

Turn Your School Round

**A Circle-Time approach to the development
of self-esteem and positive behaviour in
the primary staffroom, classroom and playground**

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SO WHAT EXACTLY IS CIRCLE-TIME?

Circle-Time is a democratic and creative approach used to consider a wide range of issues affecting the whole school community; teaching staff, children, support staff, parents and governors.

Industry calls this method, "Quality Circles" and has been using it since the 1960's to overcome the gulf that can develop between management and the shop-floor, leading to a 'them and us' attitude. The reputation for quality which Japan enjoys can be attributed largely to the widespread use of the approach.

Typically, a circle meets once a week for one hour to consider quality problems. Mostly they will tackle problems at the 'earthy' end of the scale... they will make suggestions for solving them.

In the school setting, the Circle-Time method involves all participants sitting in a circle and taking an equal responsibility for the solving of problems and the issues that they have highlighted themselves. It operates within an agreed framework of guidelines, participants must take turns to speak, listen and bring their concerns or ideas to the circle. Individuals are given time both to volunteer their own concerns for group help and to offer help and encouragement to others.

The teacher adopts a facilitative role in order to encourage participants to feel that they too have the authority and control to solve the behaviour, learning or relationship problems that concern them. Initially one of the facilitator's tasks is to introduce a range of Circle-Time strategies that will encourage co-operation and honesty within the class or staff group.

Through subsequent discussion, the sharing of ideas and the building of relationships, the participants develop a whole school policy on self-esteem and positive behaviour which is endorsed by all members of the school community.

Circle-Time holds self-esteem building to be a central aim.

HOW CIRCLE-TIME ENHANCES SELF-ESTEEM AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

The very act of sitting in a circle emphasises unity and equality, encouraging attitudes of honesty and trust. Taking it in turn to speak and join in the activities clearly conveys a message of authority and control to all participants.

The adoption of a facilitative rather than a authoritarian role encourages participants to feel that they have the authority and control to make a positive difference to the behaviour, learning and relationship problems within the school.

Participation in Circle-Time enables children to have a sense of belonging to a group they can trust. The group comes up with its own Ground Rules to help build a feeling of safety. As people's feelings and views are acknowledged and acted open, members are able to build a sounder self-esteem.

The structures and techniques within Circle-Time teach individuals to become more clear, direct and honest with each other. By learning to express their feelings in a calm way they are learning to develop assertive relationships and thus learn they do not have to resort to aggressive, manipulative or withdrawn behaviour in order to have their needs met.

Circle-Time by its effective use of a range of activities and structures, aims to motivate those involved into a willingness to share thoughts and feelings in a safe environment and to initiate a collective responsibility for the promotion of self-esteem and positive behaviour.

Circle-Time ensures that everyone feels valued as all personal and social achievements are elaborated on by the staff or class group.

Examples of Circle-Time Sessions are given in section 3.

Self-esteem is hard to measure but when in Circle-Time one sees the children's faces and the realisation that they are loved and liked and that their peers remember their actions and value them, it all seems worthwhile. We feel that Circle-Time is a most important part of our work.

Self-Esteem and Positive Behaviour policy from Christ the King School

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM AND CIRCLE-TIME

How can we justify putting time and effort into Circle-Time when we have all the pressures of the National Curriculum to deal with?

This is a heartfelt and oft-asked question! The answer is really quite simple. Until children begin to feel positive about themselves, until good relationships are established and until there's a calm, safe, caring, well ordered environment, the national curriculum cannot be delivered effectively to all children. Over the years, research has constantly shown a direct link between the enhancement of self-esteem and the rising of academic achievement. Take the task of enhancing self-esteem as a guiding force in your school and children will begin to achieve their potential.

So, use of Circle-Time can be fundamental to pupils achieving academically as well as socially at school. It also meets quite specific requirements for the English National Curriculum. Pupils involved in Circle-Time will enhance their listening skills, and become thoughtful, coherent speakers.

Statements of Attainment

Pupils should be able to:

- Level 1**
- a) participate as speakers and listeners in group activities, including imaginative play.
 - b) listen attentively, and respond, to stories and poems.
 - c) respond appropriately to simple instructions given by a teacher.

- Level 2**
- a) participate as speakers and listeners in a group engaged in a given task.

Circle-Time fulfils this requirement because:

- a) games, rounds and drama ideas are promoted to encourage each child to join in.
- b) many Circle-Time strategies are based on 'stories' which children develop, expand and discuss.
- c) basic instructions for games rounds, are given.

- a) Circle-Time involves everyone in co-operative tasks.

b) describe an event, real or imagined, to the teacher or another pupil.

c) listen attentively to stories and poems, and talk about them.

d) talk with the teacher, listen, and ask and answer questions.

e) respond appropriately to a range of more complex instructions given by a teacher, and give simple instructions.

b) Circle-Time requires description of events from children's real or imagined life.

c) Circle-Time helps children develop abstract ideas e.g. goodness, kindness, caring, from stories and poems.

d) in Circle-Time issues are raised, not just with the teacher but also with each other.

e) initially instructions are given by the teacher but then the children are encouraged to 'take the lead' themselves.

Level 3 a) relate real or imaginary events in a connected narrative which conveys meaning to a group of pupils, the teacher or another known adult.

b) convey accurately a simple message.

c) listen with an increased span of concentration to other children and adults, asking and responding to questions and commenting on what has been said.

d) give, receive and follow accurately precise instructions when pursuing a task individually or as a member of a group.

a) children are encouraged to talk through real events that have positively or negatively affected them. At other times they are encouraged to enjoy telling a fantasy story to their group.

b) rounds often focus on giving simple messages to each other.

c) further discussion on issues raised, between teacher and children encourage them to look for and develop themes.

d) Circle-Time strategies encourage children to 'take charge' and all take a turn at being leader.

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| Level 4 | <p>a) give a detailed oral account of an event, or something that has been learned in the classroom, or explain with reasons why a particular course of action has been taken.</p> <p>b) ask and respond to questions in a range of situations with increased confidence.</p> <p>c) take part as speakers and listeners in a group discussion or activity, expressing a personal view on what is being discussed or experienced.</p> <p>d) participate in a presentation.</p> | <p>a) children are given opportunities to relate events and discuss implications.</p> <p>b) Circle-Time encourages questioning and responses by providing a safe, calm environment.</p> <p>c) children are encouraged to put forward personal views and appreciate the value of being tolerant and accepting differences between themselves.</p> <p>d) develop a theme into a drama presentation.</p> |
| Level 5 | <p>a) give a well organised and sustained account of an event, a personal experience or an activity.</p> <p>b) contribute to and respond constructively in discussion, including the development of ideas; advocate and justify a point of view.</p> <p>c) use language to convey information and ideas effectively in a straightforward situation.</p> <p>d) contribute to the planning of; and participation in, a group presentation.</p> <p>e) recognise variations in vocabulary between different regional or social groups, and relate this knowledge where appropriate to personal experience.</p> | <p>a) Circle-Time offers each child the opportunity to develop coherent thinking and speaking.</p> <p>b) debating skills are enhanced and the merits of discussion are focused on.</p> <p>c) strategies encourage development of descriptive skills.</p> <p>d) strategies offer many opportunities for developing group work skills.</p> <p>e) strategies focus on differences between individuals in many areas.</p> |

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| Level 6 | a) contribute to group discussions, considered opinions or clear statements of personal feeling which are clearly responsive to the contributions of others. | a) Circle-Time strategies enhance development of reasoning skills. |
| | b) use language to convey information and ideas effectively in a variety of situations where the subject is familiar to the pupils and the audience or other participants. | b) this area will have been focused on and developed through Circle-Time. |
| | c) contribute to the planning and organisation of, and participate with fluency, in a group presentation or performance. | c) Circle-Time strategies offer many drama opportunities. |

Summary

- An Incentives Policy must have the consensus of and contributions from the whole school community if it is to be effective.
- All members of the teaching and support staff must agree with and act upon the policy.
- It is very important that all staff – teachers, supervisors, lunchtime supervisors and other support staff draw upon the same range of incentives and sanctions and are visibly seen by the children to uphold and support each other's decisions.
- To ensure that all children experience some success, a 'baseline' of incentives should be incorporated into the policy and a checklist (see below), kept for each child, on which staff record the tangible rewards that the child receives, ensuring that every child does reach the termly 'baseline'. Staff can award as much as they like in addition to the 'baseline', but every child in every class can expect to receive some reward for good behaviour as outlined in the Golden Rules.
- Parents should be informed of the incentives so that they can congratulate their children too.

EXAMPLE OF CHECKLIST FOR INCENTIVES BASELINE

Name	Sticker	Certificate	Responsibility	Congratulatory letter	Leaves for family tree
<i>Mary Allen</i>	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓
<i>Peter Barnes</i>	✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓

Checklist for incentives ‘baseline’

Every school should decide their own minimum baseline for rewards. The school that devised the checklist above decided that each child should receive a minimum of 1 sticker, 1 certificate, 3 responsibility badges, 1 congratulatory letter, and 1 leaf for the family tree per term.

Some possible incentives –

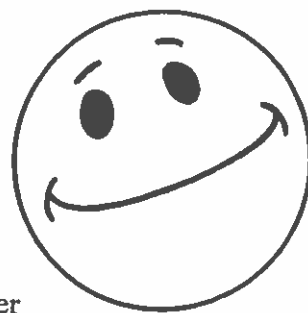
Good work and good behaviour board:

Each child has an opportunity to display a piece of work s/he is pleased with for one day. The other children are encouraged to view and praise the piece. Children can also display a drawing of a particularly good behaviour that pleased them.

If the child has been particularly successful with some positive behaviour, they can either nominate themselves or be nominated by another – then a self-portrait or photograph can be placed on the board with a halo on top with the particular behaviour written inside.

Smiley stickers:

‘Smiley’ faces can be drawn on circular stickers and given for any positive action in either work or behaviour. The children themselves can think of reasons for giving this award especially for other children who generally receive fewer awards.



Stickers:

There are a wide range of stickers commercially available which commend a variety of positive efforts such as kindness, co-operation and trying hard. Children can decide the guidelines for giving these rewards and even award each other under the supervision of the teacher and during Circle-Time. A ‘sticker’ book can be given to each child, in which stickers are placed with