

Programme 3

Arriving at school



Programme 3: Arriving at school

Key points to cover during this session

Whether you run a full-day training session or just a very short discussion, try to include these key points:

- The arrival at school is very important. It can determine whether children have a good start to their day at school – whether they feel welcome or unwelcome – which can influence their participation throughout the day. It can even influence whether they keep coming to school.
- Some children may find the arrival at school very stressful, confusing or upsetting.
- There are lots of simple, low-cost things we can do to make the school more welcoming and to help children find their way around the school more easily.
- We can make changes to attitudes, the environment, our practices and behaviour, and the resources we use. We can even make changes to school policies, to ensure that our school is more welcoming and inclusive.

Watch the video and then facilitate your preferred selection from the following activities.

A Basic workshop activities

Activity 3.1 – Role playing school arrival

🕒 60–90 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To encourage teachers to empathise with children who may experience difficulties at the start of the school day that often go unnoticed.

Divide participants into an even number of small groups, e.g. 2, or 4, or 6 groups. Aim to have about 5 people in each group.

Give participants the following instructions:

- You will need to create a short role play, maximum 5 minutes. Half of the groups will create a role play that shows a negative arrival at school. The other groups will create a role play showing the ideal positive arrival at school.
- Before you start planning your role play, do some brainstorming of ideas in your groups.
- Those who will role play a negative arrival at school, think of all the unwelcoming things that might happen. These could be things you experienced when you were a child at school, or things you have seen happening at the school where you teach, or ideas inspired by the video.
- Those who will role play a positive arrival at school, think about all the things that could be done to make children feel as welcome, confident and comfortable as possible when they arrive. Think of solutions that are possible with the resources available in a school like yours.
- Make sure everyone in your group has a part in the role play. You might be a child, a teacher, a parent, or another person. Your characters should include male and female people, and also at least one person with a disability. Think about what your characters will say and do.

Give participants at least 30 minutes to brainstorm and then prepare their role plays. Then invite the groups to perform. Invite the 'negative arrival' group(s) to perform first and then the 'positive arrival' groups.

After everyone has performed, invite a whole group discussion guided by these questions:

- Which of the negative things do you think happen at your school? Who do you think is affected by these, and how are they affected?

- Which of the positive things happen at your school? Who helps them to happen?
- How could you ensure that children's arrival at school is a more positive and less negative experience?

After the discussion, give participants these instructions:

- Working on your own, list 2 things you could change or introduce to make sure your school is more welcoming and inclusive. Make sure these are ideas you can do with the resources you have available.

Possible answers to expect from participants

The role plays for a '**negative arrival at school**' might involve:

- Seeing a stern or angry teacher as soon as you walk through the gate
- Feeling overwhelmed, being stuck in the middle of a big group of children
- Being bullied
- Feeling lonely or not knowing how to make friends or talk to other children
- Trying to find somewhere quiet to wait
- Not understanding what the other children and teachers are saying
- Not being able to read the signs around the school
- Feeling confused
- Being unable to get up the steps into the classroom.

The role plays for a '**positive arrival at school**' might involve:

- Being greeted by a happy, smiling teacher
- Being met by friends
- Pairing up with your buddy who helps you to move around or find where to go
- Seeing signs that welcome you and/or that guide you as to what to do or where to go
- Going to a designated quiet area while you wait for lessons to start
- A well-organised routine for entering the classroom (e.g. everyone lines up and waits for the teacher to say come in, or children know they enter in pairs, etc).

B

Important theoretical issues to discuss

Activity 3.2 – Different barriers to inclusion

🕒 60 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To encourage teachers to take an organised approach to thinking about barriers to inclusion, so that it feels less overwhelming.

Present the following information to participants:

There are often many different reasons why children are not included in education. These problems or barriers can sometimes feel overwhelming. But it can be easier to understand and deal with them if we break them down into different types of barriers.

We often think about barriers to inclusion in 5 categories:

Type of barrier	Examples of barriers (trainers are free to use their own examples)
Attitudes	Fear, embarrassment, shame, low expectations
Policies	Inflexible school timetables; lack of mother tongue teaching
Practices	Lack of interactive and co-operative teaching and learning
Environment	School buildings and toilets which are not accessible
Resources	Shortage of teachers, lack of materials

Give participants these instructions:

- Work in small groups and think about what you saw and heard in the video.
- On cards or sticky notes, write down the barriers that children faced when they arrived at school. Use a separate piece of paper for each barrier. For example, one barrier was “overcrowded or frightening playground area”.
- Once you have written the barriers onto the cards/sticky notes, try to organise them into 5 categories:
 - Attitudes
 - Policies
 - Practices
 - Environment
 - Resources

- Stick your cards onto the relevant flipcharts (there is one flipchart for each barrier).
- Using just the information from the film, some categories may have no examples in them, so don't worry if you have an empty category.

Note for trainer: you can show the video to participants again if they need a reminder, or you can give them a copy of the transcript to help them remember the main messages in the video.

After about 15 minutes, go through the cards/notes that have been stuck on the flipcharts. Group together any barriers that have been repeated. If you see any examples of barriers that you think are in the wrong category, invite the whole group to comment and decide which category they think the example should be in and why.

Then give participants the following instructions:

- Work again in your small groups.
- For each of the barriers we have on the flipchart, think of at least one solution. This might be a solution that you saw in the video, or your own idea. For example, one solution in the video was “put up signs to help children remember where to go when they arrive at school”.
- Write each solution on a card or sticky note and stick it on the flipchart next to the relevant barrier.
- You might think that one solution would help address more than one barrier. If so, you could draw lines to show which barriers your solution relates to.

After about 10 minutes, look at the solutions that have been put on the flipcharts. You could read out a few solutions that seem innovative, or that were not shown in the video, and ask the relevant participants to explain more about this solution (e.g. do they have experience of implementing such a solution, and if so, can they tell the group about it).

Remind participants that barriers and solutions may not rigidly fit into one category. For instance, there may be an environmental barrier in a school, but this may also be linked to the government's policy or rules on school design and construction.

Finally, ask participants to look at the barriers and solutions listed on the flipcharts and think about which of these barriers and solutions happen in their school. Ask them to talk to the person next to them for a few minutes, to explain their experiences of these or similar barriers and solutions.

Possible answers to expect from participants

Barriers we saw/heard about in the film	Solutions we saw/heard about in the film
Being made to feel unwelcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – attitude barrier – negative attitudes from others in school – practice barrier – behaviour/practices from school staff are not welcoming 	Smiling teacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – attitude – the teacher has a friendly attitude
Noisy, overcrowded school area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – environmental barrier 	Children welcome each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – attitude – the children have a friendly attitude
Confusing place where children get lost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – environmental barrier 	Children pair up as buddies to help each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – practice – the school encourages practices/behaviours that foster mutual support
	Using signs and colours to help children find their way around school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – environment – the school adapts the environment to make it more welcoming and easy to navigate
	Creating an easy to understand morning routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – practice – the school has an easy to understand system for teachers and children in the morning
	Creating a quiet area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – environment – the school adapts part of the environment to help children who don't cope with noise or crowds

None of these examples are specifically policy barriers or solutions. However, they could be. For instance, the government might have a policy that dictates how schools should be built or decorated. Or the school might have a policy on peer learning and support which encourages children to help each other at all times, including when they arrive at school.

Optional extension activities

You could start these activities during the workshop, or encourage participants to do them after the workshop.

Extension a

- Show participants again the previous 2 videos in this series ('Before school' and 'Getting to school').
- Ask them to make notes of barriers and solutions they see or hear about in these videos, and then categorise them into the 5 types of barriers.
- You could encourage them to do this with all the films as you move through the series.

Extension b

- Encourage participants to carry out some investigations in their school. For instance, they could talk to other teachers, or hold a small, informal focus group discussion with children to find out what they think about the arrival at school, what barriers they face when they arrive, and what would make them feel more welcome or less confused or worried when they arrive.

C Digging deeper into specific issues

You may want to focus on some of the specific issues raised in Programme 3. A key issue is:

- Making a more welcoming environment at low or no cost.

Activity 3.3 – Low-cost solutions for a welcoming environment

🕒 60–90 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To highlight to teachers that each barrier to inclusion can affect more than one group of children, and therefore solutions that help one group are likely to help lots more children too

To encourage teachers to be creative in devising innovative solutions that are achievable with limited resources.

Present the following:

The way the school looks can affect whether children feel welcome – and feeling welcome is a significant part of being included in education. The way the school looks can also affect whether children find it easy or difficult to navigate around the school and whether they can find or remember where to go. This can be particularly the case in larger or more crowded schools.

Give participants these instructions:

- Work in small groups.
- Each group will receive a set of cards (Handout 3a). Each card describes a group of children.
- Read each card and decide: a) which children might find it difficult to arrive at a noisy, busy school, and b) which children might struggle to find their way around the school or remember where to go.
- Make 2 piles of cards. If you want you can make a third pile, if you think some children will experience both problems.
- On each card, use the blank space to write notes about **why** these children will find it difficult to arrive at a busy school and/or struggle to find their way around the school.

After 20-30 minutes, invite the small groups to share some of their answers with the whole group. In particular, encourage them to discuss why they think certain children will experience difficulties when they arrive at school and/or difficulties finding their way around school.

Next, ask the whole group to think about the following questions:

- Think about your school. Do you know any children like this? If so, what problems do they face? What has been done to help them so far?

Possible answers to expect from participants

Participants may categorise the cards in the following way. However, there are no right or wrong answers. The main focus is to encourage participants to provide logical and analytical explanations for why they think certain children will experience difficulty on arrival or difficulty finding their way around school.

Which children may find it difficult to arrive at a noisy, busy school?

- Children who are very shy or have low self-confidence
- Children who have intellectual disabilities that affect their communication or interaction skills
- Children who have experienced bullying
- Children who have difficulty seeing or hearing, or who have mobility difficulties.

Which children may find it difficult to find their way around school or remember where to go?

- Children who are new to the school (e.g. because they have just started school or just moved to the area)
- Children who do not speak the main language (e.g. children from minority ethnic groups, refugees, etc)
- Children who have difficulty seeing or hearing
- Children who have mobility difficulties (e.g. because they cannot find accessible routes around the school campus)
- Children with intellectual disabilities or learning difficulties that affect their memory or their ability to understand instructions
- Children who are feeling under stress (it is difficult to remember things when you are upset or panicking).

Present the following:

There are lots of things that can be done to make schools more welcoming and attractive and help children find their way around easily – and these solutions can be low-cost or even no-cost.

Give participants these instructions:

- In the video we saw that children can feel more welcome and less confused if there are signs in the school to help them. There are also other ways to help children navigate around the school, such as using different colours.

- Work in two groups and think about your school and the resources that are available.
- **Group 1: Signs**
 - What signs could be used around your school to help children (and visitors such as parents) find their way around?
 - What signs could be used to help children feel more welcome?
 - How could you make these signs for your school with the resources available in the school and in the community?
- **Group 2: Colours**
 - How could you use colours in your school to help children remember where places are or how to get to certain places in the school?
 - How could you achieve this with the resources available in the school and in the community?

After about 20-30 minutes, ask the groups to share their answers with everyone. You could have a vote to choose the most innovative no-cost idea.

Remind participants that children and parents could help with implementing all the ideas for using signs, colours and other materials to make the school welcoming and easy to navigate. For instance, art or handicraft lessons could be used to make some of the items they have suggested, or there could be an after-school handicraft club where they make these sorts of items as well as other crafts. Language lessons or clubs could also be used to help make signs in other languages, for instance to help children who do not speak the main language used in school.

Possible answers to expect from participants

You can also give this list to participants as a handout (Handout 3b).

Signs

You might want signs for the following places in school. These are just examples:

- Classrooms (numbers or names)
- Toilets
- Water taps
- Office (head teacher, administration, etc)
- Library
- Kitchen or dining room
- Sports or play areas
- Quiet areas
- Staff room.

How could you make signs at low or no cost?

- Use old scraps of wood and carve or scrape the letters or numbers into the wood. You could use paint or even charcoal or chalk to fill in the letters and numbers.

- Take a scrap of wood, make some holes in it so that the holes form the shapes of letters or numbers. Wedge stones or bottle tops into the holes. These signs will be visual and tactile.
- Collect donations of old cloth from the community. You could cut out letters or numbers from one coloured cloth and sew them onto a cloth of a different colour to make a sign. Or you could simply cut out letters and sew them onto a string to make a word.
- Glue or pin some old string or rope onto a piece of wood in the shape of letters (make sure the string/rope is a different colour to the wood). Or you could glue or pin twigs onto a piece of wood so that the twigs form letters/numbers.

Colours

You could use colours in the following places, for example:

- Use coloured paint on doors, door frames, window frames, walls, etc, to distinguish different classrooms (e.g. each class has its own colour), or to distinguish different types of areas in the school (e.g. one colour for learning spaces, another colour for staff rooms, another colour for toilet and washing buildings, etc).
- Coloured paint can also help you mark the edges of steps and ramps, and also handrails, to make them more obvious and safer.
- You could paint arrows and words, pictures or shapes onto walls to help show children where to go.
- If paint is too expensive, you could get donations of old cloth from the community and hang different coloured (and different shaped) cloth flags outside each class or building.
- You could grow plants that have different coloured and shaped flowers or leaves outside different rooms or buildings.

Optional extension activity

These activities could be started during the workshop or participants could be encouraged to do them afterwards.

Extension a

Ask participants to make one of the ideas for signs or for using colours in their school that are listed in Handout 3b. Participants could work in pairs or groups. Where possible, encourage them to involve children and/or parents in the task. Encourage them to use materials that are low-cost or no-cost.

Extension b

Ask participants to make a tactile sign for children who are blind or visually impaired. Such a sign may also help children who have difficulty reading words or numbers. The sign may use Braille letters, and/or it may use other tactile methods that the children can learn to recognise (e.g. an old wooden spoon stuck on a piece of wood could be a tactile sign for 'kitchen'). Encourage participants to work with children, especially children with visual impairments, on this activity. This could be done as a special activity or as part of an art or other lesson.

Programme 3 transcript

Arriving at school

Imagine having to go somewhere every day, knowing you will feel unwelcome or uncomfortable when you get there.

Unfortunately, this happens to many children every day.

School can be an overwhelming place for children, especially if it is a big, noisy, overcrowded school.

A stressful arrival at school can affect a child's concentration all day, and may even discourage them from coming to school at all.

Children often wait in a playground before going to class.

This can be a busy, noisy place.

For many children, this is fun - a great opportunity to meet friends and play before lessons start.

But for others, it can be intimidating and frightening.

The start of the day can be confusing for some children, such as those who are very young, who have just joined the school, who have difficulty seeing or hearing, or who have learning difficulties.

They may struggle to work out or remember where they should go and when.

What can you do?

You can help to make the first few minutes at school a positive experience each day.

A friendly, smiling teacher who welcomes everyone in the morning can make a big difference.

Children can also be encouraged to welcome each other.

“All the people know Ana and say ‘hello Ana’. They say, ‘give five Ana, give five’, and she’s happy about that. She sees the attitudes are very positive. There’s no negative attitude. From the first day, she was happy to come to school. Why? Because the environment is very friendly.”

You can encourage children to pair up so that they help each other move around the school. This is sometimes known as buddying.

“The good thing about our inclusive class is the attitude of children towards Varia. It’s wonderful to see how they welcome her, how they play with her in a

circle. She does not speak but they understand and accept her. Varia has revealed her personality. She can communicate with her peers and this has been a huge advantage for her. The development of inclusive education makes society kinder and maybe even a little bit purer.”

You can put up signs....

... or use different colours on walls, floors and doors to help children remember where to go.

You can use a clear routine in the morning. This helps children to learn when, where, and how to move from the playground into the classroom.

You can create a quiet area in the school for children who find it difficult to spend time in the big, noisy playground.

Handout 3a

Cut out the 10 cards. Give each small group a full set of cards.

Children who have intellectual disabilities and who find it difficult to understand or communicate	Children who are new to the school
Children who have experienced bullying	Children who have mobility difficulties
Children who are feeling under stress	Children who are very shy or have low self-confidence
Children who do not speak the main language used in school	Children who have difficulty seeing or hearing

Handout 3b

Low-cost and no-cost ideas for making signs and using colours to make your school more welcoming

Signs

You might want signs for the following places in school. These are just examples:

- Classrooms (numbers or names)
- Toilets
- Water taps
- Office (head teacher, administration, etc)
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How could you make signs at low or no cost?

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