

DIGNITY IN SCHOOL RESOURCE

Friendship in the Playground

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.

“ Friends make me happy; friends help you keep happy and positive by being in your life. ”

Aims of the activity

This resource will look at friendship and play at school, using a rights-based approach. The aims of this activity are to:

- Find out what children need from each other to support friendship in the playground.
- Find out which areas of the playground may be more challenging for some children.
- Explore what adults can do to support friendships in the playground.
- Understand more about how adults can support friendships between boys and girls.

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



Friendship in the Playground

Activity Breakdown

Ideally this activity should be run across two sessions:

- 50 hours – Mapping the playground
- 40 mins – Finding friendship solutions

This session takes place outside in your playground.

We recommend that this activity is carried out with staff that would usually be in the playground at break and lunch. We would recommend a teacher and a PSA share this task.

The session can be run with any age group or class size, with minor adjustments to length, questions and prompts. We worked with a small group of children from across year groups in upper primary.

What you need

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

- Flags or cardboard markers in two colours (we used heart shapes)/chalk
- Wool and/or string.
- Large sheets of paper/chalk
- Coloured pens.



Friendship in the Playground

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](#).

Stand together in a circle, outside. 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 do in the playground 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 playground. We're going to look at what you need from your friends when you're playing and how we can all look after each other during playtime. We're going to have a think about how adults in the playground can help support your friendships. We're also going to think of how boys and girls might play together and how we can support you to play together.

We're going to explore the playground and think about each of the areas we like to play in. We're also going to think about the places in the playground where friendships and play could be better. We're going to come up with solutions together about how we could improve friendships in the playground.



Friendship in the Playground

Session 1

Mapping the playground (15 mins)

Individually, or in pairs, give children five minutes to explore your playground. Ask them to think about places where they enjoy playing and there are lots of good relationships, where children play together well, or where children feel included. Ask them to mark these places with your first colour of flag or a circle of chalk in your first colour.



Next give them five minutes to explore the playground and think about places where relationships sometimes aren't as good, where there might be regular arguments or disagreements on the playground, or where children may feel excluded. Ask them to mark these places with your second colour of flag or a circle of chalk in your second colour.

Let children know that it's ok for them to pick some of the same places, that just means they're really important. It's also ok if they feel differently about some places too. There are no right or wrong answers, and we will discuss them together later.

Tour of the Playground (20 mins)

After the children have identified their places ask them to take you on a tour of the spots they've picked. As an added bit of fun, you can use wool or string to map the playground as you move around, joining places with positive relationships together in one colour, and those where relationships need support with another.

As you go to the different places you can use the following prompts with the group:

- Who do you think should be able to play here?
- What gets in the way of people playing here?
- Why do you like to play here/not like to play here?
- What does it feel like to spend time here?
- What are adults like here?
- Do boys and girls both like to play here? If not, why might that be?
- How can adults support you to play here?

Session 1

Tour of the Playground (contd.)

Encourage the group to discuss their ideas together, remember they don't all have to agree but they should all respect each other's ideas.

Try to capture some of their responses as you go round.

You can use your string or wool map as a guide to create a diagram later in class showing the areas where children enjoy good relationships and where a little bit more work is needed.

This section can be adapted in length depending on how much time you have.

Top tip

We recorded some audio clips as it was easier to capture voices outside than take notes!



Friendship in the Playground

Session 2

Imagining a friendship playground (30 mins)

Split into small groups, ask each group to choose one of the areas where friendships could be better in the playground.

Ask each group to draw what their area would be like there were better relationships there. They can either use big sheets of paper and coloured pens, or they can draw on the ground with chalk (if they're on a hard surface).

In their newly imagined area, ask them to think about:

- What needs to change in this area for relationships to improve?
- Who is playing there?
- What games are played there? Is that different from what is currently played?
- How does it feel to play there?
- How are adults involved in the change?
- What can adults do to support friendships in your area?

Once they've finished their drawings, go on a tour of each drawing and ask the children to show you what their reimagined space looks like. Record their ideas throughout.



Friendship in the Playground

Session 2

Adult Pledges (10 mins)

Once you've heard everything the children have said, it's your turn to reflect. Think about all the different ways children have said that adults can support friendship in the playground. Each adult should think about at least one thing will you do to improve relationships in the playground. This could be something very small and personal, or you could think on a more strategic level.

Try and think practically about your answer:

- What is in your power to change? What can you do as an individual?
- Is your change internal (attitude, culture) or external (policy, equipment)
- How can you influence the school as a whole?
- What is the timescale for you making a change?
- What does success look like?

Share your thoughts with children and encourage feedback and response.

Remember to take forward your pledge!

