gómez de la Cuesta, Michelle and her team began delivering six Brick Club sessions (as they are known to children) across the primary schools they work with. The sessions helped students aged seven to 11 years old to build friendships, and confidence, through collaborative LEGO play. "The training was brilliant and I appreciated that there is an online portal of resources that you can continue to refer back to", notes Michelle.

She was also impressed by the support her team received from Play Included. "The team's enthusiasm has really shone through to us and I feel that they've always been there in the background." Michelle also liked that the Brick-by-Brick methodology is

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designed to be delivered over multiple weeks for the best outcomes: “The programme is more long-lasting than some of our other work so we’re able to really get to know the children during the delivery of the programme. It’s fun, the children love it, and we’re able to get involved too and so it’s very rewarding. As a team, we love it.”

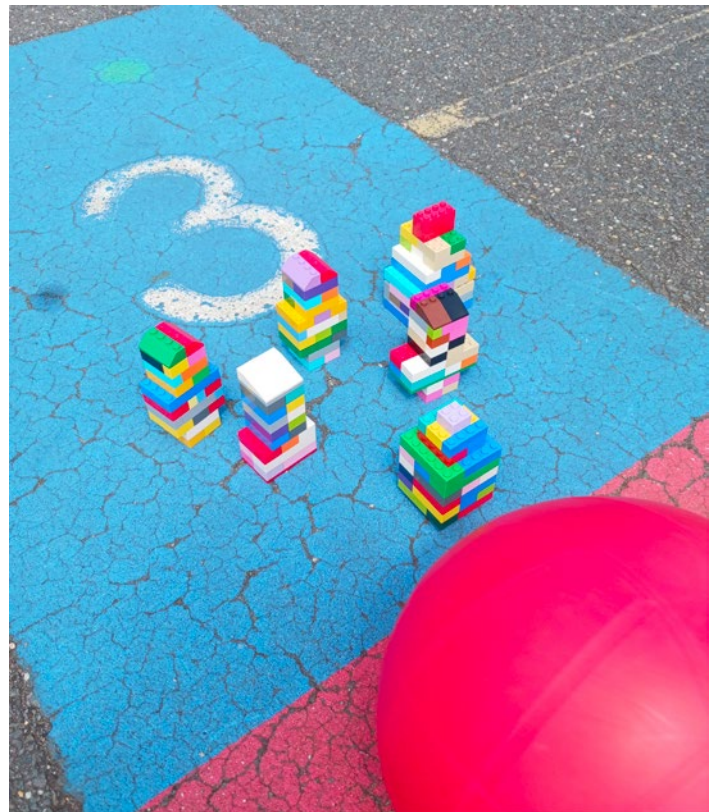
Growing creativity and confidence

The Brick-by-Brick® programme encourages children to participate in facilitated LEGO® set builds, where they build specific LEGO models, as well as unstructured free play, where they work together to create their own designs. Michelle believes that both types of play provide different benefits:

“The set builds enable children who normally want to play on their own to understand the concept and benefits of teamwork.”

Throughout the sessions, Michelle’s team gradually encouraged the children to start playing with one another, which helped to lay the foundations for the free play with LEGO bricks. Michelle added: “I really like the fact that the children’s creativity comes out during free play. It is good to see how they all come together to decide what they would like to build.”

During the eight week period of delivering the Brick-by-Brick® programme, Michelle was most struck by the increase in children’s confidence both in Brick Club and in their lessons: “Teachers have commented that the children are coming forward to ask questions in class where they didn’t before, which is absolutely amazing.” Michelle also added that after just eight weeks of Brick Club sessions, some parents commented that their children were beginning to open up and talk to them more at home.



Michelle’s team have also introduced a Brick Club journal to track the students’ progress, which encourages them to note down which roles they have played each week, what they have enjoyed, and what they would like to achieve in the next session. Students then take the journal home to share their creations and successes with their family, creating an important link with the learning that happens at school.

Most importantly, Michelle has been delighted to see the children’s joy in having the opportunity to play with one another:

“I would say that most of the feedback from the children themselves has been that they absolutely love Brick Club – they give it 10 out of 10.”

What’s next?

In the next academic year, Michelle and her team plan to build upon what they have learned in their first year to hone their delivery skills and run another series of impactful Brick Club sessions for a new cohort of Key Stage 2 students.

