

Who would you choose to be your friend?

🕒 15min 🧑 3-7 DIVERSITY

What do I want to find out?

This activity is designed to find out to what extent pupils have preconceived ideas about who they would choose as a friend, based on appearance, ethnicity or gender.

What do I need?

- Photos of six children of a similar age to your pupils: three boys and three girls, and a diversity of ethnicities for each gender. Make sure all are smiling and have level eye contact with the camera. You can find a selection on the website.
- A question sheet asking *Who would you choose to be your friend?*
- One small coloured sticker for each child.



➡ Download recording templates and images for these activities from the website:
www.risc.org.uk/toolkit

What do I do?

- With the pupils in small groups, ask them to look carefully at each of the photos and secretly choose the one they would most like to have as a friend.
- When they have all decided, ask them to put their sticker on the photo they have chosen.
- Ask the children to say in turn why they made their choice.
- Rearrange the photos with the most popular at one end and the least at the other. Do the children notice anything about the sequence?
- Count the number of times each photo is chosen and record the explanations given.

How do I analyse the results?

- Note what the pupils notice about the distribution of stickers. Are any of the children in the photos more popular than others? Are there any patterns in relation to gender, ethnicity or appearance?

How do I measure the change?

- Depending on the time between each audit, you can repeat the activity exactly, or use an alternative set of photos based on the same criteria.
- Look for a more even distribution of choices between genders and across ethnicities and appearance.
- Pupils may be increasingly able and willing to challenge the activity itself and question whether you can choose a friend on the basis of their appearance. They may show a developing understanding that the act of choosing involves making assumptions about the children in the photos.

Alternatives & adaptations

Who do you want to have in your class?

🕒 20 mins 🧑 5-14 DIVERSITY

What do I want to find out?

- Explore pupils' attitudes towards social class, disability, sexuality and different types of family.

What do I need?

- Worksheets with profiles of different children, which can be modified as appropriate.
- For younger pupils you may use Persona Dolls as an alternative to written profiles.

What do I do?

- Ask pupils to imagine that new schoolmates are coming to their school. Their task is to choose – based on a short description – which of them they want to have in their class and which not. They can select more than one classmate.
- Ask pupils to explain each of their choices.
- Distribute the worksheets, either to individuals or to groups. It is important to remind pupils to write their reasons for choosing or rejecting each child.
- Collect the worksheets.

How do I analyse the results?

- Count how many times each child was chosen or rejected. It is important to take note of the reasons behind pupils' decisions.
- You can analyse the results looking for a particular set of criteria, for example focussing on gender or disability.

How do I measure the change?

- Ask pupils to re-read their first responses and say how they would now be different, if at all; or show them responses from another class and ask them to consider and comment on them.
- Note if there is a change in the extent to which the pupils' selection was based on empathy with their situation, or the possible personal benefit, for example of having a classmate from a wealthy background.
- Look for a decrease in stereotypical ideas linked to children from poor or rich backgrounds,

migrant children, children with disabilities, or from same-sex families.

- Results can be analysed separately for boys and girls to see if choices were in any way affected by gender.

Descriptions of children

A boy lives with his mother, father, sister and brother in a detached house with a large garden and a swimming pool. The boy wears designer clothes. He comes to our school because his parents wanted to move to the UK, they got good jobs and the whole family moved to this area.

A boy lives with his mother and his little sister in a flat. Mum has two jobs to earn enough to support her family so the boy does not go out often, he often has to look after his sister. Most of his clothes come from charity shops and markets. He comes to our school because his mum had to find a cheaper flat to rent.

A girl lives with her two mothers in a small house. Every year they go abroad for a holiday and her mothers sometimes allow their daughter to bring a friend. She wears fashionable clothes. She comes to our school because the family was looking for a nicer home.

A girl lives with her father and grandmother in grandma's old house. Grandma takes care of the household, grows vegetables and bakes cakes. When the girl celebrates her birthday she invites classmates to stay overnight. She usually wears T-shirts and jeans. She comes to our school because they had to move into her grandma's when her father lost his job.

A boy lives with his foster parents in a bungalow which is adapted so he can use his wheelchair. He likes to wear his favourite football team's kit. He comes to our school because he is hoping to stay with his new family for a long time.