



Roots of Empathy  
Racines de l'empathie



Roots Of Empathy (ROE) is pleased to be working in partnership with the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) to conduct the first independent evaluation of ROE's Award-Winning programme in England. ROE has been delivering transformational programmes in primary schools in England since 2012.

ROE is an international charitable organisation that offers empathy-based programming for children. Created 25 years ago by social entrepreneur, educator, author, parenting expert and child advocate Mary Gordon – ROE is considered a model of social innovation. Over two decades of independent academic research across three continents has consistently shown that the programme dramatically reduces aggression (including bullying) and increases pro-social behaviours (including caring, sharing, helping and inclusion) among children who receive it.

In the ROE programme, a parent and baby (who is two to four months old at the start of the programme) from the community visit a classroom nine times over the course of a school year. A trained ROE Instructor visits with the family to guide children as they observe the relationship between the baby and its parent(s). The Instructor also visits before and after each family visit to reinforce teachings. There are 27 classroom visits in total in a ROE programme.

The YEF was established in March 2019 with a £200m endowment and ten-year mandate from the Home Office to research, support and evidence the best ways to protect children from becoming involved in violence in the long term. SHU is one of the leading new universities in the UK for research, with an international reputation.

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With support from the YEF and evaluation from SHU, ROE is delivering The Nurturing Empathy Before Transition (NEBT) programme to find out whether the programme is effective in:

- raising levels of empathy and pro-social behaviour;
- reducing aggression and engagement in risky behaviour; and
- supporting children as they prepare to make the important and often scary transition to secondary school.

Over two years, the Randomised Control Trial\* will run in 140 primary school classrooms in England, starting in 2022. Half of these school classrooms (70) will be randomly selected to receive the ROE programme, as part of their PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) lessons, and the remaining half will form a 'control group' who will continue with their normal lessons, without the programme.

In a world where our differences increasingly tend to alienate us from one another, there is a need to build empathy so we can find our shared humanity. We all ache to belong. When children are empathic, they include others because they understand what it feels like to be left out. We need to nurture empathy in our children to build a caring, peaceful and civil society that is inclusive of all.

\*In order to understand the impact of the Roots of Empathy programme on children, the YEF has funded a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the Roots of Empathy programme.

An RCT compares the outcomes of pupils who have received the programme with those who have not to see if the programme makes a difference. Schools will be randomly allocated to either an intervention group (a group that receives the Roots of Empathy programme) or a control group (group that does not receive the Roots of Empathy programme but will receive an incentive for their participation). Randomisation occurs to reduce potential bias in the study.

