

## INTRODUCTION

This is a step-by-step guide about how to set up a playground buddies scheme in your primary school. It includes advice how to get started, selecting children to be buddies, ten sessions for training pupils as buddies, tips for keeping things going after the initial burst of enthusiasm, template certificates, assembly outlines and a host of other activities and games. Setting up a playground buddy scheme need not be a huge burden, however if the scheme is to work in the long term there are three elements that are essential:

1. Assign one member of staff to take on overall responsibility for running the playground buddy scheme.
2. Ensure that the children selected to be buddies are trained up properly.
3. Ensure that lunchtime staff are involved in the scheme when buddies start to go on duty at lunchtimes.

A playground buddy scheme is usually launched as a response to problems in the playground such as recurrent fighting, children picking on each other, equipment being broken and so on. The idea is to give some of the older children in the school a sense of responsibility and to involve them in helping to resolve problems and prevent such problems occurring in the first place.

*"You could see it was starting to make a difference because the children realised they were role models.....I think the buddy scheme has definitely contributed to the fact that there are less incidents in the playground and the buddies say that there is less fighting."*

*Sam Williams, Deputy Head, Ashbury Meadow Primary School*

*"The best thing about being a buddy is that when you help someone it makes you feel happy. You can play with the infants and you get to make more friends as well. I've learnt how to help people and how to be trustworthy".*

*Ka Yan Yiu, pupil at Ashbury Meadow Primary School*

### What do playground buddies do?

Playground buddies are children who are specially selected to go on duty at playtimes and lunchtimes to do any or all of the following:

- organise games,
- get out and put away games equipment,
- play with children who are lonely,
- help to keep an eye on younger children,
- support children who have fallen out with their friends or are simply feeling sad,
- look out for bullying behaviour and alert adults,
- help children who have low-level conflicts to sort them out,
- prevent fights from happening by creating a peaceful atmosphere,
- be a friendly person that other children can go to for help if they need it,
- be a help to lunchtime organisers.

It is up to the school to decide what the exact role of the buddies will be, and to communicate this to all pupils and staff. For example, it maybe that that the school already has monitors responsible for putting out games equipment, in which case the buddies would not need to take on this role. Playground buddies are children selected from the juniors, usually in years 4-6, and the children volunteer to take on the job themselves. It is essential that these children are given training so that they develop the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to do their job well.

*"After the buddy training, the children were more committed to working and playing with other children – the whole project has become more self-sustaining."*

*Gaynor Stubbs, Deputy Headteacher – Armitage Primary School*

Playground buddy schemes tend to work most effectively in schools that are already committed to developing children's social and emotional skills, or 'emotional literacy', through using techniques such as circle time. This is because many of the skills that children need to develop to be effective playground buddies are building on basic social and emotional skills.