

Programme 8

Break times



Programme 8: Break times

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:

- Break times can be fun and give children a chance to relax or play. But they can also be times when children face exclusion and bullying.
- Teachers are often not fully aware of what happens in the school at break time.
- Teachers need to listen to children to find out more about break times in their school, and to find out children's experiences and ideas in relation to improving inclusion in the school.
- It is very important for schools to have anti-bullying and/or child protection policies in place, which all the staff, parents and children know about, and know how to report a problem.

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

A Basic workshop activities

Activity 8.1 – Our break time routines

🕒 90–120 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To encourage teachers to reflect critically on the situation in their own school at break times.

Preparation for this activity.

Set up six work spaces, with instructions for different tasks displayed in each space, as follows:

Task 1 – spaces

Instructions: On a sheet of flipchart paper, create a picture of your school showing the spaces inside and outside the school where children go during breaks and where they are not supposed to go.

Task 2 – activities

Instructions: Draw and/or write on a piece of paper all the different activities that children do. Who does these activities? Do girls and boys join in equally or are activities divided by gender? Do children with and without disabilities interact during break times?

Task 3 – staff

Instructions: Explain what the school staff do during break times.

Task 4 – bullying

Instructions: Think about and answer these questions:

- Do you know a lot about what children do at break times? Or are there things you do not know?
- Do you think you are aware of things like bullying?
- Do you know who gets bullied and by whom?
- If there are things you do not know, how could you find out?

Task 5 – routines

Instructions: Think about and answer these questions: Do you have a clear routine and/or set of rules for break times at your school? What are they? Write them on the flipchart.

Task 6 – positive and negative experiences

Instructions: Think critically about and discuss the following questions:

- Do girls and boys experience break times differently? If so, why?
- Do children who have difficulty seeing, hearing, moving or learning have different experiences during breaks? Do you think they have positive or negative experiences? Why?
- Are there any other children in your school who may experience difficulties at break time? Who are they and what difficulties do they have?
- What have you done, or could you do, to ensure that every child has a positive experience during break times?

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in six groups.
- Each group should start in a different work space.
- Follow the instructions provided in the work space.
- After 10 minutes, leave your answers displayed in the work space and move clockwise to the next space.

When all groups have completed all tasks, ask them to stay in their final work space. One person from the group should summarise the answers left by all the groups in that work space. They should try to highlight similarities and differences. Invite the whole group to comment on why they think some people's answers are different.

If all participants teach in the same school, have a further discussion around whether they all have the same experiences or observations around break times. If they have different opinions or experiences, why is that? For instance, are there some teachers who spend a lot of time in the playground during breaks and some who rarely leave the classroom or staffroom? Why is that?

Optional extension activity – case study

 60–90 minutes

Main purpose of this activity:

To encourage teachers to think about practical ways to make break times more positive and inclusive for all children.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in small groups.
- Read the case study in Handout 8a.
- Discuss the questions at the end of the handout.
- Create a short role play to demonstrate one or more of the solutions you would try.

Invite each group to perform their role play. Write notes on the flipchart about all the ideas they demonstrate.

After all the role plays have been performed, hold a whole group discussion about the ideas that have been shown.

Think back to what has been discussed in previous programmes. Discuss: which of the solutions demonstrated or discussed in this activity support an individual's needs, and which of the solutions help to make system-level changes?

Extend the discussion further by asking participants to think about what Mrs Khan could do to help other children enjoy a more positive and inclusive break time – especially children who cannot see well or move easily, or who have trouble understanding and communicating. Again, think about actions that support the individuals and actions that bring about systemic changes.

Possible answers to expect from participants

There are numerous ways in which Mrs Khan could help Jena to be included in activities outside the classroom. The following are just a few ideas. You can share these ideas with participants if they do not suggest them.

What could Mrs Khan do?	Who could help?
Mrs Khan needs to find out why Jena sits on her own. For instance, maybe she finds it too difficult to hear and communicate in a noisy place like the playground. It can be exhausting having to concentrate to hear or lipread, so maybe she needs time to rest in between classes. Or it could be that the other children bully her and exclude her.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other teachers who supervise break times may be able to share their observations of Jena and whether/how she interacts with others. Jena can be asked, discretely, to talk about her experiences. Jena's parents may be able to give insights into her levels of confidence, whether she interacts with siblings or children in the neighbourhood, and so on.
Mrs Khan could try to create a quiet space in the school where any child who wants to sit quietly can go. This may help Jena to interact in a quiet way during breaks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's head teacher could help to identify a place that could become a designated 'quiet area'. He or she could also help inform all the staff and children about this area and how to use it.
Since Jena likes to read books, Mrs Khan could create a book club, so that children can borrow and read books during break times. There may be more children in the school who would like to spend some of their break times quietly reading a book. They could be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other teachers could help run the book club. Parents and community members could be asked to donate any books or magazines that they no longer need. Or they could be asked to help

<p>encouraged to spend some time each week discussing the books they have read. Jena may be able to make friends among other book-lovers even if they are not in her class.</p>	<p>fundraise to buy some books.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local companies may be able to donate books or magazines, or donate money to buy them. • If there is a public library nearby, the school could develop a partnership with them to ensure children can borrow books for the book club.
<p>Mrs Khan could plan some activities relating to disability awareness, child rights and/or the issues of inclusion and exclusion. She could make this a topic for the term which gets raised in lots of different lessons. This would not be directly related to Jena, but would have the purpose of encouraging children to think more about each other, about what it is like to be excluded, and so on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other teachers may have experience of similar activities that they could share with Mrs Khan. • Adults with disabilities in the community or in local organisations may be able to give presentations or do activities with the class.
<p>Jena doesn't know how to use sign language. Mrs Khan could try to find someone locally who could teach her, and then expand this to become a whole-class activity, so that everyone learns how to sign. Children could be encouraged to use sign language in the playground as a way to communicate when it is too noisy to hear each other speak.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local disability organisation may be able to help. • A local deaf community member may be able to help Jena and the class to start learning basic signs, while Mrs Khan tries to find a more formal sign language teacher.

B

Important theoretical issues to discuss

Activity 8.2 – Children’s voices

🕒 60–90 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To highlight the importance of listening to children’s experiences and opinions as part of the process of making education more inclusive, and to encourage teachers to think about ways to do this.

Present the following:

Teachers spend a lot of time working with and observing children in the classroom, and during organized activities such as sports. However, during break times, children may be left on their own more. This can be good – it gives children time to relax and play without constant supervision or instructions from adults. However, this also means that breaks can be times when teachers are least aware of what is happening. Bad behaviour, bullying, exclusion, etc, can go unnoticed. In Activity 8.1 you were asked to think about what break times are like in your school. But, in fact, the best people to answer this question are the children.

Listening to children’s voices is therefore a vital part of making education more inclusive and responsive to children’s needs. Listening to children’s views is also something that we are compelled to do under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 of the UNCRC says:

“1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the **right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child**, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be **provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child**, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”

Preparations for this activity:

Display three flipcharts with the headings: Why? When? How?

Give participants the following instructions:

- On your own think about these three questions:

- **Why** do we need to listen to children’s voices in relation to education?
- **When** do we need to listen to their opinions?
- **How** can we give children opportunities to express their opinions about education?
- Write each answer onto a separate sticky note or card. Then stick your cards onto the flipcharts under the relevant headings of why, when and how.

After about 20 minutes, go through the answers as a whole group. Fill any gaps or clarify points as necessary.

Possible answers to expect from participants

You can use these sample answers to fill gaps if necessary. Or you could give these answers as a handout.

Why do we need to listen to children’s views on education?

- Children are the main stakeholders in education – they have the right to be listened to on all matters that affect their education and therefore their future.
- As adults, there are lots of things we do not see in school, either because we are not focusing on them or because children are good at hiding them from us (like bullying).
- Everyone experiences education differently, so we cannot assume our own experiences of education are relevant to the children we teach. The children in our school may be experiencing very different home lives, very different problems with learning or with interacting and so on. We need to listen to their interpretation of their lives, interests and challenges in order to respond appropriately.
- We want children to grow up into responsible adults who can take leadership roles in society – an important way to do this is to give them a voice and encourage them to think critically at a young age.
- Children can be more motivated to attend school and work hard if they feel that they have been involved in shaping how the school operates.

When do we need to listen to their views?

- As often as possible!
- We need to listen to their views when there is a specific school improvement project that requires consultation, like designing a new toilet building.
- But we need to listen to them regularly too: e.g. asking for their feedback on lessons, for their ideas for improving the way we teach, for their insights into problems that exist in school, and so on.

How can we listen to their views on education?

- Formally through consultations, focus groups, questionnaires, interviews, student councils, etc.
- Informally, e.g. suggestion boxes, building discussions about opinions into other lesson activities, smiley/sad face charts on the wall, using photography and art projects to encourage self-expression, creating ‘safe spaces’ for

children to talk such as having a school counsellor.

- We need to make sure that the methods we use for listening to children’s views are gender sensitive, age appropriate, and accessible to children with diverse abilities and disabilities.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in pairs.
- Tell your partner about one occasion when you actively sought the opinions of children in your class:
 - Why did you seek their opinions?
 - How did you do it, what methods did you use?
 - What did you find out?
 - How did you, and/or the children, use the information or opinions? What were the results?
 - What would you do differently in future?

After about 20 minutes, invite volunteers to share their examples with the whole group. Make notes on a flipchart of the purposes, methods and results of these examples. Highlight any common points emerging, and also any gaps. For example, are teachers often consulting children about infrastructure issues, like how to make the school safer or more attractive, but rarely asking their opinion about teaching methods or the curriculum?

Optional extension activity – listening to children’s views about break time

🕒 90–120 minutes

Main purpose of this activity:

To help teachers practise listening to children’s opinions on a specific topic.

This activity could be started during the workshop if there is time and if the workshop is happening in the school. Otherwise it can be used as a follow-up activity.

Give the following instructions:

- Recall what you did in Activity 8.1 – the different work spaces focusing on what happens at break time.
- Your task is to facilitate children to think about break times. Ask them to work in small groups to create a large drawing or cartoon which shows their experiences of break time in school. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers. Do not tell the children what they should draw or write – it must

be entirely their own work.

- When the groups have completed their drawings, put them all on the wall together, to create a huge picture.
- Give the children a chance to walk around and look at all the pictures.
- Next, ask the groups of children to think about what changes they want to see, so that break times become more fun, more relaxing, safer, and more inclusive.
- They can present these ideas for changes using whatever method they choose. For instance, they could perform a drama, create a campaign poster, write a letter to the teachers or the government, draw another picture showing the ideal situation, and so on.
- If possible, display the children's work for the whole school to see, including parents.

C Digging deeper into specific issues

You may want to focus on some of the specific issues raised in Programme 8. Key issues are:

- Child protection
- Food and nutrition in school.

Activity 8.3 – Bullying and child protection

 **60–90 minutes**

Main purpose of this activity

To encourage teachers to think about their roles and responsibilities in relation to bullying and abuse, which are key factors in children’s exclusion from education.

Present the following:

All children have the right to be protected from abuse. Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”

Schools, and the staff in schools, therefore have a responsibility to protect children.

Children face bullying in school. This often happens outside the classroom, for instance during break time. Bullying may be physical, verbal or psychological. Children, especially but not exclusively girls, may face sexual harassment or even physical sexual abuse, from peers or even from school staff or members of the public who have access to the school.

When children experience bullying or abuse, there may be a negative impact on their behaviour and on their learning. Teachers are well placed to observe children in class to see if there are changes in behaviour or performance. They can then find out what might be causing this, and take steps to ensure that the child does not become excluded from education as a result of bullying or abuse.

It is important to remember that children may not always realise they are being abused or bullied. They may not know the behaviour against them is wrong or that they have the right to report it and ask for it to stop.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Brainstorm, as a whole group, the sorts of bullying or abusive behaviour that you are aware of in the school, or that you remember happening when you were a child at school.
- Next, brainstorm the 'warning signs' that might signal to us that a child may be experiencing bullying or abuse.

Possible answers to expect from participants

Types of bullying and abusive behaviour

Every school and community is likely to experience different sorts of bullying and abusive behaviour, but the following list may help you kick start the brainstorming if participants need help:

- Name calling and teasing
- Using abusive language, including racist, sexist, disablist, homophobic language
- Hitting, kicking, tripping up
- Chasing or refusing to leave a child alone
- Stealing money or food or demanding money in return for 'protection'
- Breaking a child's property, damaging their books or school work
- Encouraging others to tease, abuse or ignore the child
- Telling nasty jokes about the child, laughing about them with other children
- Using social media to tease, bully or sexually harass a child
- Sexual harassment, including making personal, sexually motivated remarks
- Sexual contact, touching, rape.

Reactions to bullying and abuse

Every child reacts differently to bullying and abuse, so there are no guaranteed warning signs to look for. However, the following may cause you to feel concerned and try to find out more:

- You see the child crying, and not just once.
- The child is becoming angry more often or more quickly than usual.
- The child is fighting or shows signs of having been involved in fights or shows signs of physical injury.
- The child is late for lessons or absent.
- The child is shy or withdrawn, or becoming more shy or withdrawn than usual.
- The child seems distracted and does not concentrate in lessons or complete homework.

Give the following instructions:

- Work in small groups.
- Create a mind map. In the centre of the mind map will be a box that says: “preventing bullying and abuse in school”.
- Leading from this central box, create a box for each of the types of bullying you listed in your brainstorm.
- Then think about what you could do to prevent – or help prevent – each type of bullying and abuse. Write these ideas onto the mind map. Some of your proposed actions will help prevent more than one type of bullying or abuse, so you can draw lines to show this.

Possible answers to expect from participants

Each group will come up with different solutions, based on the list of bullying and abuse they brainstormed, and what they feel they can feasibly do. However, the following ideas may help you fill gaps or give participants ideas if they are struggling.

Ways to prevent bullying and abuse in school:

- Discuss bullying, abuse, sexual abuse and child rights as a topic during lessons and whole-school assemblies.
- Run special events for children, parents and staff where child rights are discussed, and bullying/abuse can be one of the topics covered.
- Create a confidential reporting mechanism so that children feel safe to report incidents and seek help.
- Create a mechanism so that adults can report if they suspect abuse is being committed by teachers, school staff or parents.
- Develop an anti-bullying / child protection policy or code of conduct for the school. Make sure children, staff and parents are involved in creating it, and that they all know about it when it is published. You may need to create an easy-to-read and child-friendly version. The policy should have a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and abuse.
- Lead by setting a good example – staff must ensure they do not use corporal punishment (hitting, physical punishments), verbal abuse, or sexist, racist, disablist or homophobic language.
- Create positive, friendly environments inside and outside class.
- Work with parents to ensure they are on board with a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. They need to support their child if s/he is being bullied or abused, and they need to be prepared to support the school in disciplining their child if s/he is the bully or abuser.

Activity 8.4 – Food and nutrition in school

🕒 60 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To encourage teachers to reflect on children's basic food and nutrition related needs, which can have a big impact on their inclusion in education.

Present the following:

Many children experience digestive and dietary problems. These problems are often dismissed as being unimportant, or the children or their parents are accused of being fussy, or the school considers it to be an issue entirely for the parents to deal with. However, this is far from true. For some children, what they eat and when they eat can even be a life-or-death matter. The way a school responds to digestive and dietary needs, and the arrangements that are in place for lunch time or eating during other breaks, can determine whether a child feels welcome and safe in school.

Give participants the following instructions

- Work in small groups.
- Each group should take one card from Handout 8b. The cards give examples of digestive and dietary problems that children face.
- Stick your chosen card to the top of a piece of paper.
- On the paper create two columns: how might this condition affect the child's inclusion in education; what could we do about it?

Give participants 20–30 minutes to discuss and write their answers. Then ask them to swap their paper with another group. They should look at each other's answers for 5–10 minutes then come together to discuss.

Possible answers to expect from participants

How do digestive/dietary problems affect inclusion in education?

- Some children need to eat at very specific times – this may not match the break/lunch times in the school timetable. If the school is not flexible, they may choose to stay home or their parents may keep them at home.
- Some children may get very ill if they are unable to stick to the correct foods or times to eat. They can miss lots of days of school as a result.
- Some children may be regularly unwell as a result of their condition – they may still attend school but struggle to learn and participate.
- Children may miss out on sport or extra-curricular activities, especially after school, if these clash with evening meal times.

What can we do about it?

- With all of the digestive and dietary problems, the first thing we can do is talk to the child and parents to find out as much as we can about the child's needs. We can work with them to create a plan so that the child is able to eat the correct food at the right time and with the right support.
- We can work with the school managers to find a timetabling solution to help the child eat at the correct times. This might include adjusting which 'lunch shift' the child or his/her whole class attend or giving the child permission to finish class early to eat at the correct time.
- We can ensure that every staff member knows about the child's condition and understands how important it is that s/he sticks rigidly to the dietary regime.
- We can create a simple system so that the child is able to leave the classroom whenever they need to eat, take medication or use the toilet. For instance, some schools ask the child to hold up a small coloured card which signals "I need to leave the room now". The child does not have to ask permission or draw attention to themselves, they just discretely leave and then return when they are ready.
- We can ensure that the child has a buddy who can help carry their food or help cut up the food and so on. This buddy can also be trained how to seek adult help if their friend is having difficulties (e.g. if they feel ill or start to choke on the food).
- We can make sure our school has a policy, so that we are all committed to supporting children who have digestive and dietary needs.

Give participants the following instructions

- Work in the same groups and discuss the following:
- Do you know any children in your class/school who have dietary or digestive problems?
- What arrangements are already made to accommodate their needs?
- What else do you think could be done, based on today's discussions?
- How could you find out if there are any children who experience problems at lunch time or who may need more help at lunch time.

Invite the groups to share their thoughts with everyone.

Programme 8 transcript

Break times

Break times are very important for everyone in inclusive education – both children and teachers.

At break time, children have a chance to rest and relax after concentrating in class...

...or it can be a chance to burn off energy after sitting still in class.

Break time is an opportunity for teachers to rest or to prepare their plan and materials for the next lesson.

For children who have chores to do at home, break time at school may be their only chance to play.

Break time is also important for making friends and building social skills.

Unfortunately, break time is not always fun and positive for all children.

It can be a time when they face bullying, harassment or exclusion.

What can you do?

You can make sure an adult or responsible older student supervises break time.

They can watch out for bullying, or be available if a child wants to report bullying.

You can encourage children to play together, and to include each other.

You could work with staff, parents and children to develop an anti-bullying policy for the school.

In class you could discuss bullying.

You could perhaps have a debate about it or make up some class rules about bullying.

Lunch time

No one can concentrate or learn properly if they are hungry or thirsty.

Inclusive schools ensure that children eat and drink during the day.

What can you do?

You may be able to work with colleagues, parents, or local organisations to ensure the school provides free lunch for children who need it.

Some children have dietary needs linked to medical conditions.

They may need to eat at specific times or eat carefully controlled types or amounts of food.

You can talk to children and their parents about these needs and how to accommodate them at lunch time.

Some children may need help with collecting or carrying their food.

Or they may need assistance with cutting up food or eating.

Handout 8a

Jena's case story

Jena is 10 years old and has difficulty hearing. She has been to the local clinic and was told there is no medical intervention that can help improve her hearing.

In her primary school class, her teacher, Mrs Khan, has taken various steps to help Jena be more included. She is allowed to sit in whichever seat enables her to hear and lipread the teacher better. Jena's seating position changes sometimes, depending on how much other noise there is in the school, or whether she needs to see more light on Mrs Khan's face and lips.

Mrs Khan has used other techniques to help Jena join in lessons. For example:

- Mrs Khan writes clear notes on the board to summarise everything she has said.
- In each lesson, Jena is paired with someone who writes notes for her. These buddies are different in each lesson; one child volunteered to help Jena with maths, another child volunteered to help with science, and so on.
- Mrs Khan uses lots of drawings and objects in every lesson. In fact, one child in class, Peter, is a talented artist and he sometimes draws pictures or cartoons on the board when Mrs Khan is speaking. These pictures help Jena to follow the lesson better, and they help a few other children who struggle to understand. Mrs Khan has even noticed that Peter's behaviour has improved – he no longer fidgets and disrupts lessons because now he has to think quickly and draw when the teacher is speaking.

Jena is doing really well in lessons, but Mrs Khan has noticed that she sits alone every break time. Often she sits under a tree on the edge of the playground and reads a book. Even the children who help her in class are not playing with her. Mrs Khan is worried and disappointed – she thought the peer support activities in class would help Jena make friends outside class. She knows she needs to think of some other ways to help Jena participate outside class and improve her interaction and communication skills beyond those needed for academic achievement in class.

- What could Mrs Khan do to help Jena be more included in activities outside class?
- How could she help Jena improve her communication skills and confidence in non-academic situations?
- Who could Mrs Khan talk to for advice and ideas?

Handout 8b

<p>Child has diabetes and needs to carefully control their blood sugar levels</p>	<p>Child has a problem with stomach, intestines or bowel. They may have to eat a limited range of foods or very small meals more often during the day</p>
<p>Child has an intolerance or allergic reaction to certain foods (e.g. nuts, wheat, dairy products)</p>	<p>Child has a mobility impairment that makes it difficult to feed him/herself without assistance</p>
<p>Child has a health condition that requires medication. They need to eat at specific times before or after taking medication</p>	<p>Child has a health condition or impairment which means they cannot chew or swallow certain foods. For example, they may only be able to eat soft foods</p>