Pillar 1. Establishing secure relationships

Key points

- Secure relationships are very important because without them, the most effective learning cannot take place.
- Secure relationships with and between children are nurturing and are characterised by
  - warmth,
  - affection,
  - trust,
  - mutual respect, and
  - appropriate boundaries.
- Encourage children to develop positive social relationships with one another, to respect one another at all times, and to work and play cooperatively whenever possible.
- Encourage children to recognise, label and express emotions appropriately.
- Get to know individual children, their families and friends where possible, and talk about them with the children frequently.
- Where possible, draw parents into the life of the classroom and involve them in their child’s learning.
- Train your classroom assistant in establishing and maintaining good relationships.

QLI indicators of success

- **Well-being**: Children appear happy and healthy. Laughter can be heard and smiles seen.
- **Social interaction**: Children play and work well together, are usually at ease with the teacher and are not unduly nervous when strange adults appear in the classroom. Children comfort those who are upset.
- **Respect**: Children are polite and considerate in their dealings with others.
The teacher, Mrs Davis, takes her break with the children. She calls it her café society and sees it as an opportunity to further develop relationships and oral language work with a class of children many of whom have come to school with poor language skills. The children fetch their own break and take it to their seat. One girl, Jemima, immediately claims to have a healthy break. She does not put up her hand before she speaks. Mrs Davis asks Jemima to say what she has to eat and drink. Jemima names flavoured water, an apple and a cheese portion. Another boy chimes in that he has a healthy break too and names the contents of his box. Children now vie with each other to claim healthy eating habits. One boy, George, is accused of having a fizzy drink, against school rules. Mrs Davis asks him in a conversational tone whether that is true. When George acknowledges it, she remonstrates but more in the manner of a peer than a teacher. Meanwhile three boys at another table are talking about football and ignoring this conversation entirely. The main conversation changes direction when one girl says her mummy is expecting a baby next week. Mrs Davis says that she knows that and takes a genuine interest in the expected event, asking a number of pertinent questions. Then she turns to another girl and says, “Your sister is going to have a baby too, isn’t she?” The two girls launch into excited comparisons of...
The teacher, Mrs McShane, is helping a boy spell out a word with magnetic letters on a tray. Another boy approaches with a book of Bible stories, looking for some attention from the teacher. Without changing her orientation away from the first child, Mrs McShane warmly draws the second child in and integrates the book into the letter activity. She asks them playfully if they can identify certain letters in the book and then, possibly seeing their interest flag after doing this a few times, enters into a 3-way discussion with them about some of the stories. The children contribute as much to the discussion as the teacher does. The children decide to illustrate one of the stories and Mrs McShane moves on to another group.

By her body language, the teacher politely indicates that she is still involved with the first child and avoids competition for her attention by making the task a shared one.

The teacher is sensitive to the loss of engagement and allows a change of direction.

When possible, the teacher facilitates the discussion rather than leading it.

The child feels confident about approaching the teacher.

On other occasions, she is happy to ask the interrupting child politely to wait until she is finished with the first. It depends on the circumstances.

Seeing them involved in an activity they can undertake independently, the teacher lets them carry on alone.