

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Playground strategies

How Cranberry Academy developed and implemented playground strategies

Context of our anti-bullying work

Cranberry Academy is a two form entry primary school in Alsager, bordering Stoke-on-Trent and Cheshire. The school community is predominantly White British with various minority groups, in addition to children who are identified as being at risk of bullying (as set out by the Anti-Bullying Alliance). 12.5% of children have SEND, 6% of children are EAL, 1.5% of children Young Carers, 1.2% of children are LAC.

What we hoped to achieve

Following questionnaires and discussions with the children, we identified that many of the disagreements between children were taking place at playtimes and lunchtimes. A minority of children disclosed sometimes feeling left out or said that they felt at a loss at these times as they didn't want to play games that other children were playing. We hoped that by providing children with activities to play that were centred around year groups (opposed to friendship groups) and by creating a designated 'Buddy Stop' where playground buddies could look out for children on their own, we would be able to further develop our inclusive environment and ensure that all children are having their needs met during playtimes and lunchtimes.

The action we took

We decided that in order for our desired outcome to be achieved, we would implement the following activities/roles in school:

Playground Buddies: two year six and two year five children were nominated by their class teachers to become playground buddies. Their role would consist of being trained by a Teaching Assistant within school to correctly identify children who were on their own and feeling isolated, how to support other children without over-burdening themselves and how to help foster an inclusive environment. These children are known across school and children are aware that they can approach them and ask to play a game if they are looking for a friend at playtimes.

Buddy Stop: We re-purposed an old sign within school to become our 'buddy stop', a designated area on the KS2 playground where children could take themselves if they are feeling isolated or lonely and are looking for someone to play with. As previously stated, Playground Buddies are trained to monitor this area and will seek to actively include any children by the Buddy Stop in a game or conversation.

Sport of the Week: Four year six children are nominated at the start of the year to take part in a local project called Bronze Ambassadors. These children receive training from the local high school on how to run activities and coach children in a variety of sports. Each week the Bronze Ambassadors (alongside the Sports Councillors for the various years) run a different activity at playtimes. Year groups are given a designated day each week whereby they are invited to partake in the Sport of the Week, run by the children within school. They do not have to be invited personally and the engagement rate across the years is very high.

Impact and outcomes of the work

Playtimes and lunchtimes within school have greatly improved since the above actions were put into place, with arguments and disagreements reducing dramatically. Pupil premium and disadvantaged children have had increased opportunities to experience a wide range of sports, as well as opportunities to coach other children and to inspire them to continue sports/coaching when they are adults. All year groups are playing more cohesively and are making friendships across the school. Behaviour has improved during lunchtimes, positively impacting pupil wellbeing. Bronze ambassador children have had the opportunity to learn how to effectively coach other children and run their own sessions, helping to foster an inclusive environment within school which is child-centred. The culture towards playtimes and sports within school has become more inclusive, with SEND and PP children getting involved more and being effectively included. All children, even those not directly affiliated with Playground Buddies, are more aware about the importance of inclusion and are all more conscious in ensuring people are included and are feeling happy at playtimes.

What we have learned

A real benefit from the actions we have implemented have been that they have all been centred around and led by children. By encouraging children to take a hands on approach to inclusivity, it has allowed us to really embed the culture and ethos that we were aiming for – a place where every child feels valued and welcome. Children nominated to have responsibilities have a sense of pride in their roles and all children are looking forward to the opportunity to fulfil these roles in their later years in school, also helping us to raise the profile of important initiatives such as playground buddies and bronze ambassadors. One barrier in having the various initiatives led by children has been consistency. At times, particularly in the summer terms as children are more spread out across school grounds during playtime, this

has been more difficult to manage. By having designated members of staff to monitor that these initiatives are being followed through has been very beneficial as this has allowed us to remind children with various responsibilities of the importance of consistency.