

# **United Against Bullying School Case Study: Using 'friendship ambassadors'**

## **How Canford Heath Infant School used 'friendship ambassadors'**

### **Context of our anti-bullying work**

Over the years, Canford Heath Infant School has had 'Friendship Ambassadors'. This involves children having an active role in supporting social interactions, friendships and anti-bullying initiatives. We have had Year 6 Friendship Ambassadors from Canford Heath Junior School join us at lunchtimes to support with playtimes. Due to the impact of Covid19, the children were kept in separate bubbles, whole school activities events were not allowed to run and the children did not attend school for large portions of the prior two years. This led to children having very little social interactions and opportunities to learn how to play in harmony with one another. Sharing was discouraged and distance was encouraged. Two things we do not usually expect of our young children. Therefore, the implementation of trained friendship ambassadors was so important as an extra support for all the children's social and emotional development.

### **What we hoped to achieve**

The desired impact was for children to have designated peer support available to them at all times if they require it. We hoped it would give children another way of communicating any concerns if sharing their feelings with adults was something they found challenging. We wanted children to learn how to play appropriately together and be guided on how to resolve conflicts. We also hoped to use the results of the UAB's questionnaire to gauge what the children needed and felt. We also wanted children's voice to have an important role in our anti-bullying approach across the school – something we aimed the friendship ambassadors to take part in.

### **The action we took**

- The friendship ambassadors worked closely with the anti-bullying lead to discuss how to support play and reduce conflict on the playground. This included discussion based sessions in the classroom and opportunities to carry out their role on the playground with adult guidance on what to do in different situations.
- Training included:
  - Types of games to suggest to children – game packs provided to take onto playground.
  - How to encourage children to share – demonstrations on modelling sharing.

- How to help with minor conflicts/children who are upset and alone – ie. Finding them someone new to play with. Listening to the problem and giving a solution.
- What is bullying, how to spot it and what to do if they see something that worries them.
- Using the results from the AUB's questionnaire to know what areas to focus on and where to base themselves.
- The Friendship Ambassadors reported concerns about children on the playground that could have been missed from an adult perspective.
- The Friendship Ambassadors also helped with anti-bullying week initiatives. They helped think of ideas of activities and came to Early Years on a number of occasions to help them learn how to play some new games.
- Along with the results of the UAB questionnaire, the Friendship Ambassadors gave staff an insight into what was happening on the playground and which areas needed more supervision or more equipment.
- Friendship Ambassadors regularly introduced and reminded about in assemblies
- Staff specifically placed on the playground to cover particular focus areas.
- New equipment for playtimes was ordered as a way of combatting rough play.
- The friendship Ambassadors now base themselves at various zones and help children learn how to play the new games/encourage them to get involved.
- Links between the UAB questionnaire results and Friendship Ambassadors were created so that Friendship Ambassadors knew who to keep an eye out for on the playground and who to encourage with new games.
- Friendship Ambassadors will also be involved in our policy making – updates have been in process over the year and once finalise, the Friendship Ambassadors will be supporting the creation of our pupil voice anti-bullying leaflet.

### Impact and outcomes of the work

- Positive impact on the children within the school.
- Children play together in a far more harmonious way.
- Opened up another line of communication between staff and pupils.
- It has increased the use of child voice on decisions made about the school.
- Children with social anxieties and difficulties in interactions have a peer to go to.
- 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.

## What we have learned

Due to the impacts of Covid19, many infant school aged children struggled to know how to actually play when they returned. Although taught games by adults can sometimes lose some of its natural joy that comes from child-only play, games led by Friendship Ambassadors has allowed children to still play freely but learn important skills about turn taking, sharing and consideration of others.