

This paper introduces the R time programme, which uses a short, weekly activity to help improve relationships and friendships in class.

R time (**R**elationships **t**o **i**mprove **e**ducation)

Greg Sampson (2004)



What is R time?

“R time is a structured programme which uses random pairing to create an environment supporting and enhancing attainment, relationships and citizenship”. (Sampson 2004)

Just as we teach children academic skills, social qualities need to be treated and valued in a similar way. R time aims to enable everyone in the class to get on better with one another. It involves a 10-15 minute activity, carried out with a class once a week over a period of 30 weeks. It can be carried out with children of nursery age and throughout the primary years.

Does R time work?

Although R time has not yet been used in schools in Moray, schools elsewhere in the UK have reported a change in the school ethos, an increase in good manners, more empathy towards others and an increase in children working well together – supporting the tenets of A Curriculum for Excellence and promoting emotional health and wellbeing in school. These findings have also been supported by an evaluation of the programme by Hampton, Roberts, Hammond & Carvalho (2010) who looked at the impact of R time on 21 schools in the south-west of England. Statistical analysis of completed questionnaires suggested that R time had made a *significant positive impact on the development of relationships and friendships*. There were also changes in how children perceived bullying and their enjoyment of school.

Comments from primary school children taking part in the study included:

[I want] to do it every single day because it's that fun.

It tells you how to work with people you don't know how to work with.

Teachers in the study reported an impact on collaborative working, manners and social skills. They noticed:

Good manners are being used in everyday classroom activities.

Random pairing has made a positive impact upon friendship groups.

Children are much more caring towards others.

How is R time carried out?

An R time session is made up of six parts, with a further part, assessment, slotted in at intervals. At the start of the session the teacher emphasises the rule, ‘show good manners and respect at all times’, and also introduces other rules, e.g. ‘ask for help by raising your hand’, and ‘always try your best when working with your partner’.

Part 1: Random Pairing: The children are randomly paired using, for example, pairing cards, objects or photographs, depending on the age of the children. Each child finds a partner by locating the person who is holding the same card/object.

Part 2: Greeting/Introduction: Once partners are located, the children sit down with their chairs facing each other. They greet each other, make eye contact and use one another's names. An ice breaker activity can be carried out, and fed back to the teacher, e.g. find out your partner's favourite colour.

Part 3: An Explanation: The teacher outlines the main activity for the session, taking only a minute to explain the task.

Part 4: The Activity: The activities are easily achievable, rarely curricular based, and should not be used to test arithmetic or literacy ability. The aim of the activity is to develop relationships between the children. There are three types of activity which are included in the R time manual; *a practical activity* – e.g. drawing, building, creating something or writing; *an imaginary activity* – e.g. imagine you are a time traveller, and *a talking and listening activity* – e.g. what would you do if you saw a child being bullied? An activity can be chosen to address an issue, e.g. bullying, or sharing. During the activity the teacher circulates the room, listening to discussions and giving lots of praise. If asked to feed back to the class, the children should check with their partner that it is ok to do so. This confidentiality aspect of R time enables children to discuss freely with their partner.

Part 5: The Plenary/Feedback: The children are asked to give brief feedback on the activity. Feeling that their responses are valued and listened to enables children to develop confidence and self esteem. The teacher may also wish to comment on what he/she saw during the activity.

Part 6: The Conclusion: The session finishes on a positive note. The children think of a 'thank you' for their partner, e.g. "Thank you Lucy for sharing your ideas with me". Resources are tidied away quietly and sensibly.

Assessment: Before R time is introduced to the children, a questionnaire is carried out orally with each child, taking no longer than three minutes per child. There are different questions for each year group, with no more than 12 questions. The same questions are asked again on completion of the programme, to ascertain the impact of R time.

'Ten Ticks to Target' is a way of measuring the impact of R time on the whole class. There are ten targets outlined, including, 'There are fewer squabbles to sort out' and 'Children call each other by their given name'. The teacher also uses an assessment sheet to assess a pair of children during R time. It is suggested that over a year, each child should be assessed in this way at least once.

There is a children's self assessment form for a pair to complete after a session, with questions such as, 'Did you smile at each other?' The two children discuss the questions and decide whether they have achieved them or not. It is recommended that this self assessment is carried out every half term.

References and Further Information

Hampton, E., Roberts, W., Hammond, N. & Carvalho, A. (2010). Evaluating the impact of Rtime: An intervention for schools that aims to develop relationships, raise enjoyment and reduce bullying. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 27 (1), 35 – 51.

Sampson, G. (2005). R time website – www.rtime.info/uk

Sampson, G. (2004). R time (resource manual) (2nd ed.) Coventry: Two Tone Design Associates.

If you would like further information about using R time in your school, please contact Educational Psychology Services.