

## DIGNITY IN SCHOOL RESOURCE

# Friendship and Learning

## Introduction

While working with children of all ages in school, we have found that friendship is a recurring theme. The impact of the Covid pandemic and the road to recovery has had a profound effect on children's friendships and they may need support to build their relationships with other children and with the adults around them.

“Life wouldn't be real without friends. They make you happy.”

## Aims of the activity

This resource will look at the relationship between friendship and learning, using a rights-based approach. The aims of this activity are to:

- Find out what children need from each other to support their learning.
- Explore what adults can do to support friendships in the classroom.

The outcomes of this activity will be different in every class, it's important to have these discussions with children each year to build positive relationships in your class and make sure that you are supporting the needs of your pupil group.



# Friendship and Learning

## Activity Breakdown

Ideally this activity should be run across two sessions

- 1 hour – Creative activity to form and build ideas in small groups
- 30 mins – Feedback and reflection as a class

This guide is aimed at upper primary school learners. With minor adjustments to length, questions and prompts, the session can be facilitated for any age group.

## What you need

In order to run this activity, you will need the following:

- Long strips of coloured paper (we recommend A2 cut in thirds widthways, or similar)
- Coloured pens
- Stapler
- Sheet of paper for your note taking.



# Friendship and Learning

## Session 1

### Check-In and Introduction (15 mins)

At Children's Parliament, we start every session with a check-in. Children love these short activities, and they are a vital piece of our rights-based practice. They set the tone for the session, allow children to express themselves freely and give you a wee heads up if there are any children who may need a bit of extra support or space during the day. You can find out more about check-ins in our ['Check-In Activity Ideas' Learning Kit](#).

Start together in a circle, together on the floor. Go round the circle and ask everyone to say:

- Their name.
- How they are feeling on a scale of 1-10 (and why if they feel comfortable).
- Their favourite thing to learn in class with friends.



Remember to take your turn as a participant in the circle as well!

Once you've all checked in, you can introduce the session to the class:



We know that friendship is really important to children in school. Today we're going to be thinking about friendship in the classroom. We're going to look at what you need from your friends when you're learning and how we can all look after each other in class. We're also going to have a think about how adults in class can help support your friendships in class.

We're going to each be creating our own link in a giant friendship chain. Each link will say what we need from each other to support friendships and help us learn. In the next session we'll be sharing what we need from each other and joining everyone's ideas together in the chain. We'll also be adding chain links from adults in class which will say how we plan to support you with your friendships in class.



# Friendship and Learning

## Session 1

### Friendship chain (45 minutes)

Split the children into small groups. Give each child one of the colourful strips of paper to work on, explain that this is their link that is going to form part of the giant friendship chain.

Ask children to write down or draw things that are important to them about friendship in the classroom. Challenge them to try to think of about five ideas each!



Below are some questions to help generate ideas among children:

- How can friends help each other with their learning?
- When do you get to work with friends in class?
- How does working with friends help with your learning?
- What is so important about having time for friendship in class?
- Are there times where it might not be good to work with friends in class?
- What can adults do to support friendship in the classroom?

You could also get them to explore friendship between girls and boys as part of this:

- What things are important about friendships between girls and boys?
- Are there any things that are important about friendships between girls and boys in the classroom?

They don't need to come up with an answer to all of the questions above and you can add or remove any of the prompts to make them work for your learners. The important thing is that they have a chance to reflect on what friendship in the classroom means to them and, if they want, talk about that with their peers while they work.

Give them time to write their ideas on their strips and decorate them, if they want.

This section can be adapted for length if you do not have a full hour. Just makes sure that children feel they have enough time to create their chain link.



# Friendship and Learning

## Session 2

### Feeding Back (20 mins)

In your second session, bring the children back into a circle together as a class with their strips of paper.

Ask each child in turn to read out one thing from their strip that is the most important to them. This can be the same as what someone else has said. As the children speak try and take notes on a sheet of paper to gather common themes and useful ideas. Ask children to expand, or explain why they chose their idea, if they feel comfortable.

After they have answered, take their strip and staple it into a chain. As each child answers the chain will grow longer.

Once you've gone round the whole group, you can ask children to reflect as a group:

- Were there any similarities or themes that came up for the class?
- Did every child need the same things, or did children need different things?
- How can we support everyone in the class feels supported and included?

Challenge them to think about how adults could help or support with their ideas. Write down their solutions.



# Friendship and Learning

## Session 2

### Adult Pledges (10 mins)

Once all the children have had chance to share their ideas and reflect on the themes of the class it's your turn to reflect. Take your own strip of paper and on it write:

- What I have heard today ...
- What I am going to do as a result ...

Let children know what you took from their sharing and, most importantly, what you plan to do or to change in class as a result. This can be something really small, but practical, or it can be something ambitious that might change the culture of the class.

Think about what you are able to achieve and the impact it will have on children. Commit to making a change and let them know how and when you will put it into effect.

Make sure every adult in the classroom completes at least one link, though you can write as many as you like!

Once you have written your pledge/s on your strip, join them to the chain, closing it off in a giant friendship loop. Explain that now everyone's ideas are joined together, they're all as important as each other and their ideas will be listened to and taken on as you work together.

Display your friendship loop in the classroom so everyone can see it and be reminded of what's important to them.

