

Circle Time Policy

Summer 2015



Aims and Objectives

On a Monday, each class in the school has a circle time session which seeks to develop good listening and teamwork skills and offer opportunities for children to experience working as part of a group, by playing games and other activities. Circle-times build in opportunities for children's self-esteem to be raised and for children realise similarities and differences between themselves and others and to learn more about each other's lives outside of school. Circle times, which follow specific rules generated by the children in each class provide a safe space for sensitive issues to be explored. Each class, with the exception of Nursery and Reception has a worry box, in which children can express their concerns anonymously and these can be followed up by the teacher, through circle time sessions or another appropriate course of actions.

Circle times are positive spaces for children to express themselves and work cooperatively as well as deal with social and emotional tensions they may have relating to issues at home or at school. We aim for Circle Times to be fun and enjoyable for all and to nurture the caring Christian ethos of our school.

At St John's Angell Town Primary School (SJAT), Circle Time enables our children to:

- build self-esteem and to recognize their own worth
- learn emotional resilience strategies
- to practice cooperation skills
- build healthy relationships between peers and adults
- understand similarities between themselves and others
- foster good listening and teamwork skills
- develop empathy
- express and develop their own opinions
- understand our common humanity, diversity and differences
- experience working together as part of a big group

Circle Time Behaviour

Circle times must be governed by specific rules to ensure that a space is created where all children feel safe to express themselves and understand the boundaries when dealing with sensitive issues. These rules should be displayed as part of a specific Circle Time display. All classes develop their own class rules so that children feel ownership over the rules and what matters to them about the way sessions are carried out is shown to have value. However these aspects must be covered by the rules in each class:

EYFS and KS1 Rules

- We will listen
- We will be kind
- We will respect each other
- We will not name people

KS2 Rules

- Take turns to speak (hold talking object)
- Listen carefully to each other
- The speaker will not be interrupted
- Look at the person who is speaking
- Everyone's contribution will be respected
- We will not name other people
- Everyone has the right to pass

If a child's behaviour breaks these rules, children will be issued with a warning sign signalling them to change their behaviour. If there behaviour continues they will have to take time out of

the session for a given period until they have shown that they are ready to re-join the circle. Children may also be issued with a reward star when they have made a good contribution to the session. Children's improvement in social and emotional aspects of being in school and participation in circle time sessions should be rewarded through half-termly certificates in whole school achievement assembly.

Teaching and Learning Styles

We use a range of teaching and learning styles when delivering Circle Time sessions, including the children in activities such as discussions, role play, games, investigations and problem-solving activities. Circle times are not simply a matter of taking turns to speak in a circle. Circle Times include games, talk partner work, kinaesthetic activities and so on.

During a circle time session children are encouraged to share their ideas and feelings but they are not forced to. A talking object is often used (i.e. something which is passed around the circle to indicate when someone should speak) and if a child does not wish to speak, they may pass by simply passing the object on to the next person. The talking object also indicates to the children whose turn it is to speak.

A teacher may wish to use a puppet. The puppet may tell the group about a problem they have as a way of encouraging children to open up and to support one another. Support and ideas can then be offered to the puppet by the children.

After a circle time session, children may be encouraged to complete a written reflection.

Circle Time Planning

Circle Time planning is the responsibility of the Class Teacher and must reflect the current needs, strengths, and interests of the children in the class. Circle Time is principally to foster good relationships and teamwork so each session must provide opportunities for cooperative working. For this reason each session must follow the structure of opening with a game, followed by a main activity or discussion, and closing with a game. This routine is symbolic and will support children to feel safe and enjoy the sessions.

Teachers can choose a specific issue or activity to cover with the children for the main body of the session. Children also have ownership of the content of the sessions through the 'worry box'. Through this, children can anonymously share with the teacher a concern they have that can then be dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Safeguarding

Any disclosure made during a Circle Time sessions must be acted upon following ordinary safeguarding procedures. (see Safeguarding Policy.)

Circle Time for Children with Special Education Needs

At SJAT Primary School all children take part in Circle Times and they can be important opportunities for our children with SEN to experience working as part of the class group. Children with SEN may have additional adult support or visual/ other resources to support their access to the content of the session. Where appropriate, more able children will be challenged to develop more sophisticated lines of reasoning and explanation. All children should feel valued as part of the group.

Assessment and Recording

There is no formal assessment for Circle Times. Teachers and other adults working in the classroom can give sensitive verbal feedback to children where appropriate but mainly the teacher can assess children's current level of understanding and ability to work as part of a group and plan subsequent sessions or interventions as appropriate. Written reflections may also be used to assess children's understanding.

All classes should have a Circle Time display. This should include the class rules for Circle Time but teacher's should also display a log of discussions/ sessions that have taken place (there is a specific discussion record sheet available on staff share) and display photos or other things as evidence. This should act as a reference point for children to reflect on and build on prior learning.

Resources

All teachers have had an INSET on circle time delivery and have learnt some games that can be used in class. We have a PSHE resource box which has lots of folders and books related to circle times. We also have an electronic circle time folder in the PSHE folder on staff share which contains resources from Janis Marsh, Lambeth Health Education Link Service, such as games that can be played with children. Staff can add resources to this folder so that it evolves to reflect new strategies. We also have a gigantic parachute that may be useful in circle time sessions.

Monitoring and review

The PSHE and Citizenship Leader is responsible for monitoring the standards of Circle Time sessions. This person supports colleagues in the teaching of Circle Time, by giving them information about current developments in the subject. Strengths and weaknesses in the subject and areas for further improvement are discussed with the head teacher and colleagues, and feedback is given to the governor responsible for PSHE and Citizenship.

The PSHE and Citizenship Leader will monitor that high quality circle time sessions are taking place once each half term, by observing sessions and checking discussion records and Circle Time displays are up to date.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Agreed by Governing Body:

Signed by Chair of Governors: _____

The Reverend Canon Dr Rosemarie Mallett

Date: _____

Next Review Spring 2017