

# Supporting the inclusion of refugees in your class - Activities

Many schools will be accepting new children from Ukraine into their classes. This is a selection of activities based on our Skills for Life programmes that you could use with your class before a new child arrives to help them to welcome the new child. There are activities for discussion, groups, creating a mind map and reflection. These activities can be used together as one session or can be used individually.

These activities were created with the war in Ukraine in mind, but can also be used for refugees from other countries, or for children coming from other schools. They can also be adapted to promote general inclusion in the classroom.

We have also created an [information sheet on how to involve parents/carers](#).

## Important information

It is important to be aware that there may be children who have joined your class who have fled from other countries in the past and may be feeling resentment, as they were not welcomed in the same way that refugees from the Ukraine are being welcomed. It is important to be mindful of this. If a child does react to this, you could say something like "I'm really glad that you brought this up! It must feel very painful and unfair. I hope that everyone will learn from this and we will welcome everyone in the same way in future."



### Activity 1 - How can we be inclusive?



### Activity 2 - What is like for children who are new to the class?



### Activity 3 - What can we do?



### Activity 4 - How can we include others in our free time activities?



### Activity 5 - What can we do to welcome new students?



## Activity 1 – How can we be inclusive?



- **Say** that today we are going to talk about how we can be an inclusive class for new and existing classmates. As we will have a new child joining our class soon, we are focusing on this today, but everything we talk about will apply to everyone in the class.
- **Ask** the children about a time when they have experienced being 'new' and what it was like. You can **make suggestions**: Moving to a new city or town, changing schools, starting at a new club.
- **Ask** if anyone would like to share their example.
- **Ask** if they can remember anything that helped them in this situation.
- If the children do not have any ideas, you can **make suggestions**: Making eye contact, smiling, saying hello and having a short conversation.
- **Explain** that these small things are important for building positive relationships between both children and teachers and have a positive impact on our mental wellbeing. They might be doing these things all the time and not even thinking about them, they are part of your daily routine, but to a new person, they can make a big difference both inside and outside of school. The most important actions we can take to be an inclusive class are to show interest in others and try to make them feel comfortable and seen.

## Activity 2 – What is it like for children who are new to the class?



- **Explain** that for some children who are in difficult situations, school can give them a break from thinking about things and help them to focus on something else. They see school and their class as a safe place.
- **Ask** the children to think about a time they have felt sad and worried about something, what was it like when they came to school? (They do not need to share).
- **Explain** that sometimes when a person is upset, they might not want to talk about it, but we can do things to help them feel better such as smiling at them, saying hello or including them in activities.
- **Explain** that children who have escaped from a war may have experienced terrible things. They might have left their house, they might have left a family member or a pet behind. It is also normal in this situation to feel worried about the future. Helping children to cope with this is a responsibility for adults, but as classmates, they can provide the new child with a safe environment.
- **Tell** the children that it is important to keep in mind: When you come to the UK as a refugee, everything is new! You might not speak any English, you do not understand the culture or how everything works. You do not have anyone to ask about this.
- **Ask** a few children - Can they imagine how this feels?
- **Explain** that experiencing something as traumatic as war can make us behave differently. For example, you might get angry, have difficulty sitting still, listening properly or focusing on schoolwork. Some children might be frightened by loud noises, or they might try to avoid situations that remind them of something that has happened. They might also feel like being alone, which can make it difficult to make new friends. It is also common for difficult feelings to have physical effects such as headaches or stomach aches.
- **Explain** to the children that hopefully for the new children this will get better as time passes. Research shows that one of the most important things that helps is support from those around you. It is very important that you work together as a class to support them, and if something does not go exactly as planned, you try again.

## Activity 3 – What can we do?



### You need:

- **A3 paper**
- **Post-it notes in two different colours**
- **Pens**
  
- **Put** children into groups of 4-6. (For younger children, you might like to do this as a discussion or drawing activity)
- **Give** each group an A3 sheet the title should read: **Things we can do to include new students.**
- **Give** out a few Post-it-notes to each child.
- **Ask** the children to write ideas of things that they can do to help new children feel part of the class. When they have finished, ask the children to stick their post-its to the sheet. Let them know that if some say the same thing, they should put them on top of each other.
- **Give** out a new A3 sheet with the title: **Ideas for a more inclusive school.** Give out a few more post-it notes to each child.
- **Ask** children to add their ideas again, but this time they should think about what the school and other children can do.
- **Ask** each group to agree on the two best most important ideas from each of the posters.
- **Ask** each group to choose a spokesperson to present their four ideas to the rest of the class.
- **Use** the ideas shared to create a tips poster that is displayed in the classroom.
- If the children do not come up with any ideas, you can **make suggestions:**

### What individuals can do:

- Say “Hello” and “Goodbye” to the new child every day
- Ask the new child if they want to work together on a task
- Ask if they’d like to have lunch with you
- Ask if they’d like to go for a walk with you
- Be a good listener when they are talking and ask questions to show you are listening

### What the school and other children can do:

- Organize after school activities and ask others to sit with them during breaks
- More group activities to encourage children to work together

## Activity 4 – How can we include others in our free time activities?



### Introduction

- **Tell** the children that now we are going to do an activity where we create a mind map that will help us to think about how we can be more inclusive in our free time.
- **Explain** that they will be creating a type of mind map, but on this type of mind map you can write and draw, this is called a 'Free Form Map'. The aim of this activity is for them to think about everything they know and can do to be inclusive.
- **Explain** that part of being an inclusive class is about thinking of other areas where we can help new children feel welcome. This can be at home, in the local community or at sports events. They should think about sports and activities in the local community that it would be nice to invite new children to.
- **Remind** them to think outside the box and include activities that are open to everyone: Going for a walk in the woods with a friend, having a barbecue in the park...
- **Put** the children in pairs. Tell them they have 10 minutes to create their free form maps. Explain that after 10 minutes, they will be discussing what they have created with the pair behind them for five minutes. They will need to choose two ideas to share with the class at the end of the activity.
- **Ask** each group to present their ideas.
- **Create** a poster of the ideas to be displayed in the classroom as a reminder when new children join the class.

## Activity 5 – What can we do to welcome new students?



- This session finishes with the class reflecting on the overall question: **What can we do to welcome new students?**
- **Put** the children in pairs and **give** each pair a Post-it note.
- **Ask** the pairs to discuss the question and write their best idea on their post-it note. **Ask** each pair to present their idea to the class and ask the class to vote on the best idea.
- **Write** all of the ideas on a poster that is displayed in the classroom.
- **Say** that you hope these activities have been helpful for the class and helped to give some ideas for how they can be more inclusive, both to everyone who is already in the class, and new children.
- **Remind** the children to make sure that they do all of the good ideas you have discussed. Thank the children for all their hard work and contributions.