

Teacher's Guide: Anti-bullying and building a positive class community

Purpose

The purpose of this playlist is to:

- promote the well-being of individual pupils and the class as a whole
- build a positive class community through active and inclusive activities
- take a preventative approach to bullying by creating a strong social framework.

Background

Know the signs: What are we really looking for?

In order to intervene effectively, we must first understand what we are seeing. Bullying is not simply an isolated conflict between two pupils. Rather, it involves repeated and persistent behaviour within a group, where there is a clear imbalance of power between the person or people doing the bullying and the person or people being bullied.

The invisible wounds (relational bullying)

Especially in the later years of primary school and in secondary school, bullying can become more hidden and take place through social exclusion, deliberate rumour-spreading, and subtle manipulation of friendships.

The digital space (cyberbullying)

Bullying is increasingly moving into digital spaces, including social media and messaging platforms. This creates an 'invisible' space that can make it much more difficult for adults to spot and intervene when bullying occurs.

It's often about status

It is important to understand that some children do not bully out of 'malice'. Instead, bullying can sometimes be used as a social tool to gain status or influence within a group.

The child being bullied can feel constantly on alert

Research shows that being exposed to bullying can have a serious impact on a child's well-being. Children who experience bullying may experience ongoing stress, which can affect their ability to learn, participate and feel safe at school.

Why does bullying occur?

Bullying rarely occurs in isolation between individual pupils. Research suggests that bullying is closely linked to the wider social environment and the relationships within a class:

Unclear social framework

Bullying can flourish when there are no clear, explicit expectations for how pupils should treat one another and behave as a class.

Limited common direction

If positive social interaction is not actively supported and guided by adults, exclusionary dynamics can quickly develop.

Moral disconnection

Pupils may tend to downplay their own actions ('It was just a joke') if the expectations and values of the class are not regularly clarified and reinforced by the teacher.

What can you do? (The Five Pillars of Prevention)

Effective prevention is basically about working with the class as a whole.

1. **Set a clear direction for the class.** Be clear about the class rules and your expectations for how pupils treat one another.
2. **Create a safe and stable environment.** Predictability and calm transitions throughout the school day can help reduce stress and support pupils' well-being.
3. **Strengthen empathy and social skills.** Help pupils develop their ability to put themselves in other people's shoes and take responsibility for the class community.
4. **Use collaboration and movement.** Activities that mix up groups – particularly those involving physical activity – can strengthen relationships and help break unhelpful social patterns.
5. **Work together.** A consistent approach among all the school's adults, combined with close and trusting relationships between school and home, can make a significant difference.

Process

This course consists of six games:

- The Positive Community (Presentation)
- What is Bullying? (CombiFrogs)
- Bullying Dilemmas (Presentation)
- Sort Messages (SuperSorter)
- What Can You Do? (SpinIt)
- Talk About a Positive Community (CombiFrogs)

The games are designed to be used flexibly. They can be used together as a focused course on well-being and bullying, or you can select individual games and use them when the need arises. In all the games, the teacher acts as the facilitator and guides the conversations.

You can use the games as part of a broader course about well-being, bullying and positive class communities, or use individual games as needed. Below is a brief explanation of the purpose of each game, along with suggestions for other activities you can do together in class to promote a positive class community.

'The Positive Community' looks at what a positive class community can look like, as well as what happens when a class community starts to break down. Use the game as a starting point for a discussion about what pupils think makes a class community positive or negative.

'What is Bullying?' has two purposes. First, it focuses on the importance of listening to one another. Second, it helps pupils put into words their own understanding and experiences of what bullying is.

'Bullying Dilemmas' is a dilemma game in which pupils take a position on the situation shown in the short film on each slide. They then stand on the square that best matches what they think. Once everyone has chosen a position, discuss why they chose that particular answer. Pupils can move if they change their minds, but encourage them to explain why they have changed their position. This

helps pupils put their thoughts into words and become more aware of their choices. It can be useful to play the presentation game 'The Good Community' alongside this game.

'Sort Messages' is a sorting game. We recommend playing it in conversation mode so that the focus is not on finishing first. This gives pupils time to discuss the different messages and why they might help or harm a positive class community.

'What Can You Do?' is a conversation game based on fictional situations. Pupils practise putting themselves in other people's shoes by imagining that they are, for example, the classmate, best friend, teacher or parent in the situation. They then come up with practical suggestions for what could be done.

How you can work with the situations (the card method)

At the end of the material, you will find cards with the same fictional situations, as well as a few blank cards that you can use to create your own. Here's how to use the cards:

1. Divide the class into smaller groups of three or four pupils.
2. Read one of the situations aloud to the class.
3. Give each group a card with the situation so that they have the text in front of them.
4. Assign each group a specific role (e.g., teacher, friend or person being bullied) and ask them to find solutions from that person's point of view.
5. Give the groups five to ten minutes to discuss what could be done.
6. Come back together as a class and listen to each group's suggestions, giving everyone a chance to look at the situation from several different angles.

'Talk About a Positive Community' encourages pupils to put into words what a positive class community looks like to them. It is also important that pupils listen to one another; otherwise, they will not be able to complete the game.

Further activities

These activities are useful for breaking up the school day and can be used regularly throughout the school year to maintain a focus on cooperation and well-being.

Hula Hoop Circle

Purpose and aim

Focus: cooperation and concentration.

The aim is to get the hula hoop all the way around the circle without touching it with your hands. At the same time, everyone must keep holding hands.

What you need

A hula hoop.

How to do it

- Divide the class into groups of around eight to ten pupils.
- Stand in a circle and hold hands.

- An adult briefly breaks the circle between two pupils and places one hula hoop over one pupil's arm. The circle is then closed again.
- The aim is to move the hoop all the way around the circle.
- Pupils may move their whole bodies, but they must not let go of each other's hands or grab the hula hoop.

Questions for reflection

- Can you work out a good method together?
- What was the hardest part?
- Can you do it faster next time?

Create a New Game

Purpose and aim

Focus: cooperation, discussion and listening to one other.

The aim is to take a familiar game and work together to create a new version of it.

What you need

You will need small pieces of paper with the names of familiar games written on them. Each group should receive one piece of paper, although more than one group can be given the same game. For example:

- Hide and seek
- Spin the bottle
- Dodgeball
- Simon says
- Musical chairs.

You will also need a box for each group containing objects that they can use in their new game. For example:

- large and small balls
- bean bags
- marker cones
- small pieces of fabric.

How to do it

- Divide the class into smaller groups of three or four pupils.
- Give each group the name of a familiar game.
- The group must work together to create a new version of that game.
- Start by asking everyone to explain how they usually play the game. You may discover that you have slightly different rules, and that's fine. The important thing is to listen to one another and give everyone a chance to explain their ideas.
- Next, look inside your box. You must include at least one object that you would not normally use in the game.
- Work together to come up with a new version of the game.

- **Remember:** ideas can become even better when you build on one another's ideas. Listen, experiment and try things out.
- When the time is up, bring the whole class back together and let the groups try each other's games.

A Safe Place

Purpose and aim

Focus: calm and a sense of safety.

The aim is to help pupils find a sense of calm and safety within themselves, while also helping them feel safe as part of the class.

What you need

Each pupil will need a small blanket or mat to lie on. Alternatively, everyone can sit comfortably, lean forward onto a table and close their eyes.

You will also need a script to read aloud. You can use the text at the end of this Teacher's Guide or create your own.

How to do it

Invite pupils to sit or lie down comfortably. It is important that everyone feels safe and comfortable. Pupils can close their eyes if they wish, but they should not feel pressured to do so.

Read the text aloud slowly and calmly.

Afterwards, you can talk about:

- what it was like to imagine a safe place
- whether it was difficult to concentrate
- when they might find it helpful to think about their safe place.

If the exercise works well for the class, you could use it regularly.

Draw a Positive Class Community

Purpose and aim

Focus: inclusion and, where appropriate, cooperation.

The aim is for pupils to work together to create an illustration of what a positive class community looks like to them.

What you need

Materials for drawing and painting, for example:

- paper, e.g. flipchart paper (100 x 65 cm)
- cardboard
- canvas
- paintbrushes

- markers
- crayons.

How to do it

1. Begin by talking about what makes a class community feel safe and inclusive. You could use ideas from 'The Good Community' presentation as a starting point.
2. Divide the class into groups of three or four pupils and give each group a large piece of paper or a canvas. Make sure the surface is large enough for everyone in the group to work on at the same time.
3. Ask the groups to imagine that their class community is a house.
4. Before they begin drawing, ask them to agree: **What should this house look like, and how should it be decorated, so that everyone in the class would feel safe and comfortable there?**
5. Set a time limit for the drawing activity.
6. When the time is up, ask each group to come up with a name for their house.
7. **Conclusion:** Display the drawings in the classroom as a small exhibition. Ask each group to present its house and explain the ideas behind it.

Tip: The drawings could also provide a useful starting point for a discussion with parents about the class's well-being and sense of inclusion.



A Safe Place – guided relaxation script

Read slowly and calmly, leaving plenty of pauses.

Now close your eyes and breathe in through your nose, all the way down into your stomach – then slowly breathe out through your mouth. One more time – breathe in through your nose and all the way down into your stomach – there is no need to rush – and slowly breathe out again through your mouth.

Now just lie completely still and notice your breathing and how it feels to lie on the floor or sit in your chair.

You can feel yourself relaxing all your muscles. Feel yourself relaxing your toes – relax your legs, allowing them to become completely heavy and limp. Relax your arms – all the way down to your fingertips. Your hands become as heavy as small stones.

You can also feel yourself relaxing all the small muscles in your forehead and neck.

You are lying or sitting quite comfortably now.

Now think of a really nice and safe place. It can be a place you have been before, but it can also just be a place that you imagine. It is pleasant and has just the right temperature. You feel completely calm and safe.

Think about what it smells like where you are; that very special scent that lets you know that this is exactly where you are. Maybe it smells of grass or the sea. Maybe it smells of pancakes or your favourite person.

Keep your eyes closed, but imagine that you are looking around your special place. What can you see? What colours are there? Are there plants? Is there furniture? Can you see trees or water? Perhaps there are other people or animals there too? You know best what it looks like in the place where you feel happiest.

Imagine that you walk around your special place for a while. You can touch the things that are there. You can pick them up and look at them.

Think about how it feels in your body to be here, in your safe place. Maybe you can feel the wind or the sun on your cheek. Perhaps you can feel grass between your toes or the softness of a carpet. Remember, it's your place.

Now I would like to ask you to hold on to those thoughts while you breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth a few times.

When you feel ready, start moving your toes and fingers a little, because now it's time for us to slowly wake up again. When you're ready, slowly open your eyes. Maybe you would like to stretch a little and yawn?

Now take a few moments to sit up and wake up properly. When you're ready, let's talk about how you're feeling.

One of your classmates is often on his own at break time. Some of the others aren't sure whether he prefers to be on his own or would like to join in the games. What can be done?

A classmate is organising a birthday party. Someone realises that a couple of classmates haven't been invited. What can be done?

There's a group of pupils who often get into fights during break times. It doesn't look as though they're doing it for fun. What can be done about it?

A couple of pupils are always making jokes about the others. They always say it's 'just for a laugh'. But no one else seems to find it funny. What can be done?

Jokes are often told about a boy in the class. The teacher laughs along with the jokes. What can be done?

A pupil is being 'bullied' online by an anonymous user. The pupil has tried to ignore the messages, but it's only getting worse. What should they do?

A couple of pupils are always making jokes about the others. They always say it's 'just for a laugh'. But no one else seems to find it funny. What can be done?

The atmosphere in class has become difficult. Lots of pupils are arguing with each other, and there are often arguments at break time. What can be done about it?

A boy in class has said that he finds going to school really difficult. He doesn't feel that he fits in. What can be done?

There's a group chat for the class. People use it to invite each other to birthday parties and playdates. But one of your classmates isn't in the chat. What can you do?

Several parents have started saying nasty things about a girl in the class. They don't want their children to play with her. What can be done?

A classmate has received some really nasty messages in a group chat that some of our classmates are also in. What can we do?

Several of the class's teachers have said that a particular class is the worst in the whole school, and that nobody wants to teach them. What can be done?

Several pupils in class have started making nasty comments about the clothes one particular boy is wearing. What can be done?

One pupil always sits on their own at break time. What can be done?

A few pupils in class have found that photos they don't want people to see have been shared online. They've tried to get them removed, but haven't been able to. What can be done?

If you are a teacher?

If you are a teaching assistant?

If you are a parent?

If you're a bystander?

If you're a friend?

If you're best friends?



