

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Developing structured play

How Canford Heath Infant School introduced playground zones and with the help of the school's Friendship Ambassadors

Context of our anti-bullying work

At Canford Heath Infant School we have had friendship ambassadors for a number of years. This involves children from Year 2 from Canford Heath Infants and Year 6 children from Canford Heath Junior who have an active role in supporting social interactions, friendship and anti-bullying initiatives. Our friendship ambassadors have undergone training with the Anti-Bullying Lead on how to carry out their role, how to deal with minor conflicts, how to encourage the children to share, how to spot bullying and what it is, using the results from the AUB's questionnaire to know what areas to focus on and where to base themselves and different playground games they could play with the children.

During our regular meetings the Friendship Ambassadors (FAs) brought up that although they were implementing all of the strategies above and playtimes had improved. There was still an element of rough play and fallings out. As a group we discussed different solutions as to what we could do at playtimes to improve them even more. Discussions were had with the school ambassadors and SLT to decide on a solution.

What we hoped to achieve

The desired outcome was to create more structured playtimes which could be enjoyed by all children who enjoyed doing a range of activities not just running around. We want to reduce boredom and instead engage children in a range of activities to further limit the amount of rough play/playground fall outs. We also wanted the children to continue develop their PSED and social skills. It was apparent from EYFS baseline assessments, knowledge of our children and the continuing impact of the COVID 19 lockdown that children's PSED could still be improved.

Additionally, we wanted to give our FAs more of a responsibility in teaching the children how to develop in their play.

By introducing the playground zones, it also allowed us to introduce the Sports Leaders who are Junior School Pupils. These children would directly run the 'sports' zone allowing the modelling of different games, teaching rules and how to take turns.

The action we took

- The FAs worked closely with the anti-bullying lead, SLT, School Councils and Well-being Ambassadors to discuss the different zones we could incorporate to help

support play. They met altogether and decided on – Sports Zone, Huff and Puff Zone, Role-play/small world, Music and Calm Zone.

- The FAs help run the zones alongside a member of staff. The Junior Sports Leaders run the sports zone.
- A Zone map was shared with all staff.
- The FAs met regularly to discuss the implementation of the playground zones. Feedback from the FAs and Lunchtime staff was that some of the children were not using the equipment appropriately. This was discussed with the FAs and the Anti-Bullying Lead and it was decided taught sessions for the equipment was needed.
- Each class T showed each of their classes the equipment and how it could/should be used. The FAs helped the Ts share the equipment and ideas of how to use.
- The FAs met to complete a new playgrounds game booklet to link to the new playground zones.

Impact and outcomes of the work

- Positive impact on the children within the school.
- Less medical incidents (bumps, falling over etc) at lunchtime.
- Children play together in a far more harmonious way.
- It has increased the use of child voice on decisions made about lunchtimes.
- Children who find play hard benefit from the structured play.
- Children feel safer and enjoy playtimes in school far more – see results of AUB questionnaire.
- Children have learnt how to play again, learnt important skills in turn taking, and play that is considerate of others.
- Behaviour at play and lunch times has improved.
- Improved areas of the playground
- More opportunities for different type of play
- Adults designated to certain areas means less room for children making the wrong choices.
- Areas of the playground which were highlighted as an improvement on the whole school survey was now not a worry anymore.

What we have learned

If we are implementing something new, we would take the time to teach the children before rolling it out. Including the taught sessions. This would ensure proper use of equipment and clarity that the children understood each area.

Children benefit from more structured playtimes. We have found that even though it is their free time to play how they wish, the children thrive on structure and routines. Having zones has allowed more beneficial play, but also the freedom to pick where/what they'd like to do.