

Being New

TITLE: Being New

KEY QUESTION: How do we all live together?

Background Information:

This activity is suitable for young people at all Key Stages. The questions should be adapted to individual circumstances, and may be used to consider how a student, who is new to a school, perhaps having moved from a different part of the country, or even within the same city, feels about their experience. It is also helpful for students to consider the feelings of those new to an environment, and ways they can welcome them.

Activity One

Through a series of questions and answers, this activity explores a young person's experience of moving to the UK to live, and how they were accepted into their new school community.

How did it feel to be new in the UK?

At the age of three my siblings and I immigrated to the UK to join my mother and eldest brother in Sheffield. I was extremely reluctant about moving to a new country, I was oblivious to my surroundings – it just wasn't home. I despised attending school; I was lonely and had no-one who I could communicate with in my own language. I could understand and speak English but I wasn't accustomed to doing so. Being new felt like the worst thing that had ever happened to me - I felt excluded and ignored.

How did it feel to be in a new school?

My family and I moved from Sheffield to Rotherham when I was eight years old. The reception I was given when I arrived was excellent. I became close friends with my neighbours instantaneously. My fellow pupils were fascinated by me because I was the first black person they had encountered and had in their own school.

Having been isolated by students in my previous school, I felt the need to change when I moved to Rotherham. Initially my only focus was my education, but I gained a social life – I had now found a place where I felt wanted, a place where people would ask me to be their partner for a class task etc. It was a change that impacted on who I am now. I don't think that there is any better feeling than a warm acceptance when you arrive somewhere new.

What did anyone do to welcome you?

On my first day my class teacher showed me around the school and introduced me to all the young people in my class who then volunteered to show me around the school themselves. People asked me to sit with them at break and lunch and play games with them in the playground. Straight after school I had a swarm of fellow students at my doorstep asking my mother if I could 'play out'. Everyone in my class just went out of their way to see that I was catered for and included. This made me feel very welcome in my new environment.

What did not help you to feel welcome?

Older students in the primary school weren't as welcoming as my class mates. Many were racially abusive, but this was soon resolved by the head teacher and learning mentor.

What would you advise people to do to be welcoming to new students?

I would advise people to be hospitable, always offering their help and support and ensuring that the person's needs are catered for. Personally I think simplicities can have tremendous effects on how a person feels – a mere smile or 'Good morning' can go a long way. Consistency in the way someone behaves helps a great deal. As a person new to

the country we used to generalise by saying “British people are like British weather- they can change instantly”... and this is the ‘consistence’ I am referring to when calling on people to remain friendly and helpful, and not only on the first day.

Activity Two

In order to develop understanding of how to welcome and include others, your students could interview anyone who has arrived new at the school. This can be a very useful piece of work for developing empathy and can lead to a booklet on being a welcoming, inclusive school. Please find below answers to the two questions given by students aged between seven and 15 years old – What did it feel like to be new to a school? What did people do that was helpful when you were new?

What did it feel like to be new?

- I felt nervous because I didn't have any friends because I didn't know anyone.
- When I came into the classroom I felt very shy. I was very glad when people wanted me to sit next to them – that made me feel extremely happy.
- I came to this school in Year 2. I felt scared because I didn't know any people. When I came in I felt very shy. I didn't want to come into the classroom or have anyone look at me. I didn't want to be here. But in the end it was OK – I still felt a bit shy. But now I feel really good here.
- When I came to my new school I was lonely and had no-one who I could communicate with in my own language. I could understand and speak English but I wasn't accustomed to doing so.
- Being new felt like the worst thing that had ever happened to me - I felt excluded and ignored.

What did people do that was helpful when you were new?

- When I first came into the room people asked for me to sit next to them and that made me feel extremely happy.
- When someone asked me to go to a club with them I went and I enjoyed finding friends there.
- When someone arrives new we must help them want to come. We can do this by being friendly, playing with them, making sure they know our names and ask them what their name is.
- Try to help the new person, show them the things they need to use, smile, and smile every time not just the first time.
- I had now found a place where I felt wanted, a place where people would ask me to be their partner for a class task etc.
- I don't think that there is any better feeling than a warm acceptance when you arrive somewhere new.
- Everyone in my class just went out of their way to see that I was catered for and included.
- It's not just about being nice on the first day – you have to carry on being nice.

Activity Three

Design a poster or leaflet that shows that you are a welcoming school by including characteristics such as being friendly to someone new to your school, being helpful to others, including the new person in games etc. Consider ways to help the new person feel at home in their new environment.

KEY STAGE: All Key Stages

TIME:

Activity One – 30 mins

Activity Two – 30 mins

Activity Three – 1 hour

LEARNING STYLE: Teacher-led / group / individual