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## Nip playground conflict in the bud this Anti-Bullying Week 2017

A MUM of two has written a toolkit which assists primary school teachers in empowering their pupils to overcome bullying in the playground.

With this year's Anti-Bullying Week taking place this month (13-17 November), Laura Gilchrist – author of 'Playground Buddies' – is keen to raise awareness of how her toolkit could make a profound difference in many children's lives.

An independent mediator, facilitator and trainer with more than 15 years' experience of working within the education sector – focusing on setting up projects that brought about whole school change in thinking and culture – Laura has created a resource where children are taught to form good relationships with their peers through clear and friendly communication.

"Playtimes can be an anxious time for pupils, even in a generally happy school. 'Playground Buddies' can help their peers to feel safe on the playground by organising games, providing a kind word or a listening ear, and helping to prevent fights. Primary school pupils can do this very effectively, provided they're given the training," explains Laura, who lives in the Old Trafford area of Manchester with her son, aged six, and daughter, aged three.

"The fundamental idea behind 'Playground Buddies' is that children can develop skills of empathy, listening, leadership and teamwork at a young age and then carry those traits into their formative years and beyond; they can nip things in the bud if they know how to. The scheme is particularly effective in inner-city primary schools that are looking to create a culture of inclusivity and kindness."

The toolkit contains all of the necessary information required for teachers to implement the 'Playground Buddies' scheme within their respective schools, with advice on how to get started; selecting children to be buddies; training sessions for pupils who are to become buddies; tips for keeping the scheme going; template certificates; assembly outlines; and a host of ideas for all-inclusive activities and games.

"It has been my privilege to use my training and experience to devise 'Playground Buddies', which is a complete, easy-to-use resource for schools looking to embed a culture that promotes kindness, compassion, fairness and equality," says Laura, who holds a Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution.

Another of Laura's observations, which some may find surprising, is that children who are currently in danger of bullying others can actually become highly effective 'Playground Buddies'.

"I remember working with a school where there was this nine-year-old boy who was always struggling, always in trouble. He applied to be a playground buddy and the

school decided to give him a chance, as he seemed keen. His teacher said to me: 'Being a playground buddy has completely transformed him; he's so proud of his new role'. Finding something he was good at was transformational, as he went from being a ringleader of trouble to a ringleader of helpers!" explains Laura.

To order a copy of the 'Playground Buddies' toolkit, which retails at £25, visit [www.playgroundbuddies.com](http://www.playgroundbuddies.com)

**ENDS**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Anti-Bullying Week is an annual event organised by the Anti-Bullying Alliance; follow all related events on social media using #antibullyingweek and #abw17. This year's theme will promote difference and equality in schools, with the tagline 'All Different, All Equal'.

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