Odd Socks and Restorative Practice

Anti-Bullying Week inspires a consistent approach by all

‘Odd Socks Day is old news’, I hear you say! Indeed November is well and truly behind us but the message and its legacy remains very much at the core of how we manage relationships at school. Not only do we wear odd socks to school for a bit of fun but also to demonstrate how we are all different but equal.

At King’s College, Anti-Bullying Week continues to gather momentum as the message grows louder each year. While we add an increasing number of activities to the week that straddles Odd Socks Day, we refer back to conversations, workshops and other sessions that were held for the children.

While we are proud of the fact that we don’t have an issue with bullying at our School, it is still our duty to give a voice to the number one key concern among young children of today. Therefore in equipping our children with the right tools, they can move forward with confidence, knowing where to seek (and use appropriately) inner guidance. It is here that empowerment and courage come to the fore-front of these lessons.

We celebrate Anti-Bullying Week to teach our children to stand up for themselves and how to work out friendship issues in a constructive way. In turn, pupils learn how to be kind while showing respect to others.

A refreshing whole-staff approach to help guide children through conflict resolution was recently laid out and already, success stories clearly demonstrate the power of discussion and understanding both sides of the story. This has come as a direct result from input explored during class sessions and assemblies but perhaps most importantly through the need to understand that consistency across the board is key for this to succeed.
We’re all superstars!

It’s all about positive behaviour in the Pre-Prep; Reach For The Stars received a make over in October and we are already delighted with the results. Every child begins the day on the Sun, no matter what may or may not have happened during the previous day. Over the day children may be moved up or down the chart (this is displayed in every classroom) allowing time to make improved or sustained choices; up to the Rocket, or even the Star for making excellent choices, or for children who make a wrong choice, the Cloud sits below the Sun and there’s even a Stormy Cloud lurking if things become a real struggle.

Parents of any child who has been on the Stormy Cloud at any stage of the day will be informed. Children who end the day on the Star are recorded on a weekly tally. These weekly records are added up across the term and the children with the highest number of appearances are celebrated in our Superstar Pre-Prep assemblies. We all then sing our new favourite Superstar Song: “We’re all Superstars but we don’t drive around in superfast cars. We’re all Superstars in our own special way. We’re all Superstars, we’ve been on a rocket to Reach For The Stars. We’re all Superstars today.” (and we love singing it, because we are all Superstars after all!) Adopting a similar system at home can be an excellent way to engage your child in positive behaviour choices and it helps to reinforce the messages they hear throughout their school day.

Managing conflict and resolving friendship issues

The concept of Conflict Resolution is nothing new. Sometimes when ‘old’ ideas are repackaged, tied with a bow and presented at the right time, an ‘old’ idea can be the most refreshing concept and when used appropriately, it can be an extremely powerful catalyst.

Firstly it is important to remember that friendships change. It is incredibly rare that children remain Best Friends Forever. In fact, it is arguably wrong of us to encourage this phrase as we are instilling a false sense of longevity. Children have to work these things out for themselves without having the adults in their lives standing on the sidelines feeding them false information. Children change and mature at different rates. It is therefore highly likely that when two friends are together, they will be going through significant hormonal changes at different times where one will not necessarily understand why their so-called Best Friend is behaving differently. This will manifest itself in a number of different ways and invariably end up in a conflict of some sort. Therefore to equip children with methods to resolve these conflicts so that both sides understand each other is possibly more beneficial than saying that it’s all going to be ok because, “She’s your Best Friend Forever”.

Take the concept of a Friendship Fire, a phrase coined by the URStrong Movement. The idea is both simple and clever where a healthy friendship is what we are aiming for. Naturally disagreements happen and the friendship fire is ignited. This then needs to be extinguished through Confronting the issue, then resolving the Conflict before moving to Forgive & Forget. The cycle is then completed with the Healthy Friendship restored. The different stages need to be explored systematically and during the initial part, teacher guidance will be required to steer the conversations towards helping each other understand both sides of the story. Possibly the biggest hurdle is encouraging the children to Confront the issue in the first place. Sometimes this is best explored once everyone is calm and ready to listen. Once the children start to take this into their own hands, adults need to step back as naturally, the children are a lot better at this than we are! It is wonderfully reassuring when a child finds me to tell me they have resolved a conflict - may friendships continue to flourish in abundance.

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