



**KINGTON GREEN PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

CIRCLE TIME POLICY

Reviewed in July 2018

Appendix C: Circle Time Policy within PSHE Policy

Circle Time Policy

Definition

We believe that Circle Time is a fundamental part of the PSHE curriculum which involves all children and their teacher sitting together with the purpose of furthering understanding of themselves and of one another.

Circle Time aims to create a space in which pupils can communicate. It's not about coercion, reprimand or correction. It is about discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Exploring relationships, feelings, reflections and emotions lies at the core of Circle Time. Circle Time also develops pupils' speaking and listening skills, which are essential for effective social communication.

The whole process enhances the self- esteem of participants - a crucial factor is determining the extent of success, both academically and socially, it being a requisite for self discipline and self motivation. We feel that Circle Time should demonstrate to all pupils that they are unique, acceptable, cared for and valued.

The impact of Circle Time goes far beyond pupil's academic achievement. Other benefits include:

- Increased levels of self-motivation among pupils
- Enhanced communication between pupils and between pupils and staff
- Greater social and community awareness among pupils
- Enhanced self-esteem and self-respect among pupils
- Greater skills of assertion among pupils
- Increased ability to empathise with others
- Heightened abilities to behave altruistically
- Improved focus on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension of the curriculum

The Circle

The circle with its concept of everyone being equal and with the same rights should:

- be formed so that children are comfortable and can see all participants
- be maintained - chairs may aid this
- be in an area free from interruption

Rules

The rules when facilitating circle time should be understood by all involved and they should be agreed by everyone, although this will depend to some extent on the age of the children. The reality of a well-run circle is such that very few rules are actually needed. We work to the following as a minimum:

- Praising positive behaviour and reinforcing the skills of thinking, looking, listening and speaking.
- Respecting all contributions and valuing opinions. This includes using positive body language and thanking children for their contributions.
- Using a speaking object to pass around to ensure only one person speaks at any given time. A child has the right to pass if s/he does not wish to speak, but is given a second opportunity at the end of the round.
- Not mentioning any child's name in a negative way and not using any put downs towards another child. This also includes family members.

There may well be other rules specific to each classroom. Ultimately, these rules should help to facilitate a feeling of safety in the children, and help them feel free to express themselves in an appropriate manner.

The Content of Circle Time

Where teachers and pupils are new to the process a period of experiment and unstructured activities is encouraged. Here children will be introduced to the process, the rules, and a range of games/activities.

As teachers grow in confidence and the group feeling develops the purpose is to restrict the games element and discussion should become the most significant aspect.

As a weekly activity there will be opportunity for an average 13 termly sessions which will be planned for with the following emphases:-

- Seven sessions directly supporting P.S.H.E. scheme of work
- Six sessions where Circle Time develops into 'meeting mode' and deals with Class Council business.
- This allows for some flexibility for classes to deal with content that is reactive, depending on incidents which have arisen which need further discussion.

There are a number of activities that teachers can use during circle time. These ideas are some used:

- A quick game may help to get pupils trusting one another and cooperating. This is all good groundwork for facilitating useful discussions.
- A whole group ice-breaker such as a guessing game will help to bring the group together after any paired work.
- Use various forms of discussion with high levels of active participation.
- Use of song, music, story, rhythm, chants, dance, and role-play.

Circle Time needs a predictable rhythm. For example, the Quality Circle Time Model developed by Jenny Mosley involves a five step structure:

- Meeting up – a game to pull the group together.
- Warming up – using a passing object to give everyone a chance to speak (such as asking every member of the circle what their favourite food is or, for more complex responses, asking each person what they would do if, say, they witnessed a child being bullied)
- Opening up – an open forum to discuss personal and behavioural issues. Children raise their hands before speaking and listen to one another. brainstorming for the class (for example, ideas for class assembly, celebrations etc., discussion on a key topic of the moment).
- Cheering up – praising each other (pupils or adult).
- Calming down – calming and visualization activities to close the circle time session. This could be reading a short poem or doing a relaxation exercise. Children should understand its significance and why they are doing it; emphasise the ritual aspect of beginning and ending the circle.

Issues to be aware of,

Circle Time is not simply a space in which to moan. The positivity in the exercise should be emphasised. Should negativity arise, as it undoubtedly will, draw the class into considering positive solutions or outcomes.

- Disclosure and confidentiality need to be taken into consideration. (see relevant section in policy)
- Circle Time needs to be planned and the teacher will need to lead at least part of the time.
- Not everyone needs to participate in every discussion or round. It's fine for pupils to 'pass' if they need or want to, as long as they do not avoid all participation. Circle time is a good space in which to watch out for withdrawn behaviour.
- Watch out for those who may dominate proceedings and use rules and strategies to ensure all feel safe and able to contribute.
- Circle Time must not become a 'time filler'. Be methodical about it and use it regularly so that your classes know that it is a feature of life in your classroom. If you resort to it only periodically, it will seem new each time and the chances are that your pupils will never truly feel comfortable with it. Above all else, teachers should show that they enjoy circle time, through enthusiasm, participation and appreciation of pupils' contributions.