

Appendix one: New beginnings

Purpose of the group

The purpose of the group is to establish a feeling of belonging for children within a small group that can be extended into the class group and whole-school community.

Children who might benefit from participating

The core activities in this set are designed to benefit children who might feel they don't belong in the class group. This might be because they have recently joined the school, have found it difficult to settle in a new class, have expressed feelings of isolation or loneliness, the class seem to be leaving them out or they have experienced considerable change in their life so far.

Key vocabulary

Happy sad scared excited nervous/worried
comfortable uncomfortable valued welcome gifts
talents excited nervous hopeful talents belong

Core activity 1

Intended learning outcomes

- I know that I am valued at school
- I know how to make someone feel welcomed and valued at school
- I understand why we need to have different rules in different places and know what the rules are in school

Resources

- magazines and other sources of photographs
- coloured pens and pencils
- glue
- digital camera
- boxes and other junk.

What to do

Start the group with one or more warm-up games to help the children feel supported and confident in the group and to help them learn each others names or something about each other. Remember to set the group rules in your own way or by using the ideas in the Introduction or in the Silver Booklets.

Use a round to elicit ideas from the children about the things that are important to them. The stem might be:

- 'The thing I think that is special about me is ...'

Explain that the first task is to think of a name for the group. The name should try to say a little bit about everyone in the group or about what the children would like to get from the group. The children might like to work in pairs to think of ideas before sharing them with the whole group and explaining why their idea will represent the group well.

As a group agree the name. Explain that the next task of the group is to make a symbol such as a flag, a coat of arms or a totem pole to represent the group. As a group they should agree what and how they are going to make and then make it together. It should be designed to represent the individuals in the group and what the group help to achieve together.

Follow-up

Ask each member of the group to volunteer one thing that they are going to do to make the other members of the group feel as if they belong to the group. For example they might agree to say hello in the morning or to do a thumbs up to each other during the day.

Core Activity 2

Intended learning outcomes

- I know that I am valued at school
- I know how to make someone feel welcome and valued at school

Resources

- plain coloured cushion
- fabric paints or crayons
- pieces of material
- fabric glue

OR

- A3 card
- magazines and other sources of photographs
- coloured pens and pencils
- glue
- digital camera

What to do

Remember to start the session with a warm-up game and to remind the children of the purpose of the group, its name and the symbol that they made last time. Ask them to explain how they made each group member feel as if they belonged to the group during the week.

Ask the children to start a round:

- 'Something that makes me special is ...'

Explain to the children that this is a special place for them to be and that in the group they are all important. They are going to create their own special place to be within the group (i.e. a mat or cushion). They will use these to show their special place each time they attend

the group and they will be able to take them home when the group is over. The mat or cushion should tell the other members of the group about what makes them special.

The first task will be to spend a little thinking time, provide some paper and a pen for the children to use if they wish. They should think about the things that make them distinctive and unique. It might be early experiences, family or friends, an interest or a special possession. It is up to them to choose but their mat or cushion should represent what makes them distinctive and unique. It might also include something that makes their membership of the group important.

They should then decorate their mat or cushion. The mat should be laminated and used to mark where they might sit in a circle or group. The cushion can be illustrated with fabric paint or pens.

Ask the children to share what they have added to their cushion or mat and why they have made it this way if they wish.

Follow-up

Ask the children to look out for anyone in the group who looks lonely or is alone and ask them if they would like to play or make them feel welcome.

Core activity 3

Intended learning outcome

- I can tell you about my gifts and talents

Resources

- circular pieces of paper of various colours
- string – enough cut into lengths (approx 50 cm) so there is one for each person in the group
- pens etc.

What to do

Remember to start the group with a warm-up game and then review whether they saw anyone who looked lonely in the playground and what they did about it. How did they feel? How do they think the lonely person felt?

Read the simple visualisation script:

Sit comfortably on your chair with your feet flat on the floor and your bottom at the back of the chair. Just imagine that you are somewhere that you like to be. Look around at what there is around you. You notice that far away there is a faint blue light. You look hard and you see it is a person. They are coming towards you. They are smiling and this makes you feel happy. They have a wand in their hand. They wave the wand above you and you feel really special. You start to think of the times when you are feeling good because you are being successful. It is a lovely feeling because you are doing something you really enjoy doing. You know it is good and the feeling is really good.

The person is going away now and you wave goodbye. The blue light fades and as it does so you start to hear the sounds of the group room. When you are ready open your eyes and talk to the person next to you if you like.

At the end of the visualisation allow the children time to reflect upon their gifts and talents.

Use a round with the stem:

- 'My special gift or talent is ...'

The children should write or draw the gifts and talents on some of the circles of paper. Use these with blank circles to make flower garlands that can be presented to each child when they next come to the group. You might like to show pictures of how people in the South Pacific islands use garlands as a symbol of welcome.

Take a photo of the children wearing the garlands to stick in their memory books. They should write their gifts and talents round the outside.

Follow-up

Ask the class teacher, parents, friends in class and the children themselves to fill in one of the garland circles to add to the garland over the week.

Core activity 4

Intended learning outcomes

- I know how it feels to do or start something new, and some ways to cope with these feelings
- I can manage my feelings and usually find a way to calm myself down when necessary

Resources

- Paper, pens etc.
- A plastic bottle for each child

What to do

Complete a round with the stem:

- 'If I went to a desert island I would take ...'

Remember to start the group with a warm-up game and a review of the last session. Share the circles for the garlands and add them to the children's flower garland.

Ask the children to shut their eyes and imagine what a desert island might be like. Quickly share ideas to build up a picture of the group's idea of a desert island.

Ask the children to imagine that they are being sent to a desert island. They can only take six things with them. What things would they take? These might be practical things to help with their survival, qualities and skills that they might use or things to remind them of what they are leaving behind.

Give the children some thinking time and ask them:

- how would you feel if you were on a deserted island.

Explain that long ago before there were mobile phones if people got stranded on a desert island they would sometimes write a message in a bottle. They would then have to hope that it would be found and passed on to someone who could help. The children should write a message to go in the bottle – it might be to someone special or to people more generally. The children should put their messages in the bottle.

Ask the children to share their messages. If they explain that their messages are secret, respect this but remind them that someone will find their bottle so they might like to think of a new message.

At the end of the group ask someone who is significant for the child in the school to reply to the message. Place it in the bottle ready for the children to find in the next group session.

Follow-up

Suggest that the children write one of the other members of the group a message and give it to them during the week. Discuss how important it is that everyone receives at least one message.

Core activity 5

Intended learning outcomes

- I can give and accept a compliment
- I can work together in a group

Resources

- A variety of cardboard boxes and 'junk' that might be used to make things
- Stones, leaves and other natural things that you might find on a desert island

What to do

Place the bottles with the reply messages ready for the children to find when they arrive. Provide some time for the children to read the message (offer help to those who might need it).

After a warm-up game ask the children about whether they remembered to give each other a message and whether they received any. They might like to share one or two or they might like to keep them secret. Discuss with them how it felt when they received an unexpected message.

Ask the children to consider what it would be like being on a deserted island. You would be alone with the people in the group. You might like to build a word picture and record it on the flip chart.

Explain that you would have to survive and try to find a way off the island. Agree with the group one or more ideas about how they would survive to try out. The ideas should involve the children working together. For example:

- Make a fishing rod or net to help you to survive on the island
- Create a colourful flag to wave to attract attention
- Build a simple shelter together with junk materials

- Write a group message from ‘things’ found on the island – e.g. lie on the floor making different body shapes to spell out a message

Build up a box of ‘treasure talents’. The children should work in pairs to tell each other a strength or talent that they have shown during the group. You might share the strengths that you have observed during your observations of the children completing the group tasks.

After listening to each other, they should write their strengths on a ‘gold coin’ and place them in the box. Make sure you have a comprehensive list of the personal and social skills that were required to complete the group task.

Follow-up

Share the box of ‘treasure talents’ with the class teacher and ask him/her to add a gold coin for each child from his/her observation over the week. Send a coin home with the children for the parents/carers to write on.

Core activity 6

Intended learning outcome

- I can work in a team

Resources

- A variety of craft materials
- A variety of boxes, cartons and other junk

What to do

Remember to start the group with a warm-up game and then review the strengths that the children demonstrated in the last session. Ask the children to share the writing on the coins they received over the week before placing them in the ‘talents treasure chest’.

Remind the children that the next session will be the last session. In that session you will include special group challenges. The challenges will need to be fun and require each person to demonstrate their gifts and talents. You might like to provide some suggestions:

- Using your bodies work together to make the word help
- Walk the plank (an upturned bench) avoiding the sharks swimming below
- Collect the delicious fruits (card or models) that are hidden in the forest
- Retrieve the gold coins from a vat of flour in a minute with your eyes shut
- Think of as many compliments as you can in 1 minute

Provide time for the children to plan and prepare for the challenges. If there is time the members of the the group might like to decorate a ‘flag’ to add to bunting you might use to decorate the room for the ‘farewell’ party.

Follow-up

Ask the class teacher to set the children a challenge in the week that requires them to work with one or more other children. They should give the child a token/sticker if they complete it successfully with an emphasis on the skills that were required to complete the challenge.

Core activity 7

Intended learning outcomes

- I can say farewell
- I can work with a group to achieve a group goal

Resources

- A medal for each child – these might be made from laminated card. On one side of the medal it should have the child's name and on the other an achievement by the child
- Decorate the room with bunting flags made from coloured paper and string. Set up the challenges devised by the children the previous week
- Refreshments for a small end of group party

What to do

Start the group with the children's favourite warm-up game and a review of last week's session. Ask them about any challenges they completed over the week and how they got on.

Each child should take it in turn to try out the challenges agreed last week. The children should get a token for each time they are successful. These should go in a group pot. At the end of the session the children will be able to trade in the tokens for treats at a small end of group 'party'.

Place the farewell medals in a box or pot. Children should take it in turns to pick out a child's medal (make sure that they don't take out their own). They should then present each other with the medal and read out (with help if necessary) what is on the medal.

Follow-up

Ask the class teacher to ask the children to show him/her the medals and remind the children to take them home. It might be helpful for children to continue to meet as a group at lunch time. Encourage them to organise these meetings themselves with your support.