

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Friendship ambassadors

How [school] developed and utilised friendship ambassadors

Context of our anti-bullying work

Through our ABA questionnaire mid-year results and pupil voice that we carried out independently it became apparent that our pupils were concerned that much of the focus of work in school was around bullying and bully's rather than friendship and positive relationships that they felt would motivate people more to change. This connected with ABA standard 1.7 pupils being actively involved in anti-bullying initiatives. Therefore it was actioned with our Friendship Ambassadors taking the lead that the school would begin to celebrate Friendship.

What we hoped to achieve

The pupils hope for this project was that in beginning to change how we celebrate positive relationships across the school pupils would have role models that they could aspire to and pupils would be recognised for the positive contribution they made to the school. They also hoped that this 'kindness ripple and recognition' would spread across year groups bringing the school closer together after COVID when children had felt quite isolated in bubbles.

The schools hope was that this initiative would change, not only pupils behaviour and attitude, recognising the fabulous relationships held in school and celebrating the often unsung generosity of pupils but would allow children who were stuck in not knowing how to move away from being a Bystander to find a different way and recognised the role they could play in this.

The action we took

The main purpose of the project was to make Friendship more visible. The Friendship Ambassador, with the support of the anti-bullying lead, now have a display board in the main school area where Friendship is celebrated. The Ambassadors have their photographs, year groups and names clearly visible on the board so that all children know who they can go to for support. There is also a section on the board for Friendship shout outs. This is where any child can write down a name of another across the school for an act of friendship and kindness and say what they did that made them feel good. These Shout Outs are then read out in or weekly Celebration Assembly and as names are read out the children stand up to create a kindness ripple. These Celebration Assemblies are attended by parents and carers of our school.

Impact and outcomes of the work

The real positive to come out of this project is the real desire for pupils to want to see their name on the board and to have their name read out in assembly. Friendship ambassadors are saying that pupils often come to them at break times to tell them about an act of friendship and ask how to write it down. It is also inspiring to see the ripple of pride as children are asked to stand in assembly. Although at the beginning this was the expected school names now we are beginning to see different children, including those who may not have always made the right choices being named. The other impact is on our parents, seeing their pride when their child stands and being able to show them that as a school celebrating friendship is a key part of our ethos not just something that is a paper exercise has impacted on the relationship with school.

It is hoped that as we continue and develop this project with new ways as a school to celebrate Friendship that we begin to see a real change in how our whole school community influence the change, resulting in school feeling a safer, friendlier place for all pupils, where every child feels respected and liked.

What we have learned

The project was easy to establish, free, with huge impact and came from a real desire within our pupil group to change. It is certainly beginning to influence some pupil's idea of the importance of Friendship and kindness. One thing we learnt was to let the Friendship Ambassadors take the lead on the project, as it has proved to have much more impact when peers stand up to recognise each other than if it were an adult led initiative. It has also supported the Friendship Ambassadors to feel valued in their role and not just seen as a 'thing' in name but an essential part of our Anti-bullying strategy and policy within school.