

# The importance of ground rules for PSHE lessons

Just a little reminder about ground rules in PSHE. When Russell Stanley delivered INSET in February, he mentioned that it is good practice to establish ground rules with the children regarding PSHE and revisiting these at the start of each lesson.

For this year, I have developed a set of ground rules which can be **stuck in the inside cover** of children's PSHE books and referred to each lesson.

***If you haven't already got a Worry Box set up in your class, please can you set this up as a way of children being able to ask for advice if they need to or if they don't want to talk verbally.***

## Ground Rules

Before teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing, clear ground rules should be established. This may also be known as class contract or class agreement and is one of the main ways of ensuring there is a safe teaching and learning environment. The ground rules should be consistently kept to and revisited throughout the lesson and should be clearly displayed in the classroom. Teachers should model good use of the ground rules and reinforce or renegotiate them as required. Teachers will want to explain that PSHE lessons cover a wide range of topics and can include talking about things that people have different feelings about and that it is important to ensure that everyone in the room feels able to participate.

*Some examples and things to consider with the class when introducing ground rules:*

### 1) Sharing opinions, the right to 'pass' and asking questions

Consider with the class:

- that topics should be able to be openly and honestly explored
- the importance of everyone being entitled to express an opinion
- that pupils should join and actively participate in the lesson, but if someone feels uncomfortable with a topic or activity they should talk to the teacher individually (the teacher might prepare the class in advance by letting them know what topics are coming up). Pupils can let the teacher know anonymously or directly if they have any concerns about themselves or a friend
- that questions are welcomed but:
  - no one should ask a question that deliberately tries to embarrass or upset someone or encourages pupils to laugh at someone
  - teachers and pupils may choose to not answer a question if it is personal
- whether questions can be asked throughout the lesson or whether there may be a set time in the lesson when questions can be asked
  - at the beginning of the lesson, questions are invited and written on the flipchart to help direct the lesson based on the current needs and understanding of the class
  - by using an anonymous questions box where questions can be asked and followed up at a later time (this is particularly useful if pupils want to ask questions that they may feel uncomfortable about asking in the lesson)

Ground rule:

- We join in and ask questions if we want to (KS1)
- Everybody has the right to join in and speak if they want to (KS2)

## 2) Listening to others

Consider with the class:

- what good or 'active' listening looks like
- how best to agree with or challenge someone's else viewpoint (ie: listening in full before making assumptions or formulating a response, not interrupting)

Ground rule:

- We make sure that everybody feels listened to (KS1)
- Everybody has the right to feel listened to (KS2)

## 3) No assumptions, non-judgemental

Consider with the class:

- that a range of different attitudes and beliefs may be explored in the lesson
- that there may not necessarily be a 'right' answer
- that everyone should be entitled to express an opinion or ask a question without feeling ridiculed - the importance of not making fun of or putting down other pupils
- where pupils disagree with another point of view, they should challenge the belief and not the person
- being careful not to make assumptions about the attitudes, values and life experiences of others

Ground rule:

- We make sure everybody feels ok – we don't put people down (KS1)
- We have the responsibility to ensure people do not feel judged or 'put down' (KS2)

## 4) Use of language

Consider with the class:

- the importance of using vocabulary everybody understands - in most cases the correct vocabulary should be used
- that vocabulary that is inaccurate or offensive should not be used (unless there is specific task that demands this)
- not just which words are used, but the way in which they are used, such as using correct vocabulary but in an inappropriate way to hurt someone or cause offence for example

Ground rule:

- We use the correct vocabulary when possible, if we are unsure we ask the teacher (KS1)
- We have responsibility to use the correct vocabulary so as not to cause offence (KS2)

## 5) Confidentiality

Consider with the class:

- that lesson time is not the appropriate setting to directly discuss their own personal experience or the personal experiences and private lives of others. General situations might be used as examples but names and identifying descriptions should be left out. Pupils can share stories or experiences without naming others, by saying: 'Someone I know...' or 'A situation I heard about...'
- the importance of not naming names or repeating other people's views if discussing lesson content outside of the classroom. You might also discuss why it is not appropriate to share the lesson content with younger pupils (depending on the nature of the lessons)
- emphasise that you cannot completely guarantee confidentiality, that if you become concerned that a child is at risk (being hurt or harmed), you will need to follow the school's safeguarding policy (tell someone else in school)

Ground rule:

- We keep the conversation in the room (KS1)
- Everybody has the responsibility to keep confidentiality (KS2)

## 6) Seeking help and advice

Teachers should direct pupils to:

- a person or people in school
- appropriate websites, helplines or text services where pupils might go to for further help or advice - these should be displayed in the classroom, especially whilst the topic is being taught

Ground rule:

- We know we can ask for further help or advice if we want to (KS1)
- Everybody has the right to seek help or advice if they want to (KS2)