

Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre

Peacebuilding for Primary Schools



INTRODUCTION

Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre's **Peacebuilding Programme for Primary Schools** lays a foundation for creating a culture of peace and establishes a sustainable restorative practice for conflict resolution within class groups and throughout primary school communities.

The Scottish Government strategy for education aims "to help learners develop the skills they need for learning, life and work" (Scottish Government, 2012). Skills such as communication, problem solving and teamwork are found in the Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government, 2012) and are at the core in Non-violence Education Approaches.

COOPERATIVE GAMES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMME

Our foundation **Cooperative Games and Conflict Resolution Programme** seeks to help children (5 to 12) gain the skills required to establish positive relationships, improve communication, enhance the ability to work cooperatively and address conflict in a constructive manner.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITHIN THE SCOTTISH CURRICULUM OF EXCELLENCE

Conflict resolution skills are based on cooperation, communication, sense of community, empathy, self-control, concentration, self-efficacy, creativity, and problem solving. Our programme relies on extensive evidence on how pupils' academic performance and future adult workplace success is strongly linked to the conflict resolution skills they develop in childhood. Through promoting children's learning of conflict resolution skills we aim to assure children's optimal psycho-social development and build more peaceful communities. In line with the Scottish Curriculum of Excellence, our Peacebuilding for Primary Schools programme focuses on the *four principal capacities* to be learned and developed. (See Appendix 1).

AIMS AND OUTCOMES

- AIMS:
 - Promote a culture of peace, respect and dialogue within the school community.
 - Encourage a proactive and prosocial approach to conflict in school communities.
- EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES:
 - Enhance pupils' skills to manage conflict in a constructive and effective manner.
 - Improve pupils' communication skills including assertiveness and active listening.
 - Enhance cooperation and mutual understanding within the school community.

In addition, our workshops support the area of **Health and Wellbeing** in the Scottish Curriculum of Excellence and help children achieve the following outcomes:

- Develop self-awareness and respect for others.
- Meet challenges, manage change and build relationships.
- Experience personal achievement and build resilience and confidence.
- Understand and develop wellbeing and social skills.
- Understand how decisions can affect our mental wellbeing.
- Assess and manage risk and understand the impact of risk-taking behavior.
- Reflect on strengths and skills to help make informed choices.
- Acknowledge diversity and understand that it is everyone's responsibility to challenge discrimination.

PLANNING AND METHODOLOGY

The programme is delivered in eight 55 minutes sessions over 8 weeks, usually to two class groups in a school per term, to fit the schedule of schools and the learning capacities of the children. By delivering one session each week we ensure that children have time to reflect upon the skills learned and put them in practice. Children are involved in an active learning process grounded on their own experiences that carefully targets outcomes and children's understanding of those outcomes. Sessions are designed by skilled facilitators to assure that activities and contents are adequate to meet the needs of pupils in the class group and from a wide range of backgrounds and ages.

The programme sessions are divided in four main areas:

Area	Purpose and skills developed
Understanding me and others.	In these sessions, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their and others' needs through team building activities and cooperative games.
Managing my anger.	These sessions include a set of group dynamics to enhance children's skills to recognize their own emotions and manage them when facing conflict.
Improving my communication.	These sessions focus on communication skills and active listening through documented educative and cooperative games.
Understanding my skills to manage conflict.	In these sessions, pupils will be able to consolidate their learning and skills through reflective practice and group dynamics.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY SO FAR

Having run the programme since 2015 with 24 class groups at eleven Edinburgh area schools our Facilitators have gained significant experience working with a range of class sizes, ages and special needs children. Our programme serves a mix of schools, with at least 10% on the Scottish index of multiple deprivation.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT: RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Building on our experience and input from schools we are developing the programme to incorporate a sustainable restorative practice and a whole school approach. Initially a 6 week Restorative Practice module will build on the foundation of the Cooperative Games programme. Later we plan to integrate these two components and offer a single 16 hour Peacebuilding programme.

FACILITATOR TRAINING PROGRAMME

We run Facilitator Training workshops two to three times per year. Thirty individuals have attended initial training workshops as prospective Facilitators or for personal development. Sixteen volunteer trainees have worked in schools. Twelve individuals completed training and became paid Facilitators, making a pool of Facilitators available for working in schools.

FEEDBACK AND EVALULATION

Teachers at Dalry Primary indicated 100% "somewhat improved" or better with over 50% indicating "significant improvement" in the five areas of behaviour identified in the Curriculum from Excellence which the programme aims to address (self-esteem, communication/social skills, cooperation, managing anger and identifying emotions). Head Teacher and Deputy

Head Teacher reported 100% significant improvement in all five areas. Head Teacher Grant Gillies commented “Specific individuals gained considerably and there was an impact on both behaviour and confidence. The PSA noted a difference in the behaviour of the pupils.” “I would recommend it to any school as the difference is tangible.

Appendix 1. *The Four Principle Capacities from the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence*

Successful Learners. The wide range of activities used in our conflict resolution workshops encourages enthusiasm and motivation for learning, creativity, independent thinking, cooperative learning, decision making and conflict management, all listed in the Curriculum for excellence. We promote a critical, experimental and constructivist approach to knowledge and learning.

Confident individuals. Conflict resolution workshops through cooperative games and educative group dynamics help children develop self-awareness, increase their self-esteem and achieve well-being. Evidence shows how children that are able to constructively address conflict and difficulties in their life are more confident and also more capable to build positive social relations with others (Sandy, 2006).

Responsible citizens. Our programme on conflict resolution workshops focuses on values such as respect, responsibility and active citizenship. Through cooperative learning, we aim to help primary school pupils “develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland’s place, developing informed and ethical views on complex issues” (Curriculum for excellence- Scottish Government, 2012).

Contributors. A crucial element of non-violence education is its focus on conflict resolution. This involves helping children improve their communication skills and problem solving capacities. In addition, our conflict resolution workshops encourage assertiveness which is required to maintain an enterprising attitude.

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