

# Circle Time and “Virtues to Live By”

Circle times have been created by experienced teachers; experienced both with circle time and with the particular age group, for the following:

- Early Years Foundation Stage 1 and 2
- Year One and Two
- Year Three and Four
- Year Five and Six

Circle Time helps to:

- Develop friendship and relationships
- Promote respect and celebrate diversity
- Develop spiritual and moral understanding
- Enhance children’s capacity for reflection
- Develop empathy
- Promote personal responsibility
- Create trust
- Improve speaking and listening
- Develop personal integrity
- Develop emotional literacy
- Create a forum for celebration and fun

## Using Circle Time

If conducted in a learning environment where all members of the school community are supported and respected, Circle Time is a very positive strategy: it builds ethos.

## The Structure of Circle Time

### *Before You Begin*

It is important to go over the rules governing Circle Time so that all participants understand the boundaries and codes that create safety within the circle. The rules are stated at the beginning of each Circle Time. Next, highlight the five skills used in Circle Time - thinking, looking, listening, speaking and concentrating.

### *Step 1. A Game*

Begin with a game. Games help bring the group together and teach valuable learning skills as well as moral values.

### *Step 2. A Round*

The round offers an opportunity for everyone in the circle to be heard. A trigger statement is used to ensure a democratic approach and safety within the group. A speaking object is used so that each person knows when it is their turn to speak and is passed on when each person has their turn. It is important to allow participants to say "pass" knowing that you will offer them another turn when the round has been completed.

### *Step 3. Open Forum*

Open Forum is a time for discussion and problem solving around personal, social and citizenship issues. At Foundation and Key Stage 1 puppets are used. The puppets ask the children for support with issues they are facing. Children offer support and ideas to try out. At Key Stage 2 Open Forum follows a script that again provides safety, clarity and structure.

### *Script for Open Forum*

Participant says, "I need help because..."

In turn audience offers support by saying "Would it help if I...?" or "Would it help if you...?" or "Would it help if we...?"

This is followed by a summary and support for the person requesting help in target setting.

### *Rules for Open Forum*

Nobody must mention any names in Open Forum. This is absolutely vital to ensure emotional safety. At the same time you need to reassure children that if they have a problem that cannot be brought to Open Forum they can approach you or other adults for support.

### *Step 4. An Opportunity for Celebration*

Following a quick game participants are offered an opportunity to celebrate particular members in their group, for acts of virtue

### *Step 5. Ending Ritual*

The ending ritual, either through a game or a guided reflection, brings the circle time meeting to a close.

This overview has been taken and amended from "*Building Bridges, an Intergenerational Programme*" by Penny Vine (2005)