

'National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence'

Tomorrow, Friday 15th March, is 'National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence'.

The theme this year is 'Bullying No Way: Take Action Every Day'.

Classes will be talking about how to prevent bullying, especially focussing on how kindness changes the culture of bullying and talking about ways that we can be kind at Nicolson Avenue Primary School. We can 'Take Action Every Day' by showing kindness, compassion and empathy towards others.

Helping kids play together - without the drama!

(In the next two newsletters we will be looking at skills that help children to play well together)

One of the great joys of parenting is watching children play happily together. There's nothing quite like the magic of seeing children laugh and have fun together, or watching children use their imagination, come up with a creative game and act it out.

Of course, in the real world it doesn't always happen that way. Instead, we often hear yelling and tears: "that's not fair!", "who said you were the boss??" and screaming and storming off sometimes ensues!

While some kids will often eventually resolve the conflict themselves, some (think kids with big feelings, strong independent streaks or difficulties with flexibility just to name a few) find it harder. And for ALL children, sometimes play just gets hard.

It can be helpful for us as adults to proactively provide a few tips, coach and help children learn to play games kindly and fairly with each other. Generally, it's better to do this kind of coaching before the problems begin, and to also ask children to think about specific games they play rather than "playing" in general. Here are a few specifics in coaching children to play kindly and fairly.

Ask children questions about their game playing

It can be useful to ask children questions about their play times/game playing regularly – to check in on their skill levels, any problems and anything that has improved/is going well. For example, we might ask:

Who are you playing with at the moment?

What games are you playing?

When was the last time you/your friend got mad during those games?

What happened?

What are you good at when playing with friends?

When do you need an adult's help when playing with friends/siblings?

There are a number of skills which we can look at when teaching children about "good play", but below I've focused on three specific ones – generating rules, dealing with problems and kind game playing sentences.

1. Helping children generate useful "rules" or guidelines to play

When you know a child is playing a particular game regularly, or having problems with a particular activity with their peers, it can be useful to get them to talk about rules for that game before they begin.

For example:

Tell me about what you might do with Jack today?

What might you play?

What do you think might be some fair rules when you are playing that game?

Ask children to think about rules for the beginning, middle and end of games. Talk about how it's important to try to agree on the rules of a game before you start the game.

2. Helping children anticipate problems and develop problem solving strategies for games

It's also often effective to ask children to develop strategies about game playing problems which have happened before – and ask them to generate potential solutions to these problems. For example:

What will you do if you disagree on when balls are in/out when you are playing handball?

What could you do if both of you want to be the dance teacher when you are playing dance school?

When you play x-box today, how will you agree who gets what game at what time?

If children have trouble thinking about the problems that might come up (remember kids live in the moment, and often won't anticipate/remember problems which as adults we are well aware of!), think of the problems you've seen happen previously - and ask them questions like this:

What could you do if someone wants to play the game and someone doesn't?

What could you do if someone wants to finish playing and someone doesn't?

What could you do if you disagree about the rules?

What could you do if you disagree about what happened?

What might be a good rule about what NOT to say or do?

What might be a good rule about what everyone agrees to do?

If children have trouble thinking about problem solving strategies, help them out by asking them about these ideas:

"I think.....(say the problem)" OR

"Can you please.....(say what they want)" OR

"Let's take a break" OR

"Let's ask Mum/Dad for help" OR

"No big deal, let's just keep playing"

If kids feel frustrated in a game they say: "I need a five minute time out" and they do something else for a minute.

