Relationships – why are they important?

I have thought long and hard about why I feel relationships in schools are so important and when I dug deep I began to realise they feed everything else that helps us to feel safe, trust and security. From relationships we find ourselves, learning about others and valuing our position in the world and how powerful we are working together.

Togetherness. Does this mean just doing things together? Well, yes and no! To just be working ‘alongside’ others does not feed their needs nor ours. I think we begin by doing that as 2 year olds do in nursery, but we need to then move on to learning about each other, being part of what is happening, playing a vital role within the activity, thus leading to the realisation that by all playing a vital role, it is more successful, more satisfying and builds a feeling of safety and trust. New friendships are formed during this play in nursery and then we no longer say they are playing ‘alongside’ each other but ‘with’ each other. To have an observer suggests there is a lack of trust in the activity, so it is important everyone has a role to play, a key role, a purpose.

So, what does that look like? It might mean when the children are getting muddy in forest school then so is the teacher, when the children make mistakes in Maths, then so do we, when children laugh at themselves, we do to! The children soon learn that we are all human, all fallible, all learning but that the teachers have a wealth of knowledge they can learn from, past experiences they can learn from and they begin to value what the teacher can offer them. There is a new found respect, value of people and their skills and togetherness.

Equality in its trueness can also create a space of tolerance, safety, respect and understanding. Not only do we look at equality in the world for all but also for ourselves. Children can build strength from this, confidence and belief in themselves as well as others. Having this ethos encourages children to value each other, share with each other, see strength in mixed skills and allow themselves to feel comfortable with what they can offer the world, society or even just the group work in class. The new found confidence here can allow groups or individuals to face challenges alone and together, see each other’s vulnerabilities and strengths which inevitably creates an environment of security and trust.

Trust. It is what we all crave. Children want to trust each other to make friends. They want to trust the teacher so they feel valued and safe. They want to have enough confidence to trust themselves to make good decisions. We have all heard the phrase when discussing marriage ‘if there’s no trust, there’s nothing’. We are learning how to have that perfect marriage, we are learning how to live with others, learn from others, learn about ourselves and at the heart of that is Trust.

So why Relationships? Well, they create happy, healthy, confident, collaborative, trusting, secure young people who believe they are valued, who value others and with friends will change the world to make it a better place. Why wouldn’t you teach about relationships?

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