

# Netherlea School Case Study



Joy Taylor (Acting Head Teacher) and Roosa Salonen (Teacher) contacted the SDS Education team after exploring resources from the SDS Meta-skills Toolkit. They were eager to share the work they had undertaken in developing the 'Meta-skills Passport', which is a programme of interactive and engaging lessons designed to bring the framework to life for their learners.

## The School's View



**Joy Taylor**, Acting Head Teacher at Netherlea School, explains why the school chose to launch the Meta-skills Passport and reflects on the journey so far.

Last year, I was introduced to the meta-skills framework and could immediately see the potential benefits — not just for our learners, but for staff too. We all gain from refining our meta-skills. At Netherlea, we teach in a special education setting for learners with additional support needs. With that context in mind, we knew we needed a system that could show progression and track skill development in a way that felt fun, engaging, and not traditionally educational. It was important that the Meta-skills Passport was game-based, collaborative, and fostered a strong sense of achievement for everyone involved.

Our school supports a wide age range, from 8 to 18, and many of our learners are approaching the end of their school journey. We felt it was vital to equip them with the kind of skills that would support success in whatever comes next, whether that's job interviews, entering the world of work, or living independently. Some meta-skills, such as collaborating or feeling, can be particularly challenging due to our learners' additional needs. The framework gave us a meaningful way to support the development of these skills. Importantly, we wanted the programme to be a partnership between staff and learners. We strongly believe that these human skills are essential for everyone – not just young people.

The journey has been inspiring. It's sparked creativity across the school, with both staff and pupils taking ownership of the Passport. The learners have felt supported to try new things and it has been lovely to see them take pride in their efforts. The stamp system has proven to be a great motivator, and the reflective questions have prompted some fantastic conversations. Over time, we've seen learners begin to recognise when they're using meta-skills in real-life situations, whether that's showing initiative while cooking a meal or demonstrating resilience when something hasn't gone to plan. It's also helped staff look at learners' progress in new ways, celebrating successes that may have previously gone unnoticed.

My advice for practitioners starting out on their meta-skills journey would be: Start with your own setting and learners in mind. The meta-skills framework is incredibly flexible, so adapt it to suit your context. Involve learners in shaping the programme, their ideas and insights will make it more meaningful. Keep it fun, keep it consistent, and give it time to embed. For us, Meta-skills Passport hasn't been a one-off lesson but instead a cultural shift, that has proven worth it at every step of the journey.

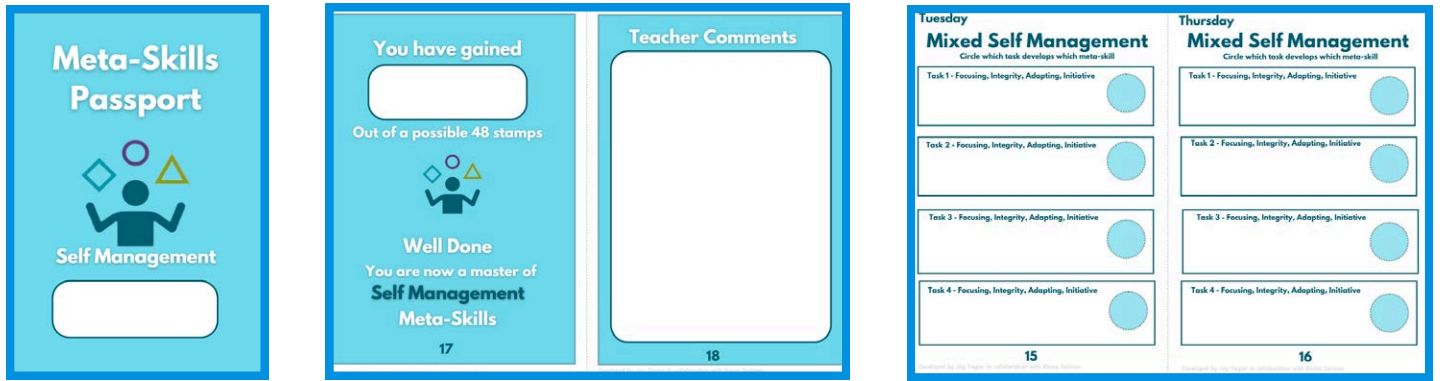
**Here Roosa Salonen (teacher) explains how Meta-Skills was embedded in practice at Netherlea.**



<https://youtu.be/gPI74KE4YkQ>

For further information or for the sharing of resources please email: [metaskillspassport@gmail.com](mailto:metaskillspassport@gmail.com)

## Example of the Meta-Skills Passport.



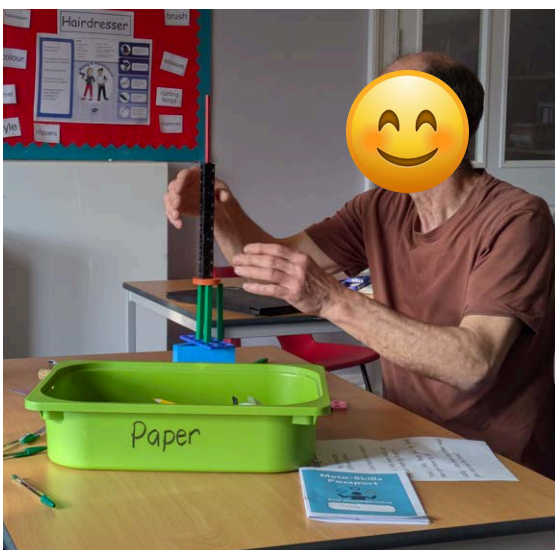
“I remember” challenge using feeling and communicating



“sorting” challenges to develop focusing.

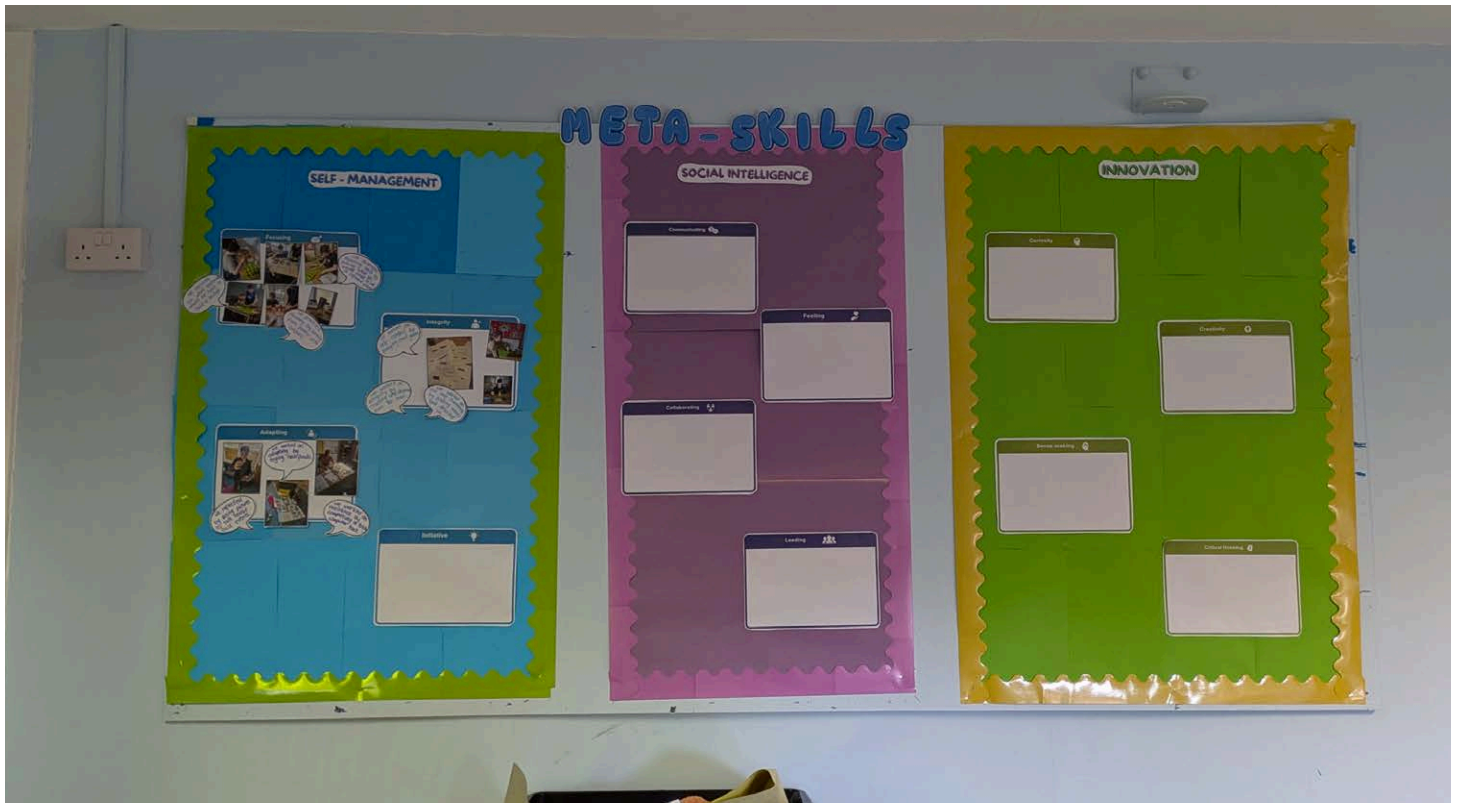


Teaching staff also take part.

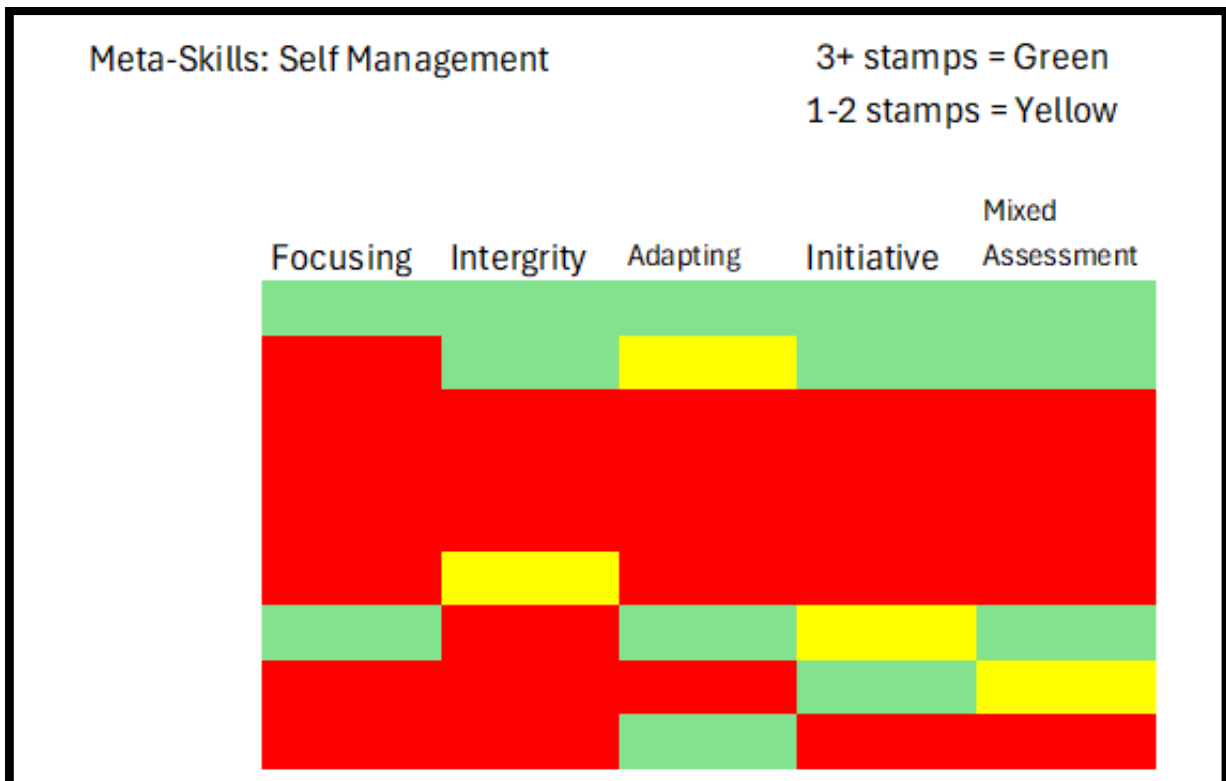


Using our meta-skills knowledge on school trips.





Visual display “working wall” with pupil voice included to track our meta-skills development.



Example of how we assess. Assessment is based on whether or not learners have attended the session not how “well” they did.

## **How we used the Meta-Skills Toolkit**

The SDS Meta-skills Toolkit was important in shaping our initial thinking around the Meta-skills Passport. It then guided us as we started developing resources. We made particular use of the meta-skills framework and used the definitions of each meta-skill to decide the focus of our activities . These resources also supported staff in gaining a shared understanding of what each skill looks like in action, allowing us to design relevant activities that felt purposeful and accessible. The toolkit provided a strong foundation, which we then adapted to meet the needs of our learners. We also found the meta-skills self-evaluation wheel helpful for staff and learners alike.

## **Overview of Meta-Skills Passport**

Meta-skills Passport is a 24-week programme divided into three distinct 8-week blocks:

- Self-management (focusing, integrity, adapting, initiative)
- Social intelligence (communicating, feeling, collaborating, empathising)
- Innovation (curiosity, sense-making, critical thinking, creativity)

Each week focuses on one meta-skill through a 50-minute interactive lesson. Lessons typically consist of three short challenges designed to explore and strengthen that skill in different contexts. Both learners and staff participate equally in the challenges, modelling collaboration and mutual growth. Learners receive a stamp for each challenge they attempt, as well as an additional stamp for responding to a reflective question. Progress is tracked using personal passports and wall displays in each classroom.

Where possible, we connect each meta-skill to real-life situations (such as planning a journey, preparing a meal, or resolving a conflict) to ensure learning is practical and transferable.

## The impact of implementing Meta-Skills Passport

Introducing Meta-Skills passport throughout our school has been noticeably impactful. Learners are increasingly able to talk about their skills using the language of the framework, and they take pride in earning stamps and progressing through their passports. For some, it has been the first time they've felt confident enough to reflect on their own development. We've seen notable improvements in communication, teamwork, and self-awareness. In our setting when conflicts happen being able to refer back to their meta-skills sessions has been a helpful tool in conflict resolution. The Passport has also contributed to a more positive school culture. Staff and pupils working together on equal terms during challenges has strengthened relationships and created new opportunities for shared success. In some cases, the framework has even influenced wider planning and behaviour support strategies, by giving us a shared vocabulary for recognising progress and effort in areas like focus, resilience, or empathy.

### Quotes from Learners

**“I actually like doing meta-skills with [young person’s name].”**

Context - This young person is not in a class with this young person usually but meta-skills allows them the opportunity to work with others.

**“Tasks can be quite funny. I like the teachers joining in”**

## Training Opportunities

It was important to us as a staff team that all members were trained in the meta-skills framework and actively involved in planning activities. This helped create a sense of ownership and enjoyment across the whole team. For some staff, implementing the Meta-skills Passport felt well within their comfort zone; for others, it offered a new challenge. By adopting a team-teaching approach, we ensured that everyone felt confident and well supported. It also allowed colleagues to learn from one another's strengths, creating a collaborative environment for both staff and learners.

## Beyond Our School

One of the unexpected highlights of the programme has been its ripple effect beyond the classroom. As part of our working partnership with our local YMCA they have seen the success of meta-skills passport and have invited us to deliver training to their staff, to explore how it could be implemented within their own youth provision. This has opened up exciting opportunities for further collaboration and wider community impact.

**“After working with Netherlea School and seeing how they have embedded meta-skills into various activities across the school, we have been inspired to do the same within our youthwork practice. Meta-Skills can be developed in fun ways and are valuable skills for young people for now and in the future.”**

**- Anthony, Senior Youth Work Coordinator, Dumfries YMCA**

**Joy shares some reflections on the training of staff & beyond.**

<https://youtu.be/uE9n0GYS34w>

If you would like to find out more about the Skills 4.0 Meta-skills framework check out the resources available on the [Meta-skills toolkit](#) or contact the Education team at [education@sds.co.uk](mailto:education@sds.co.uk)