Teacher Researcher Programme
2007/2008

The development of “Nonviolent Communication” in an Early Years Setting to support conflict resolution and develop an emotional intelligence related to both self and others.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their support in this research.

GTC Scotland for accepting my proposal and the grant, which allowed me to carry out this research in an area that I am particularly interested. To Ian Matheson in particular for his encouragement, support, feedback and acknowledgement of my research.

The children, staff and parents at Hope Cottage Nursery School for their participation in and support of the project. I appreciate the enthusiasm, flexibility, willingness, ideas and feedback of everyone involved. I have learned a lot from you all.

Penny Vine, a NVC trainer and Early Years Advisor for her support with my research project. I appreciate her passion, ideas, knowledge, advice, time and the caring attention that she has offered to me throughout this project.

Marianne Gothlin for sharing her knowledge, experience, enthusiasm and for organising our visit to the Skarpnack Free School in Sweden. Also for answering my questions and helping me to understand the NVC model more fully in practice.

Friends and family for their suggestions, encouragement, understanding, empathy, love and support throughout the project.
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1. Synopsis

Using the Nonviolent Communication Model developed by Marshall Rosenberg as the inspiration I tried to apply this to a nursery setting to see if this model could be used successfully with children aged 3-5 years.

The purpose of the research was to see if children would be able to use this style of language to negotiate and resolve their own conflicts and to see if through this model being consistently used they would develop an awareness and expression of their own feelings and underlying needs as well as developing an understanding and showing respect and empathy for the feelings and needs of others.

Although the children did not negotiate conflicts independently I found that with adult support and the help of 2 visual books the children developed an emotional language and intelligence which they used to negotiate conflicts very creatively and found new solutions which met everyone’s needs. It was very encouraging to see how creative the children could be and that they enjoyed this style of communication and asked for help in order to find solutions to their everyday conflicts with their peers. The conflicts are current and are resolved there and then.

I also realised that this model is more than a tool. It is an underlying set of values and ethos, which would pervade all our practice in order to consistently model and teach values.
2. Introduction

“Nonviolent (as in Gandhi’s approach) Communication” (NVC) is an innovative model of communication developed by Marshall Rosenberg, which is used all over the world in schools, prisons, hospitals and many other places to support relationship based work. It offers proven tools and processes to support inclusion and active participation where the needs, feelings and values of each individual matter (Rosenberg, 2005).

The nursery school in which I teach and manage had become interested in this Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model and all staff had received some introductory training. I thought that I had a good understanding of the model and was already applying it within the Nursery classroom. The more that I read and the more I reflected on my practice throughout this research I realised that I was not consistently “living” the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model. For ease for the reader I will use the term Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model but I also want to clarify that although I based the work on this model, I have translated and adapted it for use in the classroom environment. My interpretation and my choice of materials to use when applying it may not fully be Nonviolent Communication as developed by Marshall Rosenberg. I would like to acknowledge this in this paper in order for the true essence of the model to be upheld.

I have been interested for a number of years in a greater depth to behaviour management with an understanding that children behave in certain ways in order to meet an unmet need e.g. the need for attention, the need to feel important, to feel valued, to be accepted, for fairness. Our school behaviour management practice tries to find ways of supporting these needs in children as well as supporting children to take responsibility for and self regulate their own behaviours. I continue to be interested in exploring and developing behaviour management and the well being of everyone, including parents, in our setting. I wanted to use the NVC model:

- To support children’s growing self awareness and awareness of others.
- To develop empathy and respect within the classroom.
- For children to understand and express their own feelings and needs verbally as well as listening to the feelings and needs of others.
- For children to make their own choices and find their own solutions to conflicts where everyone’s needs matter.
- For children to behave in ways that meet everyone’s needs from their own intrinsic motivation rather than because the adult has told them that this is how they have to behave and reinforced this with either punishment for undesired behaviour or rewards for desired behaviour.

With the NVC model there is clear, honest communication of feelings and needs by both staff and children and I wanted to see if and how this could be used to maintain a healthy ethos and discipline within the classroom.

NVC offers an outline of how both to express yourself clearly in a conflict situation and to hear the other person. People are often not clear in their communication e.g. one child saying to another child, “I am not your friend.” NVC outlines 4 steps to use to make this expression clearer e.g. “when I see you stand on the snail, I feel angry because I was looking after the snail. I want the snail to be cared for.” This child really wants his feelings and needs to be understood and respected by his friend. In NVC the child would then make a request of the other child. The child listening to this can also share his/her observation, feelings and needs e.g. “When you say “I am not your friend, I feel hurt because being friends is really important to me.” The children would then try to find a solution together to this problem. With this style of communication it is more likely that a solution can be found and the children understand each other better.

In communication it is often what people don’t want to happen that they express e.g. “stop running in case you fall” or they do not give a reason for their request, “walk please.” If this is changed into a NVC communication it may be “When I see you running, I am worried, because you may fall and it’s
really important to me that you are safe and well.” In this interaction the child can hear why we are asking them to walk, and the underlying need to keep them safe. They are actively learning about beliefs and values.

It is hoped that the findings from this research into NVC will be of benefit to a wide range of practitioners as well as parents and children. Parents in the school in which I teach have already expressed interest in learning more about this model. Parents want what is best for their children and are looking for different ways to manage certain behaviours. They do not like to see their children upset, and are asking for help and support. Conflicts are part of human relationship. To find a way to negotiate these conflicts and find satisfactory resolutions for everyone will contribute to everyone’s wellbeing. There will be times when we would like children or young people to be able to say no (e.g. to drugs) and again NVC offers a model to support people to be able to practice saying no respectfully and clearly. The capacities at the centre of the curriculum for excellence also place importance on values, knowledge and skills that can be actively learned through the NVC model i.e. it seeks to develop:

Successful Learners with:

- Openness to new thinking and ideas

And able to:

- Use communication skills
- Think creatively and independently

Confident individuals with:

- Self-respect
- A sense of emotional well-being
- Secure values and beliefs

and able to:

- Be self-aware
• Relate to others and manage themselves
• Develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world

Responsible citizens with:
• Respect for others
• Commitment to participate responsibly in social life

and able to:
• Make informed choices and decisions
• Develop informed, ethical views of complex issues

Effective contributors with:
• Resilience
• Self-reliance

and able to:
• Solve problems
• Work in partnership and in teams, communicate in different ways and in different settings

I am interested to explore how these capacities at the centre of the curriculum for excellence can truly be developed within the classroom. Brian Boyd emphasises the growing need for creativity and importance of resilience. In a difficult situation what will someone do? If someone believes that they can solve a problem, then they are more disposed to try to find a solution. The core of this research project is trying to find solutions to conflict situations and teaching children that solutions are possible.

Hoffmann (2007) in his theory of empathy and moral development recognises the importance of active learning and the importance of a child’s own experiences. In his theory he talks of “induction” being the necessary environment for moral development, for “moral internalisation”. The key aspect of moral internalisation is “whether the transgressor is motivated to avoid the harmful act or at least feels guilty and acts prosocially afterward, and whether he or she does these things even in the absence of
witnesses.” (Hoffmann, 2007). Do our classrooms follow an induction model? Do we really provide a model in our schools that develops values within pupils to this internalised level?

Halstead and Taylor (1996) emphasised the need for schools to make their values explicit and for values to be inherent in teaching. Teachers communicate their values whether consciously or unconsciously. It is important that teachers are aware of what values are really being modelled in their classrooms. Do we really teach the values at the core of the curriculum for excellence and are there opportunities for children to think through these values and come to their own decisions. Halstead and Taylor wrote, “children will care more about values which they have thought through and made their own than about values simply passed down by adults.”

In applying the NVC model within my nursery class I wanted to find out if the values at the core of the curriculum for excellence could be actively explored in everyday situations and for children to internalise these values and to choose to behave in responsible and respectful ways.
3. Literature Review

The NVC Model

The intentions underpinning NVC are to develop a quality of relationship with self and other where everyone’s needs are considered and matter. Person Centred Counselling also emphasises the importance of authenticity as well as empathy and acceptance as the core conditions needed to build up a trusting and respectful relationship.

One benefit of using NVC language and having the intention of connection where everyone’s needs matter are that through this process people develop a greater clarity of what is important to them. In my experience in learning to use this model I have had to reflect on my own needs within the classroom - Why do I want to have certain rules? As well as developing a greater clarity in what is important to me, through learning and using this model I have also developed a greater connection with and understanding of other people - Why might a child be behaving in a certain way? What might the child’s needs be?

An understanding of ourselves and others is very important in order to live a happy and fulfilled life. This understanding is also important in order to be able to cooperate with and show respect for others as well as self. This is what we want children to learn in our schools. The NVC model provides an active tool through which children can live and learn cooperation and respect. NVC guides us to think about our responses in situations rather than giving a habitual, automatic reaction. Our responses become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling and needing.

NVC explains all behaviours as an attempt to meet a human need. Abraham Maslow (1962) lists the human needs of survival, protection/safety, belonging, competence/learning and autonomy or self-actualisation. NVC expands on the vocabulary of needs to include many others, including the needs for love, friends, fun, clarity, creativity, self-worth, celebration, honesty, support and understanding. A
full list is available in the NVC publications. In Rosenberg’s experience when people start talking about what they need instead of what is wrong, the possibility of finding ways to meet everybody’s needs are greatly increased.

Rosenberg (2005) also describes how the conflict happens not because the needs themselves are in conflict but rather the strategy to meet the need e.g. if a child insists that they want to play with one particular child who at that time may want to play alone, then there is a conflict at the strategy level. The child’s underlying need may be for friendship or a sense of belonging. This need could be met in different ways e.g. by joining a different group of children. Conflicts occur when people think that there is only one way to meet a need.

In addition the needs are universal – we all share the same human needs. This helps to understand what motivates people to behave in certain ways even when lifestyles and beliefs are different.

One important tool within NVC is the 4-stage structure called the language of giving and receiving. The 4 stage structure offers a tool to be used both to express yourself and to receive the other person.

To express yourself:
I say as honestly as I can: My Observations, Feelings, Needs and Requests

- Observation: I say what I see and hear – “When I hear …..”
- Feelings: I say how I feel – “ I feel …”
- Needs: I say what I need – “because I need …..”
- Requests: I ask for what I predict will meet my needs. “Right now I would like……. If you are willing ……..”

e.g. A parent saying to his child “I feel frustrated when I see that the bed isn’t made, because I have a need for support in keeping order in the house. Would you be willing to make your bed in the mornings?”
When listening to another it is the same process:

I make my best guesses about: Your Observations, Feelings, Needs and Requests

- Observation: I guess what you see and hear “When you see/hear……”
- Feelings: I guess your feelings “do you feel…..?”
- Needs: I guess your needs “because you need….?”
- Requests: I guess what might help meet your needs. “Right now would you like ….?”

E.g. A parent in response to hearing her child say, "Nobody likes me", may respond “So it sounds like you’re really feeling sad, because you aren’t having fun with you’re friends and you’d really like to be.”

There are many other examples in the literature of various dialogues between teachers and pupils or parents and pupils and how they sounded when NVC was used. With the practice of NVC there is more chance of the need actually being met. The need is articulated in a clear manner free from judgement, blame, guilt, demand, criticism, etc.

Diana Whitmore (1990), a Psychosynthesis Psychotherapist, clearly describes the importance of the relationship between the educator and the child. Educators need to be aware of the quality and intensity of their own feelings in order to respond appropriately to the feelings of others. She also explains how children do not blame their problems on the adults but perceive themselves to be bad. When a child feels bad, the child will find different ways to protect himself/herself. This may be behaving in ways that are expected and by over pleasing, or the child may be fearful and some may act as if nothing is the matter. She shows how important it is that we try to see the need behind behaviour so that the child can then reach out appropriately for these needs. NVC provides a model where these feelings and needs can be articulated and heard: the child hears adults speaking while learning to express themselves in the same clear manner.
The books by Rosenberg, Hart and Kindle Hodson also clearly explain what NVC is not. Much language that is regularly used by people in everyday life as well as in the classroom has the following characteristics:

- It labels people e.g. He is lazy, She is kind, clever…, I am hopeless
- It judges e.g. You are good, He is bad, I am right, I am wrong, You are wrong, They are a nice family
- It blames e.g. You should have known better, It’s her fault, It’s my fault
- It denies choice e.g. I have to, I can’t, You have made me …
- It makes demands e.g. If you don’t behave in this way then you will not get…

The use of language within a classroom can have a powerful effect on a child. Using labels and comparisons, criticizing, making demands, and threatening punishment can stimulate fear in a child. Emotional safety and the ability to learn have been correlated in contemporary educational and brain research. “Students who are anxious, angry or depressed don’t learn; people who are in these states do not take in information efficiently or deal with it well ….. when emotions overwhelm concentration, what is being swamped is the mental capacity cognitive scientists call ‘working memory’, the ability to hold in mind all information relevant to the task at hand” (Goleman, 1995).

Alfie Kohn (2005) has explained the negative effects of rewards and punishments, which are so much a part of our behavioural management systems in schools. He explains that punishments and rewards affect the moral growth of children and contribute to a preoccupation with self-interest. Kohn believes that our goal should be for children to refrain from doing certain things not because we’ve forbidden them, but because they have developed a moral understanding. He quotes research of Eisenberg (1985) that has found that “children who are encouraged to become actively involved in decision making tend to exhibit higher-level moral reasoning.” Kohn wants children to ask “How will doing x make that other child feel?” not “Am I allowed to do x?” or “Will I get into trouble for doing x?” He says that it is an ambitious goal but not unrealistic as human beings are born with the capacity to care. Children will not automatically grow into ethical people if left to their own devices; they need our help.
They need adults willing to role model the very values that we say as a society are fundamental to a healthy, inclusive society. He equally applies this to parents and family life as well as teachers and education. NVC provides a model, which could replace this traditional form of discipline.

NVC considers different power structures. It is looking for a “power with” structure. Many structures within education are currently “power over” structures. Penny Vine (2008) describes NVC as a “power with” process.

It is not about letting children do whatever they want to do. It is about taking care of ourselves, having clarity about our own values and being clear and responsible for the choices and decisions we make so that we are able to offer the most inspirational role model for children, recognising that we teach who we are. It is about being clear that we are interdependent, that all our needs matter and it is of benefit to everyone to work with a spirit of partnership.

The 4 capacities within curriculum for excellence highlight the importance of self-respect and respect for others, self-awareness and an understanding of others. There is also an emphasis on active learning. Using NVC as a communication tool in real life situations on an ongoing basis will engage children in the 4 capacities. Adults make a lot of decisions for children as they are growing up but in order to grow into responsible citizens, children need experiences of making their own decisions.

Hawkins and Catalano (1992) have identified several risk factors in youth, which, according to current research, are high predictors of later violent and antisocial behaviour. Among these factors are “alienation and a lack of bonding to family, school and community.” Research has also uncovered a group of “resilient” children, who are exposed to the same risks but are able to bounce back and overcome the effects of a high-risk environment. According to the literature on resilience, these children possess among other qualities, social competence and problem solving skills.
Within NVC books there is discussion of hearing children say “no”. When a child says “no” they are saying “yes” to something else. For example, a child may say “no” to an invitation to play outside because they are responding to a much stronger internal “yes” to stay engaged with a game they are playing alone. We want children to grow into responsible citizens who make their own judgements and decisions, who think deeply for themselves e.g. being able to think critically, being able to differentiate between fact and opinion, being courageous and willing to stand up for what they believe, saying “no” to drugs /risky behaviours, or to peer pressure to bullying. How often though do children get to practice saying “no”! Are children in our classrooms allowed and supported in saying “no”? Rosenberg (2005) emphasises that the “objective of Nonviolent Communication is not to change people and their behaviour in order to get our way: it is to establish relationships based on honesty and empathy which will eventually fulfil everyone’s needs.”

Diana Whitmore (1990) also highlights the importance of children developing their own internal value system – “A central issue is the formation of an individual’s value system. An important factor is whether the value system adopted is internalized or remains externally asserted. If the adult world externally regulates a child, determining and enforcing the right and wrong, without communicating why or for what purpose, the child does not develop an internalized set of controls.” Children need to be able to develop their own value systems in order to be responsible citizens.

**Reported results of using NVC**

Where this NVC model has been introduced there have been reported results of fewer conflicts among staff and between children, more listening to one another, greater skill in mediating conflicts that arise, mutual respect among all members. The results are based on the experiences of teachers using this NVC model over time in their classrooms or schools.

Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hudson have written a book *The Compassionate Classroom – Relationship Based Teaching and Learning* (2004). This book brings together their collective 45 years
of teaching experience. They highlight the importance of the quality of the relationships within the classroom and how this contributes to a child’s development of compassion.

Compassion is not a static state, nor is it a destination to be reached. Compassion is not a subject to be taught. Compassion is a way of being in relationship – a way of acting and interacting. At the same time, certain practices can help cultivate this way of being. In our experience, Nonviolent Communication is the most practical and powerful of these practices.

People often say that they do not have time for the lengthy dialogue required by this process. Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson report that in their experience taking time and listening to pupils as well as showing that their needs are important actually decreases the amount of behavioural problems that require the teacher’s attention. They also reported more engaged learning, which made more efficient use of the teacher and pupil time in the classroom.

Hart and Hodson assert that engaged learning only occurs when the needs of teachers and students for physical and emotional safety are met. Students need to feel safe and trust the learning environment before they are willing to be vulnerable, to take risks, to make mistakes which are all necessary for a pupil to actively engage in learning.

Kindle Hodson shared NVC skills with a kindergarten classroom and reported that several parents had observed a change in their child’s behaviour – from whining and arguing to instead using “brainstorming strategies for meeting their own needs.” Some parents also reported hearing their children “brainstorm need-meeting strategies with siblings and friends.”

Goleman (1995) also reports on the benefits of teachers consciously creating caring relationships and teaching relationship skills. He found that from this foundation of safety and trust there was then more cooperation and less conflict reported in the classrooms. Students also developed empathy from this model and this led to students being more sensitive to the needs of the teachers as well as other
pupils. In addition to these increased social skills there were also better scores on standardised achievement tests showing the effect on the children’s learning in general.

Hart and Gothlin report on the findings over a 10-year period from the Skarpnacks Free School in Sweden. The findings include a dramatic decrease in the number of conflicts between students. Most conflicts that now occur are handled by the children.

Students increasingly talk directly to each other when they don’t like what the other is doing, with growing confidence that they will be heard in a way that they can both enjoy and will lead to mutually satisfying outcomes. We rarely experience resistance from the children because they know that we will listen to their “NO” and will want to hear their needs. They now trust that we will not exert power over them and make them do things.

The pupils talked of this on my visit to the school, that they did not have to do things, but they were choosing to do them because it was in their interests. They also talked about the ways lessons were planned, with the pupils and teachers together deciding on the topics and how they would learn the subject. In addition, in standardized testing and a recent inspection the results for testing 9 – 11 year old in reading maths and English showed that students were performing at or beyond the expectations of their age.

**Critique of NVC**

There are a few criticisms of the NVC model available online from organisations who have chosen to apply the model and then as a direct result of their experiences in trying to apply it to their specific context have become critical of the model. The NVC model is criticised for being too prescriptive, for not being the whole answer and for not allowing for interpretation and evaluation. One such criticism is from Sharon Sarles (2001) who reviewed the NVC model. She reviewed it on the basis of the literature available and from observations in her place of work where colleagues were applying NVC. She also had concerns about how NVC was being used. It is a complex model and she did not always
feel that it was being applied authentically. This is a difficulty with the model; it takes a depth to fully understand the underlying beliefs and to put the NVC model into practice.

The main difficulty with the NVC model is that there is a lack of longitudinal analytical research. There are anecdotal examples of the outcomes of this process, and many of these are consistent and could confirm the plausibility of the hypothesis that: the NVC model does support conflict resolution; it models a democratic process and does develop respect and compassion. There is however a lack of longitudinal research and a lack of research that specifically tests the theoretical basis of the model.

The NVC model is very much based on a belief system. This belief system is contrary to the work of Skinner, which much of our current educational practice has evolved from. Skinner, cited in Kohn (1999), believed that everything we do could be explained in terms of the principle of reinforcement. We behave in a certain way because it is rewarded or a punishment is withheld. There is also a wide held belief in society that “good” deeds should be rewarded and “evil” deeds should be punished. Within the NVC model there is no reward or punishment.

The people who have applied the NVC model believe very much in the underlying values base and for other people, if it does not fit their value base then they would not apply the model. In the context of Scottish education it very much links into the underlying value base at the core of the Curriculum for Excellence but as Kohlberg in the foreword to Hersh, Paolitto and Reimer (1979) said the authors “assume that only if a theory can be genuinely accepted by teachers in terms of their own autonomous thinking, and not from the prestige or authority of ‘science’, can it form a valid basis for practice.” There is not one model that suits all and it is important for teachers to not jump on the bandwagon but to keep thinking and reflecting.

More research is needed into both the outcomes of applying this model in schools and also into the underlying theoretical framework.
Moral Development and NVC

NVC provides a possible model for supporting moral development. It supports higher reasoning skills and engages the children in a thinking process, challenging their thinking beyond where they currently are which are aspects that Kohlberg claims will support moral development.

The research by Hoffmann (2007) into the best model to develop empathy and moral development would suggest that an induction model was more productive than either love withdrawal (punishment) or identifying with parents. His theory states that a child is active in reconstructing and understanding moral rules, using information communicated by adults as well as his own experiences. “Peer conflict stimulates children to take different points of view, to produce ideas on how to co-ordinate the needs of self and others and to consider the rights of others – especially claims to ownership and possession of objects.” These are very common conflicts between nursery-aged children.

In Hoffmann’s induction model for moral development, when disciplining in social situations the parent:

- Highlights the other’s perspective
- Points out the other’s distress
- Makes it clear that the child’s action caused it.

During this process the child experiences inner conflict between their desires and another’s needs. The child must experience the emotionality of the situation. The parent requires to use a certain amount of pressure for the child to stop what he or she is doing and attend to the process of induction but not too much pressure that the child feels undue anger or fear, which will disrupt the process.

Hoffman is a leading researcher in the field of empathy and moral development and although there is some consistency between his theory and the NVC model there is a fundamental difference too. In Hoffman’s theory he suggests that in a conflict the child needs to act against self-interest, Rosenberg suggests that there is a solution that favours both people’s interests. Hoffmann also believes that guilt is necessary in moral development. This is where the 2 models fundamentally differ. Hoffman
emphasises the role of the adult in making it clear that their behaviour caused the feeling in the other person: Rosenberg emphasises the importance of feelings not being causally linked. He claims that this gives away our power, that someone else cannot cause us to feel a certain way, it is a trigger but not causal. Hoffman’s research compared different parenting styles. None of these styles included NVC and it would be interesting to have further research into this area. Is the guilt aspect really crucial to moral development?

Hoffman also talks of the importance of not blaming the victim for what has happened. When blame is present, it interferes with empathy. On this point both Hoffman and Rosenberg would agree.

Values Education

The Values in Action Schools Project (2008), sponsored by the Australian Government is a values education research project. They have completed and evaluated stage 2 of the project using a whole range of different programmes in schools across the country and highlighted some key features, which they found to be integral to values education. It is not about applying one model but about a core set of values and features. The key features of a values education would include:

- Pedagogies that engage students in real-life learning, offer opportunities for real practice, provide safe structures for taking risks and encourage personal reflection and action
- Schools where values are thought about, talked about, taught about, reflected upon and enacted across the whole school in all school activities
- Integration rather than an addition to the curriculum
- A modelling or living out of the values, which creates the real meaning
- Consistency
- Encouraging teachers to take risks in their approaches to values education. Teachers are encouraged to review their teaching practices at a fundamental and personal level
- Empowering student decision making, fostering student action and assigning real student responsibility
- Having a common language to discuss the values
NVC includes all of the key features listed above. I conclude that more research into NVC as a communication model within schools to develop values at the centre of the curriculum for excellence would be very valuable. The purpose of further research would be to ensure that these values are truly internalised in pupils and not just demonstrated in certain classroom situations e.g. in relation to assessment, or to receive a reward, or when the behaviour is being witnessed, in order to receive teacher approval. This small-scale research project aims to look at some of these values.
4. Aims and Objectives

My research project focussed on the following:

Overall Aim:

- To explore the extent to which “Nonviolent Communication” conflict resolution can be used by nursery children aged 3 –5 years

Specific Objectives:

To evaluate the:

1. Effectiveness of “Nonviolent Communication” as a model of conflict resolution that can be used independently by children

2. Impact of the “Nonviolent Communication” model in contributing to the creation of a classroom where young children show a respect for the needs of others as well as their own needs

3. Effectiveness of NVC in reducing the conflicts between children and between staff and children

These conflicts could be over sharing resources, allowing independence in a friendship, speaking respectfully to each other, allowing all children to feel included, tidying away resources, playing safely, coming in from the garden at the end of the session etc.

I wanted to:

- Read materials available about NVC and its application in schools
- Research and investigate ways in which the NVC model could be introduced more explicitly and used more independently by children aged 3-5 years
- Liaise directly and to speak to practitioners who have been implementing this model
- Visit schools if this was possible and relevant
5. Methodology

Information and consent leaflets were given out to parents (Appendix 1) and I also made a booklet (Appendix 2) explaining the research project to the children. I shared this booklet with the children and they then either gave or did not give consent by writing their name (or making a mark) in the yes or no box. I thought that it was important that the children also understood the project and to what they were agreeing or not agreeing. It was particularly important because I was researching conflict. Most of the children and parents willingly agreed for these conflicts to be observed and recorded in some way. These conflicts could be when they were particularly upset and I thought it was important that they were agreeing to the recording of this and for this to be shared confidentially with others.

I wanted to decide on and make a practical visual resource for teaching the model to children and for the children to use this visual resource when resolving conflicts. The visual resource was needed to support independence in conflict resolution and to be inclusive of all children. I made 2 visual books for teaching the model – one for each child in the conflict. I used these books with the children when any conflict arose in the classroom. I also gathered the children together to initially explain the books and the feelings and needs cards (in the books) to the children. They were stored in the classroom in a material bag and either the children or myself would suggest using them and go and get them and bring them back to the situation. This was also so that they would be freely available to the children in their play.

Using the books during a conflict situation:

- One child would make an observation
- Say how he/she was feeling by selecting the feeling picture
- Say what his/her underlying need was and select the need picture
- Then listen to the other child who would make an observation
- Say how he/she was feeling by selecting the feeling picture
- Say what his/her underlying need was and select the need picture


The children would then try and find a solution to the problem, a solution that met both children’s needs.

One child might make a request or a suggestion, which the other child may negotiate over or agree. The important aspect was that they both were happy with the solution and they agreed it together.

I supported the children in this process –

- Making suggestions at different stages of the process if I thought that the child needed help.
- Modelling the whole process and checked out with the child if I was guessing accurately.
- Suggesting a solution.
- Repeating what each child was saying to the other child.
- Speaking about everyone’s needs mattering.

My role changed depending on the children involved in the process. My intention was to support them in using this NVC style of communication and to support them to continue with the process and find a solution that they were both happy with.

Appendix 3 has a photograph of one of the books. The 2 books are identical – on the left hand side is a collection of feelings and needs cards, which the children select and move across and stick onto the right hand page. The right hand page of the book has 4 sections – observation, feeling, need and request.

I made written observations of the children in conflict situations prior to the visual books being introduced. I then introduced the visual books and made written observations of the dialogue in these negotiations. As all the written observations were written after the event – the gist of the dialogue as opposed to a verbatim account was recorded. I realised before the start of the project that more accurate dialogue would be recorded if I used a voice recorder. This may not be possible in all situations but could be used when possible. The voice recorder recorded more accurately the whole
dialogue in a negotiation. The method of observation was chosen, as it is a very useful and practical assessment tool for young children.

This was a small-scale research project by myself as the class teacher. As well carrying out the research I was also in the normal role of class teacher. In order to have more evidence it would have been good to have an independent person, with the sole purpose of recording observations.

The project was implemented in the 12 week summer term. It was carried out in the upstairs nursery class. The class was made up of children between the ages of 3 – 5 years. There were 24 children in the class. The initial plan was to record before and after the project. In reality the recording of observations continued throughout the project. I realised that I did not have a lot of time to implement the project and the project didn’t actually stop. The children responded enthusiastically to the visual books and they continued to be used until the end of term. I will discuss this further in the results section.

I then looked at the observations to assess if there was a change in the way that the children mediated conflicts, shared resources, expressed their feelings and needs and listened to the needs of others in their play. I also assessed whether there was a reduction in the amount of conflicts.

I also wrote stories to be told with puppets. Young children are very engaged with puppets and I wanted to use this engagement to actively involve the children in conflict resolution, using the NVC model. In order to return to these stories at other times in the classroom I made photo books of the puppet stories. This would reinforce these examples of conflict scenarios and the solutions that the children themselves had suggested. It is important for children to have repeated opportunities to engage in a learning activity.

A mouse puppet and a bear puppet were introduced in the summer term. The children met the puppets and learned a little about them e.g. where they lived, what they were called, what they liked
to do etc. The puppets then visited the nursery on regular occasions. Although I had a plan for the format of these visits, I adapted this again throughout the project in response to the children’s needs and the time available. I had made up stories in which the puppets were in conflict e.g. Mouse was painting and bear came along and grabbed the paintbrush and ran off. Mouse then hit bear on the head.

Initially the puppets talked about what they had been doing and this set the scene. They then talked about what had happened (their conflict). The puppets wanted help to sort out their problem. At this point the puppets were set aside and I showed photographs of the scenarios to remind the children of the situation. Using the visual books we then thought about what the feelings and needs of both bear and mouse may have been. Using the visual books the children then asked the puppets if this was what they were feeling and needing. In advance I had thought of possible feelings and needs that the puppets may have had but also responded to the children’s own ideas. Sometimes I introduced a different feeling or need which the children may not have thought of. The puppets then agreed or disagreed with the children and once the feelings and needs were agreed the children made suggestions for solutions to meet both puppets’ needs. The puppets then said goodbye. Appendix 4 has 2 examples of a puppet story and my initial ideas of the possible feelings and needs.

Later in the project I brought in new photographs showing a scene where the puppets had responded to the children’s ideas, showing the solution they had followed from the children’s suggestions e.g. a photo of the bear and mouse now with 2 paint brushes painting alongside each other (Appendix 5). One day I also introduced a story where the puppets had had a conflict but how they had sorted it out for themselves. I wanted to show the puppets independently using the language of NVC.

I introduced the puppets to the whole class together with other staff helping to support the children to focus and participate in a large group. The stories were then told with the puppets in story groups, usually with another member of staff helping as I realised I needed help to move the puppets, use the
visual books, have a discussion and manage the situation so that all the children felt included and had turns to speak.

The children also wanted to talk to the puppets, ask them questions, stroke them etc. Having a longer timescale would allow more scope for the puppets to come in for different purposes. My skills in using puppets, involving the children and also keeping a focus and attention for all children developed throughout the project. In the future I may use the photographs rather than the puppets themselves when we are trying to find a solution to their problem, as it would be more manageable.

One day the story evolved in the moment as one child called out “silly pants” to one of the puppets. The puppet then went back in the bag and a child suggested that he had gone back in the bag because when the child had said “silly pants” the puppet felt sad. We used this scenario to discuss possible feelings and needs and what the puppet would like, which the children responded to very well.

I recorded some of the puppet sessions in order to have a more detailed record of the dialogue.

It was a very short time period to introduce the puppets and introduce the different stories. It would have been good to carry out this project over a longer time period. In retrospect, I would have liked an initial period of time to research the idea and make the resources and then a whole academic year to implement the project. There are a lot of changes at the end of term and some children are leaving nursery and moving onto Primary School. During a period of change there are lots of emotions aroused and new experiences to understand and process. Some children were feeling anxious about friendships as the children were going onto different schools. This was not the most ideal time period to be reviewing the research project, as more conflicts could be present.

At the end of the project I decided that feedback from parents, children and staff would be valuable and give me more insight. Although the feedback would be subjective I decided that it would give a
wider dimension to the research. I compiled and gave out questionnaires to all parents, classroom staff and also asked the children three questions for feedback on the project (Appendix 6).

Previous to the project I had participated in NVC training. My main link during the research was with Penny Vine, an early years advisor in Leeds as well as being an NVC Trainer. I have met up with her on a few occasions and discussed and liaised over this research project with her. She helped me develop the initial puppet stories as well as refining the visual resource that I made. We have also had many interesting conversations which I have found very useful and have helped me understand the NVC model more fully as well as how to apply it or “live it” in an early years setting. We had lots of discussions about observations in the classroom and what the need behind the behaviour may be. These discussions were invaluable for when I was supporting children to articulate their feelings and needs to one another. I also discussed the research project with other colleagues whom I teach alongside in the nursery school.

During this research project I made contact with 2 kindergartens – one in the UK and one in Sweden. They are both at the initial stages of exploring or implementing the NVC model. I will continue to try to make links around the world with other schools applying this model to learn from each other and share our experiences.

I visited the Skarpnacks Free School in Sweden during the same time period that I was carrying out this research and met Marianne Gothlin, one of the founder teachers of the school. Pupils showed us around and talked about the school. They clearly explained how agreements were made. Rules are negotiated flexibly between the pupils and teachers when the need arises. There was a strong sharing of respect and empathy for the teachers from the pupils and between each other. I observed a very relaxed, peaceful atmosphere and I liked the quality of the relationship that I witnessed between staff and pupils. Safety, acceptance and inclusion are essential for joyful learning and the school had created this supportive learning environment.
6. Results and Discussion

There was an observed difference in the skills and language that the majority of children used to negotiate with in a conflict situation. This was in school, when they were using the visual books and I was supporting the process. However, there are limitations to the extent to which change can be measured within the group as a whole. Each child is at a different stage of personal, social and emotional development. It may be more appropriate to look at the observations on each child and assess individually whether there was a change during the duration of the project.

Out of a class of 24 children, observations from 22 children are included in the study. One child left and one new child arrived during the project and another child did not give consent. Observations on these children are not included. From classroom observations 21/22 children used the visual books and changes in conflict resolution could be observed.

Staff Responses:

From the staff questionnaires the other staff in the classroom also noticed some changes. They commented that solutions had been found and conflicts had been resolved when the children had used the visual book with adult support. Older children in particular were observed expressing their feelings and needs in different situations and also becoming more aware of the needs of others e.g. seeing when another child is in need of support. One staff member commented, “there are changes in how the children understand how conflicts can be solved with an adult supporting.”

Observations:

When using the books the children could express their feelings and needs clearly rather than using physical means, whining or using language that didn't help to resolve the conflict e.g. “I am not your friend”, when really they would like to be friends but are not happy with something.
### Examples of conflicts before the research project:

- Another child has told a child, that she cannot go in the house.
- A child snatches a toy from another child.
- A child has been told that another child is not her friend.
- A child is hit by another child as the child walks past.
- A child comes up to tell me that another child has hit him. He says that he wants the other child to stop. The other child listens from a distance and when we go up to speak he runs off.
- A child in garden throws a small stone. When he sees the teacher watching he runs off.
- At story time a child is banging on the musical instruments close by. When this behaviour was discussed with the child, and the teacher asked about finding a way to support him, to listen more easily, the child suggested that the teacher bought him some cookies.
- A child has had sand thrown over him at the sand tray; he is covered in sand and is standing quietly.
- 2 children are hitting each other – both had wanted the same car.
- One child is putting a block in one position on the car that he was building. Another child picks it up and is taking it away. The first child is crying.
- One child has been asked by an adult to go back down and wipe his muddy shoes on the mat at the door. He is angry and begins to throw cards on the floor.
- One child said that if someone hurts you then you hurt them back.

In these situations the adult supported the child verbally, to find out what the problem was and to listen to each other. The children had often used physical means to get what they wanted. One child on occasions was upset and was standing waiting for help. The child was not asking for help independently. Children may have run off when they saw a teacher watching. It was as if some children were scared that they would get into trouble and therefore ran off, hoping to avoid it. It was not responsible behaviour. Other children came up to a teacher to say what had happened, but ran off.
before speaking directly to the other child. The child was giving the responsibility to the adult to sort out the problem.

The child, who asked for the cookies, had a sense of humour but also knew that he could use rewards. He would behave in a certain way if I were to reward him with cookies for it. I wanted to find an alternative way.

Appendix 7 contains a transcript of a dialogue I had with two children using NVC but before introducing the visual book. The children do resolve their conflict in a way that they are both happy with, but I as the adult am making the suggestions and giving them the words to use. There are other examples where the conflict was not satisfactorily resolved.

In table 1 below is an example of a conflict that had not been resolved before the project and then an observation during the project that demonstrated changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Example of a conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before the project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child A came in from the garden at story time and was very angry. She said quite clearly that she was sad because child B wouldn’t play with her and then said that no one would play with her. She said that she had asked child B if she could play, and that she had said no. Child B explained that she had been playing with someone else. When asked by myself she said that yes child A could have joined the game too but she had forgotten. She said that on another time she would say yes. Child A continued to be angry and was angry during story time. I did not feel that I had helped resolve the conflict satisfactorily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During the project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later on in the project I observed clear communication between the same 2 children. Child A was saying to child B – you cannot play just now because we are playing an adventure game but we can play together in the afternoon. Child B knew that it was friendship that she needed at that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
particular time and went off to find another child to play with and joined in their game. They were both happy with this interaction. The children had learned about the feelings and needs of another and this was being shown in their explanations to each other. They were giving more reasoning to their friends when they didn’t want to play together. This prevented a conflict arising.

Table 2 gives an example of using NVC to negotiate a conflict before the introduction of the visual books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Example of using NVC to negotiate conflict. This was during the observation period before the project.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A child had splashed water onto the floor at the water tray. I was concerned for safety and he was ignoring me and continuing to splash water on the floor. I was explaining my concerns to him. I was worried that a child may slip and I wanted everyone to be safe. I asked him if he would mop it up, he said “no”. Our conversation continued with me explaining my feelings and needs about safety and being responsible and fairness. He then offered his suggestions as to how the problem could be resolved. You could walk around the table avoiding the wet floor. He also shared an observation that another child had walked through it but had not slipped. He then offered a solution that I was also happy with; he could sit and warn children of the wet floor. He called out “too wet”, “be careful”. When he wanted to go off and play somewhere else he accepted the towel and dried the remaining water off the floor. This was a long discussion and it took time but I think that for this particular child it was very important. He found a solution that we were both happy with and showed great depth to his observations, reasoning and creativity. He also through the experience fully understood my reasons for wanting the floor to be dry and on other occasions in the future did keep the floor dry or mopped it up if some water had spilt. He became responsible for his own behaviour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This example clearly shows that by using the NVC process the nursery aged child developed an understanding of the needs of others. He also learned to articulate himself clearly. The interaction shows that he was listened to and through this experience the child felt important and valued. In this
situation he was able to act responsibly, not through obeying an instruction but by taking responsibility for his own behaviour. He acted in a responsible way.

On listening to my role in supporting the children to resolve their conflicts I can clearly see a change throughout the project. From the voice recordings in particular I can hear that before the visual books I was not focusing on the underlying needs with the children. We find solutions together but I have not supported the children to think about their underlying need. Instead I have focused on the strategy that they have chosen to meet that need. The following table details an example of this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Example of my role as supporting adult in the observation period before the project and my reflections on how I would have approached it using the visual books during the project.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 children are arguing over 2 toy ladders. I am empathizing with the children that they both really want a ladder. Child A wants a longer ladder to reach the princess in the tower and child B wants to have his own ladder. Maybe the underlying needs would be discovery, or having fun for child A and for child B to be included, to be part of the game. Once the visual books were introduced the underlying needs were always part of the dialogue, taking the emphasis away from the particular strategy to the underlying need. I focused on the ladders but really it was about belonging, or discovery etc. When children say what it is they need, it is easier to find a solution that meets everyone’s needs. In this particular example child A, who wanted to reach the princess grabbed the ladder from child B and said that they could share. She would give it to him when she was finished. This solution clearly did not work for child B who wanted to be part of the game. He found a solution by putting his ladder on top of child A’s ladder. Both sets of need were therefore met and they were both happy. By working together the princess could be reached and both children were involved. I reflected from this on how often as adults we suggest sharing as the solution when in fact an alternative solution may meet the needs more satisfactorily.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The example shows that the children are involved in a creative process. They are both engaged in the process and actively explore and find a solution together. They are being creative and find a more
creative solution rather than the regular solution offered by staff of each having a turn and then swapping. Through the experience of finding a solution and having problems satisfactorily resolved, the children will gain in resilience and optimism that solutions are possible.

From observation the children mostly liked the voice recorder. I think the recording of the conflicts in itself changed the kind of dialogue. It raised the profile – resolving conflicts was important and it was important that a solution was found that everyone was happy with. My attitude also changed. Before, I may have not really wanted to support the conflict. I may have been involved in another activity and really wanted to spend my time at that. For the purposes of the research I wanted to support conflicts and therefore needed to be more flexible and the research project was using the NVC model to support the conflicts. I began to feel differently towards conflict and began to value much more the time that I spent on supporting the children in this way to really find solutions that worked for them. This is consistent with the research into values, which emphasises the importance of how we act. I was now acting in a way that valued the importance of resolving conflicts together, of involving children in this process and showing that I valued how they felt and respected everyone involved.

Table 4 contains examples of conflicts being resolved using the NVC visual books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Examples of conflicts during the research project, using the visual books.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 3 children were jumping off the large chair in the story corner. I used the 2 books to model the children’s possible feelings and needs and my own. “When you are jumping off the chair, are you happy and having fun?” “When I see you jumping off the chair I am worried and want you to be safe.” I then asked what solution we could find to meet their need to have fun and my need for safety. One of the children suggested that they read books and went off to get a book. The jumping stopped. At the time I remember thinking can it be this easy? In the past I may have had more that one conversation asking the children to stop jumping or kept watching them closely to ensure that they did stop. It seemed as if by using the visual books the children could see that I was also interested in their needs, I did also want them to have fun and they happily and independently found an alternative game.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 2 children both wanting to play with a tractor, one child saying that it wasn’t fair. Using the visual books they both also expressed the need for having fun. I talked about what fairness meant, that fairness was fairness for both people. I realised that this child when talking about fairness had meant fairness for him. Now the book was modeling fairness for both of them. “Fairness is important to you, how can it be fair for both of you, and how can you both have fun?” I asked. He suggested getting an egg timer, which he went off to get. A solution had been found. He then swapped over himself when the time was up.

• A regular response in a conflict continued to be “I am not your friend”. I had hoped that this would lessen. It didn’t but when the children were then supported by using the visual books or later in the project even without the books, the children could translate this into a more clear explanation of their feelings and needs and in most cases find a solution. For example one child who had said “I am not your friend” went on to explain that the other child had not been holding his hand in the circle and when he saw this he was upset. The other child then explained that he hadn’t held his hand because the child had been putting his fingers in his mouth. He asked if the other child could keep his hands out of his mouth and a solution was found. It was very quick to find out the difficulty and for the children themselves to be happy with the solution.

The examples demonstrate the importance of clear communication in social relationships and how by using the visual books the children can communicate clearly and resolve their conflicts, with adult support.

What can clearly be observed are children responsibly finding solutions to meet everyone’s needs. They are choosing to be responsible and to behave in a way, which takes into account the needs of another. They are learning about what is important to others. Through these experiences the children will be building up their empathy range. They are actively learning about concepts such as fairness, not only in theory but actively practising it. It is through our action, rather than our reasoning that we
show our moral growth. The observations clearly show that children are actively involved in their own moral development.

Appendix 8 contains the transcript of one interaction where two girls ask for help to resolve their conflict in their play. They want to find a solution and successfully do this with the aid of the visual books and adult support. In this particular situation child A is angry when child B is following her around the blocks. She has a need to make her own choices in the game. Child B also clearly articulates that when she hears child A saying that she cannot follow her, she is sad, and she wants to be listened to. Together they find a solution whereby they play the game twice. On the first playing child B can follow child A and on the 2nd playing of the game child B will not follow. The transcript shows the dialogue and the adult role of supporting the children with this process. The adult supporting each of them to be able to respect each other’s needs and take this into account when finding a solution.

Table 5 contains examples based on observations of individual children before and after the project. These observations demonstrate the changes in the children’s communication skills, development of empathy and self-awareness as well as awareness of others. Hoffman (2007) shows a direct correlation between the ability to regulate one’s emotions and empathy and helping behaviour. What can clearly be observed is a change in the children. The children are showing that they can regulate and articulate their own emotions.

Table 5: Examples of Individual Changes

- A child who had previously hit other children when there was a dispute or when he was angry, on this occasion very clearly articulated his feelings and needs to the other children. Immediately after the incident and when speaking to me, he was extremely angry and was making accusations, making threats etc. Once he had calmed down, he then went to speak to the other children and very clearly stated his own boundaries. Although I was near by, he had the language and skills himself to express this. The other children listened very
attentively and responded to his request. He told them that when they hit him he felt really angry. “It’s not good to hurt somebody, if you hurt them blood can come out. I want you to stop and never hit me again.” One child who had also hit him wasn’t present and he clearly said that he also needed to speak to him and went off to also tell this child.

- One child had been pulled around the classroom by another child and he had not asked the other child to stop. He then used the visual book spontaneously one day in his play and said, “No one is pulling me and no one is hitting me and I am happy.” He was able to articulate his feelings and describe what he did not like.
- One child who had often used physical means to sort out his problems was now speaking to other children and willing to accept another way.
- One child who had not sought adult help to sort out problems and who had run off when another child wanted to speak to him about a problem, now came up to tell me about his problems and wanted to use the books to find solutions.

Table 6 contains examples based on observations of the children at play in the nursery. These were not all conflict situations but demonstrate how the children used some of this new language in their everyday play and how they used their own creativity to help each other.

Table 6: Examples of hearing this language in the play of the children

- Role-play in the house - hearing a child playing the role of mother saying to her child “I need you to be safe” and the child playing the role of father saying, “would you like a hug? and then trying to find an alternative solution “would you like a hug from a girl instead?”
- Before going out to the garden one child saying, we need to tidy up first and another child saying, “I could help then we would get it done quicker.”
- 2 children both wanting to be sleeping beauty in a movie that they were filming went off to find an alternative solution. They did this independently and they came up with an idea that worked for both of them. One decided to be the Prince and the other one was going to be
Sleeping Beauty. Previously they had had a solution where they were both sleeping beauties and there were 2 princes. On this occasion they found a different solution.

- One child offered a solution to another child who didn’t want to leave the game that they were both playing to gather in a group and learn about the outing the next day. “If I was to come with him, he would go up”, the child said. Even although this child himself was not going on the next day’s outing, he was willing to offer this solution to his friend. The solution worked for both of them.

- One child, coming in from garden where he had had a conflict, went to get the visual books himself and selected the pictures to stick on. He then sat down and talked through the incident again to tell me about it. “When child x hit me, I feel angry, I need help.”

- One child was upset that he did not have a spanner, and was saying, “I want one.” Another child picked one up and gave it to him.

- One child took out a photograph from his personal-learning-planning folder of himself and a friend to swap it for another photograph. As if he was anticipating what his friend might think he spontaneously said to his friend “but I still like you.”

- One child had fallen over and was crying. He spontaneously went to get the visual books and clearly said, “When I fell over, I feel sad, I want to be well.” I asked him what he needed to be well. Love he said and another child who was standing by, spontaneously gave him a cuddle.

These examples show the children working together to meet their needs, finding solutions independently, talking about needs, talking about feelings, showing empathy for each other and taking responsibility for their own behaviours. What it also demonstrates is that the children are transferring this new language into their own play. They are building up a metalanguage to talk about feelings and needs. Metalanguage is important for children to develop emotional literacy and prosocial behavior.

In this research I made observations on all the children participating in the project over the term. This is quite a large sample in a short time period. It may be more useful to focus on a smaller group of
children for recording observations, although the project would be carried out with all the children. It may be clearer to assess the results. NVC was already being used in the classroom before the start of the project and therefore this also affects the clarity of the results. There was no control group.

The children do benefit from an adult to help them in the negotiation and in general are not resolving conflicts independently. What can be seen however is an increase in their language and style of negotiation –

- They can clearly describe what has happened, how they feel and what they need.
- The needs they talk of mainly are having fun, rest, peace, safety, help, love and care, friendship.
- They use the visual books to do this and speak the language quite independently.
- They also listen to the other child do this and then with the help of the adult to ask questions - they themselves come up with creative solutions, more creative than in my opinion we have had before.
- They find solutions where both people’s needs are met.
- They are more likely to come and ask for help than use physical means to sort out their problems.
- Other needs such as autonomy, respect and belonging some children have had the experience of talking about when resolving their conflicts and their awareness of a wider range of human needs is growing.

I also find as the adult supporting the children that my awareness is also increasing. There are still situations where I have to think myself about what the possible underlying need may be and discuss this with colleagues. In retrospect I can’t imagine why I thought that they would be able at this age to use the books independently. It is a complex skill – to develop an emotional intelligence takes time, support and practice.
Dialogue with puppet conflicts:

The children were all engaged with the puppets. They suggested how the puppets may be feeling and what the need may be. In the discussions the children had different ideas e.g. the puppet could be feeling sad and another child might suggest that the puppet was feeling angry. The possible need might be for help, for love, for friendship. The children did engage with this process and often said themselves when the puppet had a problem, “lets get the giraffe books”. In the process they could make suggestions for feelings and needs and did offer creative solutions. For example when bear was dressed up as a lion and roaring and jumping out at mouse, from the bushes, mouse was scared. They suggested the mouse could join in and bear could roar more quietly, but not so quiet that he wasn’t enjoying his game. Again different children had different ideas and offered different solutions. From these dialogues children were directly learning that we all have the same feelings and needs but also have differences. It modeled flexibility and the children’s own responses also showed a flexibility and awareness of differences. They listened as the puppets spoke to them and discussed the feelings and needs further.

Hoffman (2007) talked of the importance of role-taking opportunities to stimulate both caring and justice. The children fully engaged with the puppet stories and through these stories they were actively engaged in perspective taking. The puppet stories helped put the feelings and needs of others into the children’s consciousness and therefore enhanced the children’s empathic range.

This was only one aspect of the project - as well as these role-taking opportunities there were also active socialization experiences. These are two components that Hoffman believes support empathy and moral development. The engagement with these puppet stories offered opportunities for the children to be creative, and to stay with the creative process. There was not only one possible solution. The children’s engagement with the process showed inquisitiveness and clearly modelled that solutions were possible, which is crucial in developing resilience. These stories will have helped to embed the values of oneness, of everyone’s needs being important, of respect within the children’s experiences.
The children talked about the puppets and the problems that the puppets had had as well as the solutions. It interested them and at the end of term many of them also made their own hand or finger puppets to take home. Some of them wanted to have their own Bear and Susie. Although the popularity of the puppets is not conclusive, it is indicative of learning.

Children's Responses:

Table 7 has a collation of the children’s responses to the feedback questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If you have a problem what can you do to sort it out?</td>
<td>Get help from an adult</td>
<td>“Get the teacher” “Ask somebody to help you”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draw a picture</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use the giraffe book</td>
<td>“Get the giraffe book”</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Say stop</td>
<td>“Please can you stop it” “….. pushed me but I don’t like it, please say stop to him.”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Described a problem not the solution</td>
<td>“You feel angry and sad”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is giraffe language? (Giraffe language is referring to NVC)</td>
<td>It is a book for helping sort out problems</td>
<td>“For your troubles” “For help” “If somebody has troubles they do the giraffe book” “Helps me and a friend solve our problem using the pictures.”</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gave examples of NVC language

| “Say somebody’s angry with you, stay stop.” |
| “… pushed me yesterday, I say please stop, please help.” |
| “When child A is dressed in Cinderella dress, I feel sad, I want it to be fair.” |
| “A child described a puppet story and what had happened and the language the puppet could have used instead - don’t run away with my paintbrush.” |

| It keeps you safe | “It’s important because it keeps you safe.” | 1 |
| Don’t know | | 3 |
| Gave an explanation that I didn’t understand | | 3 |

| 3. Has it been helpful? | Yes | “Yes cos when you feel sad, you need help.” |
| | | “Then we’d be happy.” |
| | | “It helps us, I think its really important.” |
| | | “Yes, when …. & ….. were not my friend, I was really sad. Then they were going to be my friends.” |
| No | ““because when they really want to be it, then it doesn’t help.” |
| | “It never working together.” | 3 |

| No Response | | 1 |

Twenty children responded to the feedback questions. One child was absent and I chose not to ask one child for language comprehension reasons. The children’s responses to the feedback questions are very positive. 80% children said that NVC was helpful. This is a high response in favour of NVC.

I found it interesting to reflect also on why three children may have said “no”. From their responses I gained some insight perhaps as to why they had not found it useful but this is only my interpretation. One child was having an ongoing conflict with a friend who was not listening to his need in the situation and they had not yet found a solution to their problem.
Another child said quite accurately that if someone really wants something e.g. to be Cinderella, then it is difficult. In some situations it had taken time for the children to want to act in a way where everyone need’s mattered. For some children more than others, in certain situations they really did not want to have to compromise in any way. Over time the children found it easier to find a solution together and to consider the needs of the other child too.

The visual books modeled this process very well, and children who did not consider the needs of others if I talked only verbally with them, did consider the other child’s needs when I used the visual books. There are 2 books; one for each child and it is very easy and clear to see that there are 2 sets of feelings and 2 sets of needs.

The other child who said “no” described how when she used the books, she didn’t get what she wanted. On one occasion she had taken a feather from another child and ran off. The other child said that he was going to get the visual books and she instantly gave the feather back. It was as if the feather was not that important to her and she did not want to negotiate over it. On other occasions if something was very important to her, she did use the books.

45% of the children said that they would get the giraffe books or say “stop” if there was a problem. It is encouraging that this percentage of young children does know that they can sort it out. It was only 10% who said that they didn’t know what to do if there was a problem. The project raised the importance of getting help and that it was possible to find solutions to problems that everyone is happy with. The children have this optimism and faith, which is important. It is only with this optimism and faith that a child will develop resilience. If there is a problem they are going to do something. At this age they still needed help to find a solution but they trusted the adults to help them and when they described NVC 70% talked of it being to help them sort a problem out.

This is a significant percentage. 70% of the nursery children are aware of conflict resolution. I hear adults saying that there is nothing that they can do about something, or it is out of their control, or they
are scared to bring an issue up, or that it’s not really important. I find it very inspiring that almost all the children in the class were confident to sit with another child and express their feelings and needs and ask for what they needed as well as listening to the needs and feelings of the other child or adult.

From the results it is showing that NVC is a real tool for empowering children, developing their confidence and for developing an emotional intelligence related to both self and others.

One child at the end of term asked if she could keep the visual book. She wanted her own smaller version to take home.

Table 8 contains a compilation of the Parent’s Responses to the feedback questionnaire. 13/22 parents returned completed feedback questionnaires. I have picked out two of the key questions in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you noticed any differences in how your child expresses his/her feelings?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you observed your child being more aware of other people’s feelings and needs?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although only 46% of the parents (returning questionnaires) reported significant changes for the child’s expression of their feelings and 62% reported changes in their child’s awareness of the feelings and needs of others, some of the comments that they wrote are very interesting. A selection of comments is in Table 9.
Table 9: Selection of Parents Comments reflecting changes they have observed in their children:

“Trying to communicate feelings better such as pain and anger.”

“Yes, using clear and sophisticated language and vocabulary”

“Yes he is more willing to talk through conflicts calmly rather than getting upset or reacting physically.”

“He says when he is angry or sad about something which is new.”

“Yes, he’s more vocal e.g. he says I’m happy, I’m sad etc...”

“She’s more confident talking about how she feels.”

Hearing their child asking another small child not to bang into his scooter in a nice way

“Tries to think about others feelings, it can be difficult for him though.’

“Yes he tries and feels sad if has made someone else sad.”

“I have told him how I feel when he says hurtful things to me, and he takes this on board and stops ‘most’ of the time.”

“Yes, he often asks people how they’re feeling and talks about it.”

“Yes, she pays attention to what other people say – ‘they need help’ and she tries to help.”

“She has become more aware of other people’s feelings e.g. if her younger sister is upset she will give her a hug and will talk to her in her very concerned voice.”

These comments reflect possibilities of change from such a project and what these changes look like.

Why were more changes not observed? What would help further changes to be seen also in the home environment? 32% of parents have expressed an interest in hearing more about the research project; they would like to hear the outcomes and are also interested in further training as parents in NVC. Further research in this area would be recommended.
**Number of conflicts:**

Another potential outcome of using NVC methods is that conflicts can become less observable. It is difficult to assess whether this intervention led to a reduction in the number of conflicts between children, or between staff and children. Feedback from staff varied, some thinking there had been a reduction, others that there had been a slight reduction, while others saw no reduction but observed that some conflicts had been resolved.

From my observations there continued to be daily conflicts over friendships, sharing, respecting each other etc. Any assessment in this timescale would be very subjective.

There are still conflicts, which there will be with the age and development of the children. Conflict situations require you to act against purely your own self-interest and to take into account the interests of another. Children aged 3-5 years are developing this skill. The change that is observed is that these conflicts are clearly articulated and solutions are found that everyone is happy with. The conflict is resolved. Also that the conflicts are current, in the past a child was often remembering something that they hadn't liked from a few days before, the conflicts now are current and resolved there and then. The children were not merely being obedient but were choosing to behave in ways that met everyone’s needs. This took time.

The process clearly models moral internalisation. The children are too young to have developed this, which develops in adolescence and into adulthood but through the NVC process the children are realizing that they have a choice. They are finding solutions and choosing to take actions. The adult is using their power to stop behaviours and to direct the children to the NVC process. This adult role is crucial, Hoffman believes, in moral development. There are however no rewards or punishments being used. The children are being encouraged to engage with a process. In moral growth what is important is how you would act, not how you would reason. Children are observed acting in ways that meets everyone’s needs and through using the visual NVC books the children come up with these solutions themselves.
Reflections:

I have gained a new understanding of the NVC model of communication and it has changed my practice in a wider context than just using the visual book and puppet stories. I have a deeper understanding of the underlying beliefs and ethos of NVC, including power relationships. Initially I focused on the language of NVC rather than the underlying values. Thus on a surface level it could appear that I was engaged in a process that modeled respect and involved children collectively in decision making.

On some occasions I would involve children in decision-making but on other occasions staff made decisions independently, at a staff meeting. For example when there was a concern in the garden over the safety of the skipping ropes and how they were being used, the staff team discussed the situation and came up with a solution to the problem.

What message is being communicated to children through this practice? It is not modelling the values of respect and self-responsibility. Instead it is adding in another rule for children to obey, and also a missed opportunity for creativity and problem solving. It is a missed opportunity for children taking responsibility for their own behaviour through a deep understanding and empathy with others.

In addition it was not effective as a method. Staff spent a lot of time trying to enforce the rule, which they had independently decided upon.

Consistency is a key factor in all values education, modelling our values consistently on a daily basis. The NVC process offers a structure to model our values, but only if staff consistently use it on a daily basis. Otherwise the hidden message is one of the adults having the power and control and using this power in a tokenistic fashion to sometimes appear to include children in a democratic process. Rather than creating isolated situations for teaching respect and democratic decision-making, here is a model that can truly live these values, if it is consistently applied. Also it is less likely that children will learn to be responsible respectful citizens if this is not being consistently modelled.
As well as the importance of consistency in value education, what also became apparent to me was that if I was not consistently involving children in conflict resolution then I was missing opportunities for real life teaching of social skills and creativity. Conflict resolution is a life skill. We all continually experience conflicts in our lives as we live and negotiate with other people. We may have different needs in different situations and how do we negotiate this? It is important to see more negotiation in classrooms as a problem arises, so that children can truly be involved in the decision making process and have regular opportunities to negotiate conflict.

There was a problem at the end of term regarding tidying up. We had always tidied up at the end of the day when the children came in from the garden. It now was feeling like a struggle for me. One day there was a large number of children who were very reluctant. I knew that I could praise those children who were helping and that this would have the effect of others also then joining in. On reflection I realized that I was being inconsistent with my own values. I wanted to model self-responsibility but was going to use techniques, which manipulated the children to behave in certain ways in order to receive praise.

Instead I gathered the children together on the next day. I talked about what I had observed and my need for orderliness at the end of the day and also acknowledged the children feeling tired at the end of the day and their need for rest or having fun and playing. The children decided to tidy up when they were finished playing with something and before they went out to the garden. Some of them were excited that when they came in from the garden they would be able to get a drink of water and then come and join in the circle game without having to do anything else. Not all the children were present when we had this discussion and the solution was not perfect but in general there was more of a willingness to tidy up before going outside. This opened up possibilities for me about negotiating agreements and rules that I would like to explore further. If we truly want children to be responsible for their own behaviours we have to be consistently giving them opportunities to behave in this way.
From the observations throughout this project it can be concluded that nursery aged children, with adult support, can use NVC as a model of communication to resolve conflicts (using the visual books). The children are very creative in the NVC process and again if this is not consistently used then there are missed opportunities to be creative and to develop these skills. Guy Claxton (2006) also highlights the importance of daily opportunities for being creative rather than isolated lessons. “Habits of mind reflect the day to day values and practice of the community in which people spend a lot of time.”

From the observations it can clearly be seen that the children have a curiosity about the problem, they stay with the process, they experiment with different solutions and pay attention to details. These are all key components of developing creativity. The process lends itself to creativity and conflict resolution is an ideal opportunity to develop creativity within the classroom.

In addition to creativity and values children are learning many other skills during this process e.g. communication skills, an understanding of safety, an understanding of self and others, thinking skills, perspective taking. An alternative to negotiation would be telling children what they need to do e.g. that they need to share and organizing the sharing for them. NVC communication involves the children in the process rather than just the outcome and I have begun to really value this process. The process values the children’s own ideas, consolidates their self-awareness. Self-awareness is so important for children to be able to stand up for the values that they believe in and to articulate these to others. They learn to trust themselves. It develops self-resilience. From the observations all the children are able to negotiate with others. They are able to find solutions to problems and to let the problem go. They express their feelings appropriately and the feeling is let go of. It is a healthy and safe way for self-esteem and self-awareness to grow.

In addition the observations show that children do express their emotions clearly. There is a halt in the process as the children go and get the books and then articulate themselves as well as listening to the other. The ability to regulate one’s emotions correlates positively with empathy and helping behaviour. The observations show children regulating and expressing their emotions and this is a skill
that is important to continue to really support within the classroom.

Some situations in the classroom are non negotiable. These are for safety reasons and ensuring all children are safe including being emotionally safe within the nursery environment. During this project I have reflected on these situations. Do we sometimes use safety as a way of controlling a class and having order, when it is not really about safety at all? As consistency is such a key in modeling values it is very important that we are consistent and honest with children. I want to be clear about my needs within the classroom and to articulate these clearly to the children. Although some situations may be non negotiable, I still want to enforce this safety in a respectful and clear manner.

The visual books have been very popular and useful in negotiating conflict. I will continue to use them in the classroom. However in order to be useful for negotiating all conflicts I will add more feelings and needs pictures to the book this next term. A tool is only useful if it fits the purpose for which it is designed. The books will only be useful if the picture cards reflect the different emotions and needs that arise regularly in the classroom. I would like to add in the need for ease, which is often one of my needs as a teacher in organising the class and the day. I also would like to add in a needs card for respect and orderliness.

Rather than a discussion of feelings and needs out of context, or learning about feelings and needs only through board games or story books here is an opportunity to learn in context. It provides opportunities on a daily basis for children to actively learn in real life contexts personal to each one of us. There is not a discussion of a feeling being appropriate or not, but all feelings and needs being recognised as universal and practical. This is vital in emotional wellbeing and in development of self-esteem.

The children developed independence in saying the observation, feeling and need. The part of the process that they needed more help with was at the request and finding a solution stage. Maybe the wording "Would you be willing to…..?" would be useful to include in the booklet and to teach for the
request stage. This may help the children to also negotiate the solution more independently. The other stages in the process had more visual prompts in the books than the final stage in the process.

There is a depth to the NVC model and it takes time to learn a new language and way of interacting. I am concerned about how it transfers to other environments. The children are learning to be really involved in decision making processes, to articulate their own feelings and needs as well as respecting the feelings and needs of others, to question rules if they do not make sense, to ask for explanations. The process itself develops an open mindedness, an awareness of many possibilities, flexibility, and creativity. These essential thinking skills are at the core of the curriculum for excellence. Perhaps here is a tool for really teaching it – not as an abstract lesson but through daily life and negotiating in a classroom in order to meet everyone’s needs.

How will this affect the children if they go into an environment that does not encourage this? In the majority of cases there was not a change in the child’s behaviour in the family home. I would recommend more research into NVC in different settings and with different ages of children over a longer time frame.
7. Conclusions

Overall Aim:

- To explore the extent to which “Nonviolent Communication” conflict resolution can be used by nursery children aged 3–5 years.

The Nonviolent Communication Model as developed by Marshall Rosenberg can be used with children aged 3-5 years with appropriately adapted materials. The visual books are set out in a way that young children can use easily and they respond enthusiastically to using the model to help resolve their own conflicts as well as suggesting solutions to other people’s conflicts. This is supported by the classroom observations of the children using the books when negotiating conflict, the children’s responses to the puppet stories, parent and staff questionnaires.

Specific Objectives:

To evaluate the:

1. Effectiveness of “Nonviolent Communication” as a model of conflict resolution that can be used independently by children.

Nursery aged children can use the NVC model with adult support to resolve conflicts. Some of the children used part of the process independently. They all needed adult support at the finding a solution stage.

The research demonstrated that:

- Conflicts are satisfactorily resolved. The children find resolutions that everyone is happy with.
- Children aged 3-5 years are creatively engaged with the process. They showed high levels of creativity and decision making.
- Children aged 4-5yrs can use the visual books (with adult support) to resolve more complex conflicts satisfactorily.
• Children aged 3-5 years do need adult support to model the process. The adult needs to be skilled in the NVC process and have an understanding of the underlying needs. It takes time to go through the process and for the children to learn this language.

2. Impact of the “Nonviolent Communication” model in contributing to the creation of a classroom where young children show a respect for the needs of others as well as their own needs.

The children developed an understanding of their own feelings and needs and were able to articulate these, sometimes independently, sometimes with adult support. Through this process they also developed an awareness of the feelings and needs of others. On some occasions the children independently showed empathy towards others. Respect was modelled throughout the process. Respect was shown when an adult supported the conflict resolution using the visual books. More respect by the children was independently shown, some of the time.

The research demonstrated that:

• Children aged 3-5 years can learn to use this language to express their feelings and needs, rather than using physical means to resolve conflicts.
• Children aged 3-5 years develop a sophistication and clarity when expressing their feelings and needs. They can regulate and articulate their own emotions.
• Children aged 3-5 years transfer this language to new situations and used the language in their own play.
• Most children aged 3-5 years have a willingness to listen to the feelings and needs of another when their feelings and needs are also being heard. They are actively learning about empathy.
• Children aged 3-5 years become more aware of the feelings and needs of others from using the NVC model.
• Children aged 3-5 years can find solutions (with adult support) to meet everyone’s needs. They are actively learning about respect.
- Children aged 3-5 years can take responsibility for their own behaviour
- NVC does model that everyone’s needs matter and provides a process whereby solutions can be found that everyone is happy with. NVC, when used consistently, models the values of empathy, respect, responsibility and fairness
- Through the NVC process the teacher also develops an increased awareness of human behaviour and underlying needs

3. Effectiveness of NVC in reducing the conflicts between children and between staff and children.

The number of conflicts between children and between staff and children was not reduced but resolutions were found to the majority of conflicts in the moment. Solutions were found that everyone was happy with and the conflicts were resolved.

The research demonstrated that:
- Children aged 3-5 years negotiate conflict more articulately when using NVC
- The majority of conflicts are being resolved in the moment, in the here and now
- More than a term is needed for the children to learn this language effectively

In addition the research found that the children became more creative in finding solutions to problems and developing as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

This model is more than a tool. It is an underlying set of values and ethos, which could pervade all our practice. “What we are teaches the child far more than what we say, so we must be what we want our children to become.” Joseph Pearce, quoted in Hart and Kindle Hodson (2004). Children learn from what we model, not from what we tell them. If we want to model that everyone’s needs matter and that it is important to articulate our feelings and needs clearly and to listen to each other, then it is
important that we truly model this consistently in our schools. There is a Government priority in reducing violence in society and here is a model, which could actively contribute towards this aim. There is still more to learn about and practise from the NVC model.
8. Recommendations

I would recommend the following research projects to follow up on the results from this small-scale research project with nursery-aged pupils.

- A longer term research project into using NVC in schools with different ages of pupils
- Further research into the role of guilt in empathy and moral development
- Review of power structures in schools and how involved in decision making pupils are
- A research project with families – using NVC in the home
- What training and support is needed for adults to model and implement NVC
- More research into the negative effects rewards can have on empathy and moral growth
9. References and Bibliography


SERA (2005) *Educational Guidelines for Educational Research*

SERA (2007) *Starting Points for Research in Schools*


10. Appendices

Appendix 1

Non Violent Communication (NVC) Research

I, Elaine Fullerton, have received a grant from the GTC Scotland to research into using Non Violent Communication with nursery-aged children. This gives me 10 days to read and learn more about Non Violent Communication, time to make resources to use with the children, time to observe and reflect. I am very excited about this opportunity.

Non Violent Communication (NVC) is a compassionate type of communication that supports people to clearly share their feelings and needs and to try and find solutions to problems that try to meet everyone’s needs.

What I would like to do?

- I would like to observe the types of conflicts that nursery children have and what they do when these conflicts arise.
- I then plan to introduce a visual book that shows the 4 stage process of NVC, and support children to use this themselves when problems, disputes, conflicts arise.
- I also want to introduce puppet stories that show the puppets sorting out conflicts using this process.
- I then wish to observe the children again to see what types of conflicts now arise and what the children do when conflicts arise.

Aims:

Staff at Hope Cottage are already using NVC to support children to resolve conflicts. The aim of my research is to see whether children themselves can use this process to resolve conflicts. Will young children show respect for the needs of others as well as their own? As a result will there be less conflicts?

The aim is to:

- Support children’s emotional intelligence - awareness of both their own feelings and needs and to develop an understanding and awareness of the feelings and needs of others.
- Develop empathy and respect.
- Develop communication skills.
- Make clear requests for what everyone would like.
- Maintain a healthy ethos and discipline within the classroom.
Parent/Carer Consent Form

Hope Cottage Nursery School

Elaine Fullerton is carrying out this research into using Non Violent Communication with nursery-aged pupils.

I would like to make written observations and digital sound recordings of the children resolving conflicts. These will be used to evaluate the work. This research will be used in written publications and presentations for educational or research purposes. No real names of the children will be used and every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. Photographs and video recordings may also be used when sharing the research.

Please complete and sign this form if you are happy for your child to participate in this research.

I _______________________________ (name of parent/carer) agree for my child _______________________________ (name of child) to participate in the research.

Please tick the box if you are happy for me to use any or all of the below during the research:

Written observations [ ] Photos [ ]

Voice-recordings [ ] Video recordings [ ]

Please tick the box if you are happy for me to use observations, recordings, photographs and video recordings in any written publication or presentation about this research.

Date:

Signature:

I hope to complete the research by September and will be writing a report. I would like to share the findings briefly with you before the final report is published.

If you would you like the findings sent to you either by email or post, please give details below. Thank you

Contact Details:
Appendix 2

Teach you about giraffe language

Using a giraffe book

Using puppets

Giraffe Language can help us to:

Ask for what we need

Find solutions together to problems
I would like to:

Write down what you say

Record what you say

Take photographs

Video you
Afterwards I would like to write up this research to share with other teachers and people interested in using giraffe language in their work.

I will also talk about and share this research with others. Show them the photos; tell them about what you say to ask for what you need or to find solutions to problems.

It will be confidential, I will not say who you are. Can I record and share what you say in this research?
<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Note:
Since I began this project I have learned that Marshall Rosenberg has requested that materials do not use the giraffe symbol to represent the Nonviolent Communication Model. I would alter this booklet to be called another title in response to his request.
Appendix 3

Picture of Visual Book
Appendix 4

Being a lion Story

Both Susie and bear really like to dress up, they have different costumes and clothes. Do you know what they like to dress up as? Well today, this morning, Bear dressed up as a lion, he had been given a lion costume for his last birthday present, and he loved his lion ears and paws. He was playing in the woods, he was prowling around, with his big lion paws on his feet, and he was roaring as loud as he could. He then saw Susie coming and he quickly hid behind a bush. Susie didn’t see him and when she was close, he jumped out and he roared at Susie. She screamed and began to cry.

Possible feelings and Needs:
Needs: To play, to feel safe 
Feelings: Scared, happy

Susie could have a need to feel safe – may feel scared

Bear could be having fun, may be feeling happy, then looks annoyed when Susie screams

Solution?

Painting in the forest Story

Susie has been given a new set of paints and she is very excited. She finished her breakfast quickly and goes off into the woods, to paint a picture. She really wants to paint her favourite flowers that are growing in the woods. In her paint box, she has lots of different coloured paints, and she is busy painting when Bear comes along.

He grabs the paintbrush from Susie and begins to run off with it. Susie grabs the brush back and hits him.

Do you think we could help them sort out their problem?

Possible feelings and needs:
Needs: To Play, to be fair 
Feelings: Angry, frustrated

Millie may be feeling angry, she has a need to play

Bear may also have a need to play, he may be feeling angry that he doesn’t have a turn, may have a need for it to be fair
Possible solution?

**Princesses and dragons Story**

Can you remember what Susie’s favourite thing to do is?

Well today, Susie was dressing up as a princess again. In the nursery there is a silver princess dress and Susie is wearing it. She has got the dress on and she is heading off to the woods with a wand to try and hunt dragons.

Bear comes up and asks, “Can I join in please?”

“Yes” says Susie, “you can be the dragon”

“I don’t want to be the dragon”, says bear. “I am always the dragon, I want to be a princess too.”

**Possible Feelings and Needs:**

Needs: Fairness    Autonomy

Feelings: angry, upset, happy
Appendix 6

Non Violent Communication (NVC) Research

Feedback Request - Staff

This term we have been supporting the children using the Non Violent Communication Model to find solutions to their conflicts, where everyone's needs are met. I have used a visual book that the children can use with support if they have a problem. This helps them to talk about what has happened, how they are feeling and what they need, as well as listening to the other child say what has happened, how they are feeling and what they need. Together we then find a solution to the problem, to meet everyone's needs.

I have also introduced puppet stories - Susie (a mouse) and Bear have been visiting nursery and sharing their stories and the children have been using the visual books to help the puppets find a solution to their problem.

I am seeking feedback on the project any comments would be warmly welcomed.

- Any comments on the use of the visual book
- Do you think with an adult supporting the children, the visual book is useful in supporting children to resolve conflicts - in expressing themselves, listening and developing a respect for others and finding a solution to meet everyone's needs?
- Have you observed any children sorting out their own conflicts using NVC?
- Are there any changes in how the children resolve their conflicts?
- Have you noticed any differences in how the children express his/her feelings?
- Are the children able to ask for what they need in a respectful manner?
- Have you observed the children being more aware of other people's feelings and needs?
- Have you observed the children suggesting solutions to any problems?
- Any observations or feedback on the puppet work?
- Do you think that the puppet work helped to support children to resolve conflicts - in expressing themselves, listening and developing a respect for others and finding a solution to meet everyone's needs?

- Do you think there has been a reduction in conflicts between children and staff?
• Do you think there has been a reduction in conflicts between children?

I will be evaluating the research in August and will then share my findings with those of you who are interested.

Many Thanks,
Elaine

Non Violent Communication (NVC) Research

Parent Feedback Request

This term we have been supporting the children using the Non Violent Communication Model to find solutions to their conflicts, where everyone's needs are met. I have used a visual book that the children can use with support if they have a problem. This helps them to talk about what has happened, how they are feeling and what they need, as well as listening to the other child say what has happened, how the are feeling and what they need. Together we then find a solution to the problem, to meet everyone's needs.

I have also introduced puppet stories - Susie (a mouse) and Bear have been visiting nursery and sharing their stories and the children have been using the visual books to help the puppets find a solution to their problem.

I am seeking feedback on the project any comments would be warmly welcomed.

• Have you noticed any differences in how you child expresses his/her feelings?
• Is your child able to ask for what they need in a respectful manner?
• Have you observed your child being more aware of other people's feelings and needs?
• Have you observed your child suggesting solutions?
• Has your child talked about the puppets, or visual "giraffe" book we use when there is a problem in class? Can you briefly feedback?

I will be evaluating the research in August and will then share my findings with those of you who are interested.

Many Thanks, Elaine

Feedback Request - Children

If you have a problem what can you do to sort it out?

What is giraffe language?
Has it been helpful?
Appendix 7

Child A is playing with a stone and drawing on the ground with it.

Child B asks for the stone

Adult is standing nearby and overhears

Child A: No

Child B looks upset and comes up to me

Adult: have you asked him if you can have a turn?

Child B: yes

Adult to child A: Child B would really like a turn

Child A: She won’t give it back.

Adult: Ah so you are worried that she won’t give it back and you’re really enjoying playing with it. Is there a solution? (I ask child B)

Child B: I will give it back in 5 minutes

Adult: There is only 5 minutes until we go inside

Child B: I’ll give it back in 1 minute

Child A gives the stone to child B

Child B plays with the stone and then gives it back to child A

Child A smiles
Appendix 8

Dialogue of the process of finding a solution to a problem using the 2 visual books. Child A had asked me if I could help them with the giraffe books sort out their problem. I went with them to the story corner. They went to get the books and gave one to each other.

Child A: When I see you following me lots of times, I feel angry ....(pause)

Adult: I think it might be this one (pointing to the autonomy picture), about making your own choices. You want to make your own choices, being independent, I think

Child A: Yeah

Adult: We haven’t had that one before, yes I think it is about making your own choices, you want to choose what you do.

Child A; Yes because I wanted to play the game, I made up the game

Child B: When I see Child A not telling me to follow I feel sad

Adult: What is your one about?

Child B: I want her to listen to me

Adult: I don’t know what the solution is actually, you want to be listened to and what else is it about is it about friendship, or having fun, or is it about?

Child A also says that she wants to be listened to

Adult: I wonder if there is a way that you can play the game together, child A really wants to make her own choices

Child A: because it was my game and I played it before and child B copied me when I played it lots of times

Child B: No, 1 time

Adult: You want child B to make her own choices really too? You want her to make her own choices?

Child B: shaking her head

Adult: You don’t want to make your own choices, you want to be following
Child B: nods head

Adult: I wonder if there is someone else then who could join the game then

Child A: suggests another child that could join the game

Adult: Maybe this other child is quite happy that child B copies her? And then maybe you (child A) could make your own choices?

Child A: I am going to ask her (she goes off to ask this other child). She asks her - are you OK with child B copying where you are going?. The other child replies No. She said no.

Adult to child B: so you really want to follow someone and copy them, perhaps child C would like to join the game. Child C was sitting close by listening.

Child C says that he wants to join the game.

Adult: Well explain the game to child C then

Child A: (begins to explain the game)

Child B: I don’t want to follow child C

Adult: but you need to respect that child A really doesn’t want to be followed

Child A: and it was my game

Child C: and I really want to be in the game

Child A: you can be in the game

Adult: We have a problem that we really need to sort out before the game can start again

Child C is asking what the game is about

Adult: It’s a game of crocodiles in the water

Child A: Can you do this please?

Adult: You really need to find a new solution, it can’t be the same child B, child A really doesn’t want that

Child A: and it was my game

Adult: whether its your game or not, its important that child B hears that you don’t want her to copy you

(A discussion about the game and what happened)
Adult to child A: and can you really understand that child B really wants you to hear that she wants to copy you. You don’t need to let her copy you, but she really wants you to hear her. Can you hear her? Yeah? OK

Adult: well there is a solution because child C is allowing you to copy him, but child A is saying no, that part you really need to respect. If you are really wanting to copy and follow someone there are other people who are happy and willing for you to do that and that would be a solution and it would really respect child A, who wants to make her own choices

Adult: What do you suggest as a solution child B? remembering child A also needs to be happy.

Child B:

Adult: It’s taking a long time to get to the solution. What do you suggest child B?

Child B : (indistinct)

Child A: I know what child B – you know when we are finished the game we will play it again so you can follow me

Adult: All right, so you play it 2 times, 1 time when child B is not following you and 1 time when she is following you. Wow. Does that work?

Child A: or do you want to follow me the first time? Do you want to follow me the first time or the 2nd time?

Child B: 2nd time

Adult: so that’s OK for you child B?

Child B: (nods)

Adult: so you have found a solution, well done.