

## How does Circle of Friends help?

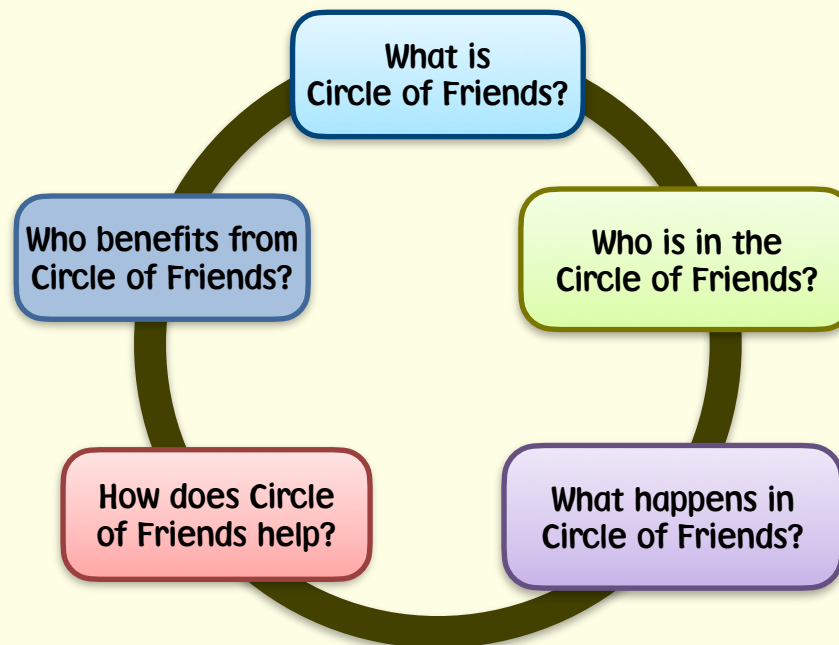
- ✦ Develops the language skills necessary to explore, define and problem solve the behaviour.
- ✦ Develops empathy.
- ✦ It builds a sense of community and encourages each person to recognise that they can play an active part.
- ✦ The focussed child understands that they have the support of others.

## Who benefits from Circle of Friends?

- ✦ The 'Circle of Friends' approach is about meeting the needs of the focus child. However, all participants can directly benefit in terms of their own skills and attributes.
- ✦ Improving the situation for the focus child has benefits for the whole class and the wider school community. Some of these benefits may also transfer to the home environment.
- ✦ Participation in 'Circle of Friends' will give the focus child an opportunity to develop their social behaviours and improve relationships.



# Circle of Friends



## A quick guide to Circle of Friends





## What is Circle of Friends?

- ✦ 'Circle of Friends' is a way of supporting a vulnerable child through the organised support of their peers.
- ✦ It is effective for children who struggle with friendships as well as those with more complex behaviour, emotional and social needs and/or autistic spectrum.
- ✦ It is based on voluntary participation by the vulnerable child and their supporting peers.
- ✦ The 'circle of friends' meet each week to set and review targets and strategies.

## Who is in the Circle of Friends?

- ✦ With the agreement of the focus child and their parents a meeting is set up including all members of the class or form.
- ✦ This meeting is led by the class teacher/form tutor and the member of staff who will facilitate the 'Circle of Friends' during the term.
- ✦ The focus child is not present at this meeting which generally last 45-60 minutes.
- ✦ The difficulties experienced by the focus child will be explored through an open discussion and at the end volunteers will be asked to commit to being part of the 'Circle of Friends'.

- ✦ The class teacher/form tutor will select from all the volunteers a balanced group of about 6-8 peers to be part of the 'Circle of Friends'.
- ✦ The parents of the volunteers are informed.

## What happens in Circle of Friends?

- ✦ The 'Circle of Friends', the focus child and the facilitator meet each week for about 20-30 minutes. This is often done during a break-time.
- ✦ Issues are discussed and ways of supporting the focus child achieve targets are agreed.
- ✦ The facilitator's role is to help with the organisation of the meeting and to provide guidance to the group. They should encourage open and frank exploration of issues but intervene if a topic becomes too challenging for any of the participants.
- ✦ Minutes are recorded for each meeting and these are shared with the whole class or form.

## How does Circle of Friends help?

- ✦ It encourages open discussion of problems.
- ✦ It enlists the support of peers in finding solutions.
- ✦ Raises the focus child's awareness of their behaviour and how it impacts on others.