

Social Skills Programme

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When should I refer a child onto this programme?

This programme is designed to be used as either:

- As discreet teaching package that can be used as part of a stage two code of practice intervention programme.
- As a resource for class teachers who are seeking to provide help and support to a child who is presenting behavioural difficulties linked to an apparent lack of social skills in some contexts.
- As a part of the diagnostic and information gathering system required by the code of practice.

Purpose of the programme:

To provide a user-friendly basic programme that can be run by a class teacher or primary helper.

To act as part as a code of practice stage two individual education plan.

To be diagnostic in the context of the code of practice, to assist in identifying children who may need to proceed to stage three.

To provide the participating children with the skills to begin to form positive relationships with other children and adults.

To provide a caring environment for children to learn by experiment, experience and practise.

To allow the children to have their developing skills acknowledged and rewarded.

Who would benefit from being included into the groups described in this booklet?

- Children who are not able to be able to take a telling off appropriately.
- Children who the teacher thinks are negatively affected by feeling different in some way.
- Children who find it difficult to make and keep friends.
- Children who attract attention by use of negative processes.
- Children who are not asking for help when needed.

Social skills background information.

For our purposes here we would define social skills as being a range of behaviours you need to have available to you in order to access relationships and behave appropriately in social situations. We feel social skills are important because: We live in a society where we have to relate to others in order to get our needs met, both material and emotional. Social skills can be tools for bringing about change. By allowing the individual to be able to communicate appropriately and to have the skills to be able to manage the process of change.

This programme is designed to teach the skills required to achieve the target behaviours of:

- Accepting a telling off appropriately.
- Showing evidence of accepting difference in themselves and in others.
- Showing evidence of making and keeping friends.
- Using positive strategies to attract attention.
- Asking for help when needed.

The assumption for inclusion in the group will therefore be that the children participating have not for whatever reason had the opportunity to learn the targeted social skills in a way that they were able to retain and use.

The programme is diagnostic in so far as once a child has been through the programme and shown evidence of achievement it may be reasonable to assume that the child has the skills required of certain social situations. If they do not use them a more complex intervention process may be needed, for example there may be evidence to support moving the child into stage three of the code of practice.

The process of teaching these skills is via group work. The groups are run in a way that is attentive to the needs of the individuals within the group and because the numbers involved are lower than with a normal class more attention can be paid to individuals, this may go some way toward meeting their individual special educational needs. The groups cannot be seen as therapeutic in a psychological sense but should perhaps be seen as providing some additional help space and attention for children who are experiencing a specific learning difficulty with regard to some aspects of social skills acquisition.

A general guide to running the groups.

The following is a step-by-step guide to starting and running a group:

1. Time:

- Establish a consistent time and day the group is to meet and stick to this.

2. Place, you will need to find a room that:

- You and your group have sole use of during your time together.
- You will not be interrupted, over looked or overheard.
- You can have every week during the programme of the programme.

3. Membership:

- If the groups are run effectively you will find that most of the children will want to come and take part as they are getting attention they may not be getting elsewhere. You may have to make a decision as to whether attendance will be optional or compulsory in the first instance.
- Choice of group size is up to you, but from our experience groups of between six and twelve are the most effective size overall. Do not hesitate to reduce the group size down to two if you feel that the needs of the children can be met that way.

4. Rules:

- You may choose to have no rules but we have found that to have some rules helps the children to feel safe and sets clear limits.
- You may choose to set rules that are important to you and ask the children if they would like to add to these, rules can be added at any point in the life of the group.
- These are the rules we have used:
 1. Confidentiality within the group of what's discussed within the group. Discuss this with reference to when you as group leader may have to break that confidentiality.
 2. Only one person to talk at any one time.
 3. No eating or drinking.
 4. Treat one and another with respect.

You will certainly need to teach the children what you mean by the above rules .

This programme has been planned to teach and develop some clear and precise skills linked to social situations that commonly occur in schools. We have assumed that many situations have set routines and expectations that are culturally determined. Within the culture that this pack is written for namely, British schools, being told off involves a certain pattern of behaviours from the pupil and the teacher. If the pupil fails to conform to the culturally set pattern for being told off he or she will almost certainly end up in worse trouble. For instance the child who is being told off for a minor offence who refuses to make eye contact and stand reasonably still may make the teacher angry and the situation may escalate out of proportion to the original offence.

We aim through this programme to teach children to make better choices about their own behaviour by allowing the children the opportunity to experience and explore the choices open to them and the consequences resulting from them making a particular decision.

The groups should be an enjoyable useful and practical educational experience. Some of the activities will be very difficult for the children, because of the feelings that may arise. So you will need to be aware that the children may need sensitive encouragement and praise throughout.

The sessions are started with "Check in" this is an opportunity for the children to bring any difficulties they are experiencing to the group, that hopefully they are finding helpful and supportive. Most of the time a simple recognition of the child's feelings may be enough. For instance, "I appreciate that must be difficult to handle, you did well".

If more complex social problems arise these must be referred back to the head of special needs and may then be taken into account when decisions are made with regard to further support. Total confidentiality can't be offered, but must always be conditional that if the child is being hurt or affected in a way that is damaging you must tell them that you have to tell the head teacher.

Session one

Aim of session: At the end of this session the children will have had the opportunity to help identify the behaviours expected of a pupil being told off. They will have practised being told off in a non-threatening environment.

Materials:

A room with a chair for all, paper and pen.

1. Market
2. Pass the squeeze
3. Brain storm being told off.
4. Practise doing it wrong, what would happen if you did it like this.
5. Practise being told off by group leader.
6. Practise being told off by peers.

Classroom based reinforcement:

1. Teacher role-plays telling pupil off.
2. Teacher recognises pupil achievement with positive note to pupil, see appendix 1.

Session Two

Aim of session: To allow each of the children taking part to practise a number of strategies designed to help them make and keep friends.

Materials:

A room with a chair for all, a board game appropriate to the age of the children, snakes and ladders is excellent.

1. Market
2. Pass the squeeze
3. Say something nice about person on left.
4. Say something nice about person on right.
5. Play game.

Classroom reinforcement:

Children use self-monitoring card, teacher asks to see this once per day, praise for it's use, reward with choosing time or other school focused reward. See appendix 2.

Session Three

Aim of session: At the end of this session the children taking part will have experienced asking for help in an assertive and clear manner.

1. Market
2. Pass the squeeze.
3. Nice to person on left.
4. Nice to person on right.
5. How do you ask for help?
6. Practise the clear and specific way of asking for help.
7. How do you feel?

Classroom reinforcement: give pupils target of four requests for help or checks to see if work is OK per day. Tick box on help card for each request. Reward with choosing time for each day they make four requests. See appendix 3.

Session four.

Aim of session: At the end of this session the children will have experienced thinking positively about differences between themselves and others.

1. Market
2. Pass the squeeze.
3. Something nice about view out of window.
4. Something nice about ceiling.
5. Something nice about mark on wall.
6. Something nice about a piece of dirt.
7. Something nice about self.
8. Think of person you dislike and say something nice.

Classroom reinforcement: Pupils asked by teacher to say a positive about themselves, the class as a whole and one person in class at teachers discretion each day. Reward with choosing time. See appendix 4.

How to play the games.

Check in:

This is simple but an essential component of any group that seeks to be supportive. Each member of the group takes their turn to report on their week. Instigate this by asking an age appropriate question such as, "Has anybody got any news" or "How have things been".

I went to the market and I bought:

Here the children have to repeat all that went before.

1. Begin by example, " I went to the market and I bought a dog".
2. Pass to the child sitting next to you.
3. Go round the group once or twice.

Pass the squeeze:

Here the children all hold hands in a circle. Whatever number of squeezes is felt on one hand is repeated on the other until it returns to the sender. Sender feeds back to group on the accuracy of the return.

Brainstorm told off:

Here you need to extract from the children their view of how to be told off appropriately, in terms of clear behaviours. Such as: Make eye contact, nod head to show listening, say, "Yes Miss/Sir" to show listening, answer questions truthfully, stand reasonably still.

Told off and doing it wrong:

Here the children get told off by the group leader, but they behave in the wrong way, they fail to make eye contact, answer back, answer dishonestly, ignore you, walk off etc. This is greatly enjoyed usually. Ask the children to predict what would happen if they really did act in this way when being told off.

Told off and doing it right, by group leader:

Here the group leader tells each of the pupils off in turn for some fictional offence. Praise and remind about the expected behaviours:

- Eye contact.
- Say "Yes Sir/Miss"
- Nod head.
- Answer questions.
- Stand reasonably still.
- Say sorry.

Told off and doing it right by peers:

The children tell each other off, they enjoy this. Again remind about the expected behaviours. Ask the children to predict the consequences of accepting a telling off in a way that teachers expect.

Something nice left and right:

Model saying a positive comment to the person on your left, e.g., "I like your hair, shoes, smile" etc. Ask the children to do the same. Repeat with person on your right. They may find this difficult and need lots of encouragement.

Play game:

With this activity you are creating an artificial play situation, you will need to explain that the children can play the game by your rules, which are:

- They must say please and thank you to each other.
- They should say well done when a player does well.
- They should say hard luck when a player does badly.
- The winner should be congratulated.
- The winner should say, "Thank you for playing to the losers."

Ask the children at the end how they felt when the other children were polite and kind to them.

Note the best games for this activity need to have lots of minor disappointments such as snakes and ladders.

How do you ask for help?

Ask the children to tell you how they would normally ask for help, or how they see others do so. You will probably be told something like, "Can you help me please Miss/Sir." Suggest to the children that they might like to think about asking for help in a much more specific way, such as, "Could you help me with this sum/spelling please." I tell the children that the reason for this is that as you are asking for a very small amount of help your teacher will probably get to you quite quickly.

Practise clear and specific way of asking for help:

Model or ask one of the children to model requesting help in a polite and assertive way. "Excuse me Miss/Sir could you help me with this sum please" The children take it in turns to ask for help and take it in turns to be the teacher.

How do you feel?

Ask the children how they feel when asking in a polite strong way for help. How did they feel as the teacher when they were asked in a polite strong way for help, did they mind?

Something nice:

The series of positive comments requested by the activities below is designed to challenge those children that tend to hook into negatives. To get them to begin to develop the skills of thinking positively.

View out of window:

Ask the children to make a positive comment about the view from the window.

Ceiling:

Positive comment about ceiling.

Mark on wall:

Now they begin to think you are mad.

Piece of dirt:

Select a piece of dirt from the floor, and ask the children to say something positive about it. Now they know you are mad. You will be very pleased with the quality of inventiveness you are about to experience though so it's worth it.

About self:

Often the toughest one, gently point out that if they can say something positive about a piece of dirt they must be able to think of one nice thing to say about themselves, insist they do, very gently.

Person you dislike:

There is always something good about someone we dislike even if it is their hair, work etc.

Appendix

Reward certificates and letters.

The following selection of happy notes, positive letters and certificates are a very powerful means of reinforcing and rewarding behaviours being taught in the groups. They should not be seen as bribes, which are payments or rewards for engaging in illegal or immoral activities, but as an efficient and motivating way of letting a pupil know that she/he has your approval for his current positive behaviours.

Appendix 1.

Dear

I want to let you know that I appreciate how hard you are trying to improve your behaviour. I have noticed a big improvement and I really like what I see. I know that you are not finding it easy and sometimes I have had to tell you off but you have accepted this and continued to try and improve. So well done.

I would also like to let you know that if you continue with your progress I will reward you with a certificate to be given out in achievement assembly and I will send a letter home.



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Dear

I am sure that..... has told you she/he has been trying to improve his/her classroom behaviour and that I have been very pleased. This letter is to let you know that I am very pleased indeed with the improvement in behaviour that I have seen. So far I have rewarded with lots of praise, and with a note from me saying how much I appreciate the effort being put in. A certificate was also given out in achievement assembly, which is a very great achievement. If you choose to reward at home as well I would be in full agreement with this.

I will write again soon to let you know of any further progress.

Yours sincerely

Class Teacher

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Good Behaviour Certificate

This certificate has been awarded to
for making a very big improvement in her behaviour.

Signed.....



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Appendix 2.

Name.....

Tick when you:

Say something kind:

Share:

Say something nice:

Name.....

Tick when you:

Say something kind:

Share:

Say something nice:

Name.....

Tick when you:

Say something kind:

Share:

Say something nice:

Appendix 3.

Requests for help. You keep this with you, your teacher will tick one of the boxes each time you ask for help. You should ask for help four times each day to get your reward.

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Requests for help. You keep this with you, your teacher will tick one of the boxes each time you ask for help. You should ask for help four times each day to get your reward.

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Appendix 4.

Positives

Take this card to your teacher once each day. You will be asked to say some positive things, if you do you will get your reward.

Self

Class

Another child

Positives

Take this card to your teacher once each day. You will be asked to say some positive things, if you do you will get your reward.

Self

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Another child

Positives

Take this card to your teacher once each day. You will be asked to say some positive things, if you do you will get your reward.

Self

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