

Children's Exploratory Drawings (CEDs) Guidance



By Cleo Timney & Abi Cohman, 2020

What are the Children's Exploratory Drawings?

This resource uses personal construct psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955) to elicit and gather a child or young person's views about themselves and the world around them. In his theory of PCP, Kelly proposed that individuals create "constructs" as ways of making sense of the world and making predictions about it. Some constructs are more "core" than others, in the sense that they are more fundamental to how we organise and make sense of our experiences. PCP allows individuals to explore those constructs in order to help understand another person's, or one's own behaviour. During information gathering or consultation work, it is often useful to explore these core constructs with a young person in order to help us generate both within-child and systemic hypotheses around situations they face (Beaver, 2011). The *view of self* encompasses both self-image (how a young person thinks they are) and self-esteem (how they feel about the person they think they are) (Moran, 2014). The *view of the world* describes how a young person believes the world around them to be, how it operates and how they fit within this world (Beaver, 2011). These two concepts have been linked by a large body of literature both to one another and to mental health and wellbeing. Positive self-image and view of the world is associated with good mental health and high wellbeing and, conversely, poor self-image and view of the world is associated with poor mental health, low wellbeing and destructive or harmful behaviours (Thomas et al., 2011). Educational psychologists and other helping professionals working with young people may first need to elicit information around these core concepts in order to begin helping the young person to experience positive changes to them. Core constructs might not be consciously available to an individual and might not be easily represented by a young person through language. It can be useful, therefore, to use a projective resource around which to structure and prompt conversation and ask exploratory questions.

The Children's Exploratory Drawings (CEDs) are a series of simplistic drawings of common school scenes, which translate common school experiences that most young people will have had into a visual resource. They may be useful for exploring how a young person thinks about their life at school, themselves as a member of the school community and the other members of that community. The use of visual information means they are appropriate for use with young people of a wide range of ages and communication abilities. Although the settings and scenarios depicted aim to be universally recognisable by school-aged children and adults, and are unambiguous in this regard, the projected narrative of the scene is open to interpretation. The figures within the drawings are intended to be void of obvious gender, ethnicity, age or other such personal characteristics. Facial expressions are excluded, and body language is relatively neutral. Each scene allows multiple interpretations, so that the young person can create a story, and give the figures thoughts, motives and feelings that allow them to express or explore their own internal representations and core constructs around school (Stanczak, 2007). If a child finds it difficult to talk about themselves and their experiences the images can be used to talk through metaphor and indirect questioning. Metaphor can allow children to discuss situations, draw parallels with their own life and promote coping and problem solving, whilst reducing worry of feeling judged (O'Connor, Schaefer & Braverman, 2015). Using the drawings to explore core constructs with a young person can allow professionals to gain a better understanding of the young person's world whilst facilitating meaningful interaction and acting as an intervention in itself.

The Children's Exploratory Drawings is a resource created by Cleo Timney and Abi Cohman, Trainee Educational Psychologists at the University of Southampton and in collaboration with Tim Cooke, Academic and Professional Tutor at the University of Southampton. The drawings were created by John Timney. This resource is designed for use by Child and Educational Psychologists.

If you use this resource in your practice, please reference it appropriately:

Timney, C. J. & Cohman, A. R. (2020). *Children's Exploratory Drawings*.

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References and further reading

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Ways you can use the Children's Exploratory Drawings

Considerations

- Establishing context, rapport, and safety
 - The initial stages of any work with children require some rapport building and establishing of context. It will be important for you to discuss your role and the reasons for your completion of this activity with the young person prior to the activity. It should be made clear that the young person is not required to answer anything they do not wish to and that they can ask to stop at any time.
- Enjoyment
 - There are no right or wrong answers when talking about the Children's Exploratory Drawings, so the conversation should not be arduous or overly challenging. If the young person does not appear to enjoy the task, the user should consider adapting or ceasing the activity. You should acknowledge and respect everything the young person says whilst avoiding judgement.
- Appropriateness
 - Although the Children's Exploratory Drawings have been designed for use by a wide age range, it is important for you to be cognisant of the communication needs of the young person with whom you are using it. It is important to be aware that additional communication needs may influence the descriptions given by young people. Confirming meaning with young people, repeating what they have said, or asking simpler questions may be helpful.
- Ending the session
 - It is likely that using this resource will provoke discussion and openness between you and the young person. This may have been difficult for the child or brought feelings to the surface, so it is important that the session is ended in a positive way and that the young person is informed about the next steps for your involvement.

Conversation prompts

Use of Children's Exploratory Drawings as a conversation prompt:

- You can select a drawing for discussion, or the young person can be given a choice of a smaller array of drawings to talk about
- You can explore self-image and constructs using appropriately timed and constructed questions
- You can use the drawing flexibly, allowing child-led discussion
- You can allow children who rely on use non-verbal communication to use the drawings by pointing or selecting images and annotating with pens/pencils

Story prompts

Use of Children's Exploratory Drawings as prompts for the young person to produce a story

- The young person can select from a range of images to tell a story about
- The young person can name the character/characters
- The young person can dictate while the you note or record their speech while child dictates – this can be a summary of what the child has said. This should be read back to the child to allow them to confirm you have maintained their meaning.
- You can explore self-image and constructs using appropriately timed and constructed questions
- You can create a second story with the young person, focussing on the same image. This can be used to explore alternative realities and possibilities.
- You can give the resulting story to the young person to keep after the session is concluded



Questions and prompts that might be useful when using the Children's Exploratory Drawings

Level 1: Describing

1. Tell me about the images here
2. Tell me about the image you chose/the image in front of you
3. What do you think is happening?
4. What made you choose this image?
5. What do you think they are thinking?
6. What do you think might happen before this?
7. What do you think might happen next?

Level 2: Exploring

After an initial description is given by the young person, this can be further explored using exploratory questioning (as outlined in Beaver, 2011):

1. Implies: finding out what is implied by the description
 - a. What else can you tell me about someone/something like that?
 - b. What does that mean to you?
2. Opposite: finding out what is excluded by the description
 - a. How would you describe someone/something that is not like that?
 - b. What sort of person would not say/do that?
3. Importance:
 - a. What is important for you about that?
 - b. How important is that for you?
 - c. What sort of person would find that important/not important?
4. Behaviour
 - a. What sort of person would do/say that?
 - b. How can you tell they are that sort of person?
 - c. How can you tell that is what that person is doing/saying?

Exploratory questions around feelings and emotions can also be helpful:

1. How does that person feel?
2. Why do they feel that way?
3. How could they feel differently?
4. Someone in this picture is upset/angry/worried/etc., who do you think it might be and why might they feel this way?

Level 3: Bridging

This involves taking the concepts described and exploring their meaning within the life of the young person. These questions should be approached sensitively in order that the young person should not find the questioning intrusive.

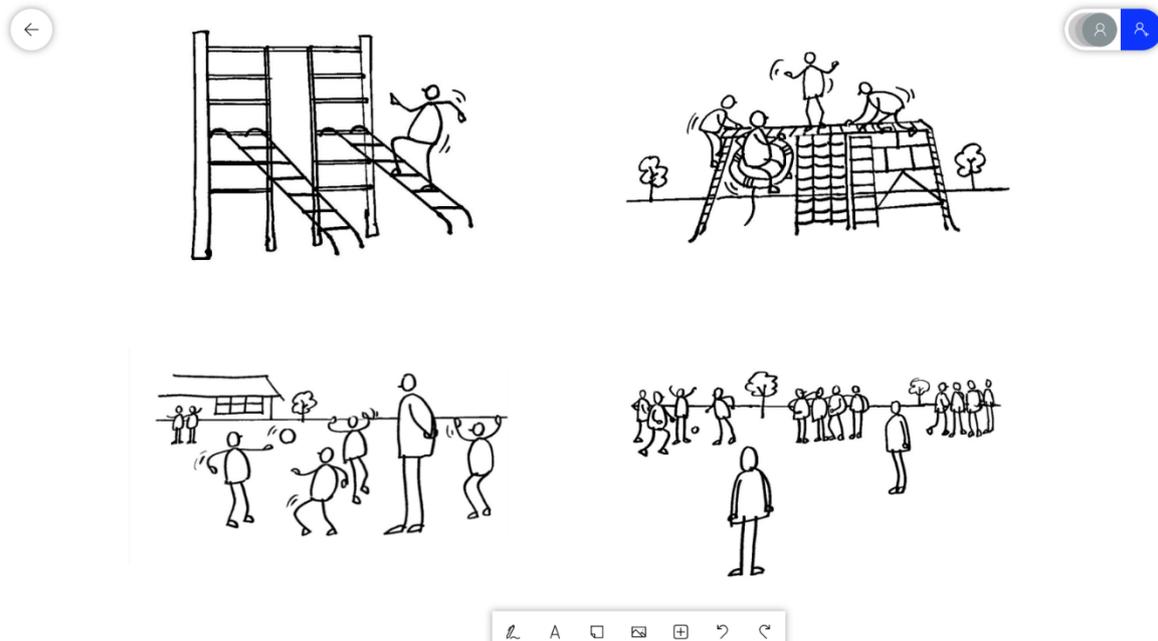
1. Which figure is most like you?
2. Which figure is most like your best friend/sibling/etc?
3. Which figure would [someone in your family/school] say is most like you?
4. Which figure would you most like to be like?
5. Which figure are you like on a good day/in a good mood?
6. Which figure are you like on a bad day/in a bad mood?
7. Can you think of/tell me a time that you might have experienced/felt like/done that?
8. Tell me about times when you might feel like that



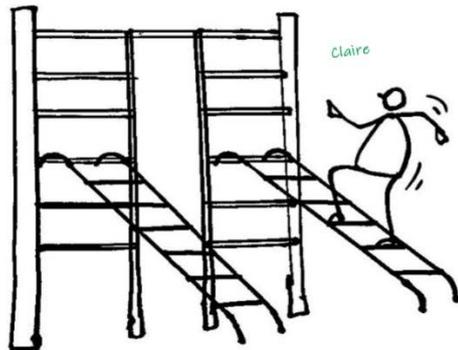
Using Children's Exploratory Drawings Virtually via video conferencing software

Using Microsoft Whiteboard (user download may be required)

- You will need to prepare your Whiteboard ahead of the video call with the young person. You can select, add and arrange an array of up to eight, Children's Exploratory Drawings you would like to talk about with the young person (see below for example).



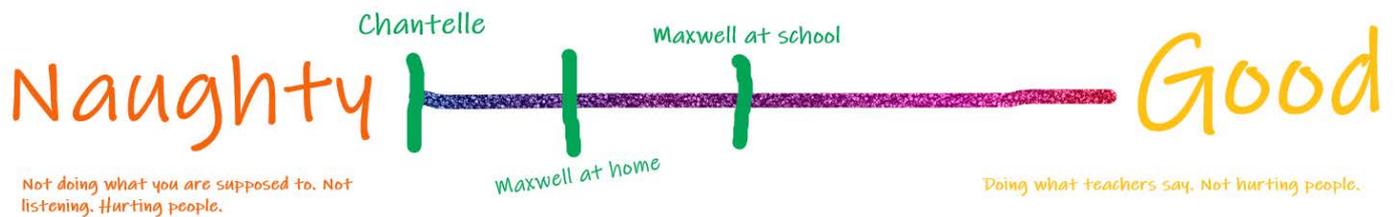
- During the video call, you can share your screen  (ensuring to select Whiteboard) so that the young person can see your Whiteboard.
- You can move the images around, resize them, annotate them, highlight sections and more. When the young person has chosen a single drawing to talk about, you can enlarge this drawing and/or move the others out of view. The story or description given by the young person can be typed directly onto the Whiteboard and names can be added to the figures in the drawing (see below for example).



Maxwell's Story
Claire has run away from her classroom and she's playing on there and she's not suppose to be on there. She is being naughty.

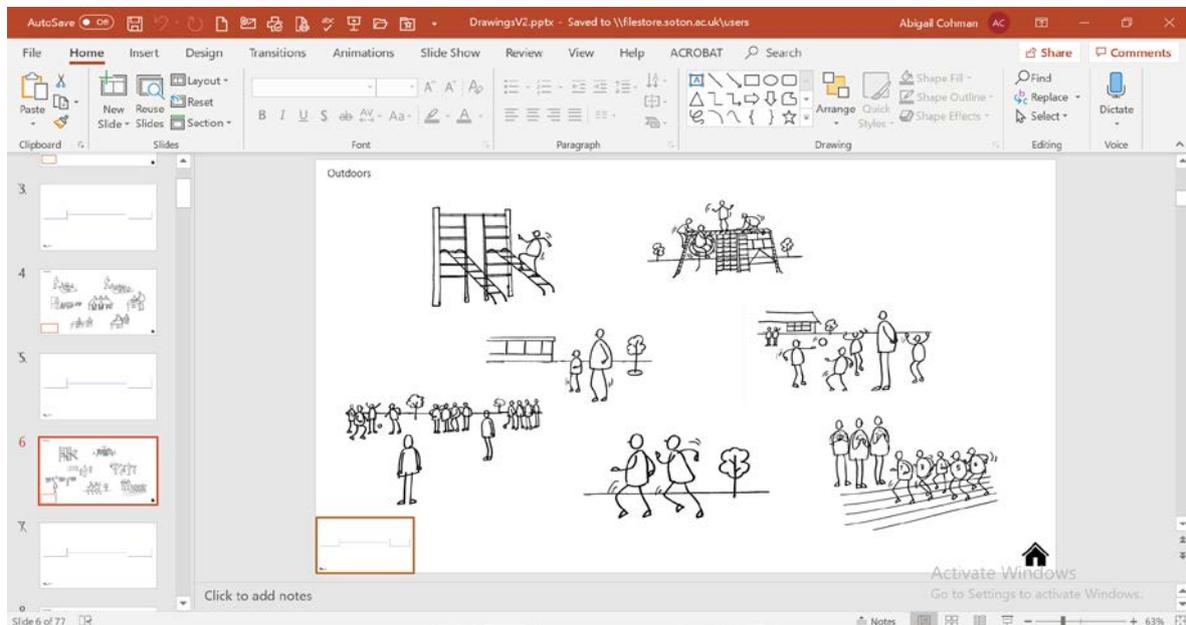


- The professional may then elaborate on the work by employing other PCP techniques, such as, Salmon Lines and Pyramid & Laddering (Beaver, 2011). In the below example, a Salmon Line technique was used to explore the young person's use of the construct "naughty".



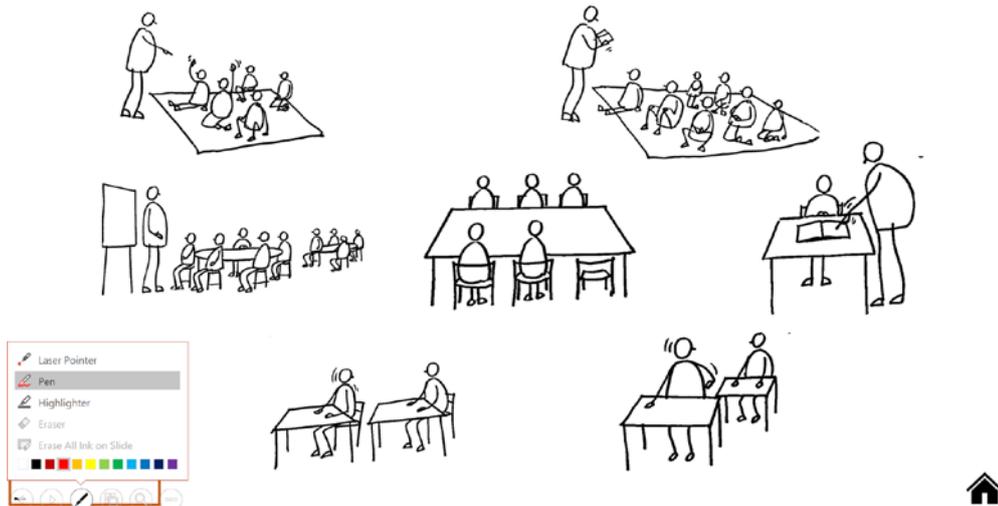
Using Microsoft PowerPoint

- You should open the Children's Exploratory Drawings PowerPoint file ahead of the video call with the young person. Before the meeting you can select which slide you would like to share with the young person depending on the area to be discussed. The chosen slide should be visible on screen before starting the call.
- It is suggested that you familiarise yourself with the functions before using the tool with young people.

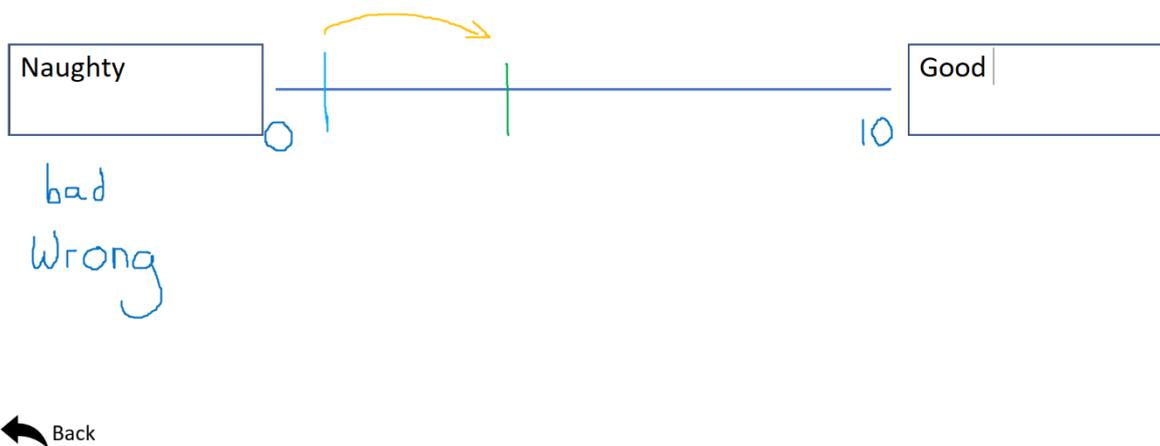


- During the video call, you can share your screen , selecting the Children's Exploratory Drawings PowerPoint under the **Desktop** **Window** **PowerPoint** (you may be required to scroll down to find the correct window). The young person should now be able to see the whole window. In order to view the PowerPoint full screen and use its functions press the slide show button within PowerPoint (bottom right).
- You can discuss the images with the young person and can also use the pen function available on all slides if you wish to draw, add words or circle images. The right arrow key on your computer keyboard can be used at any time to move to the next slide.

Classroom

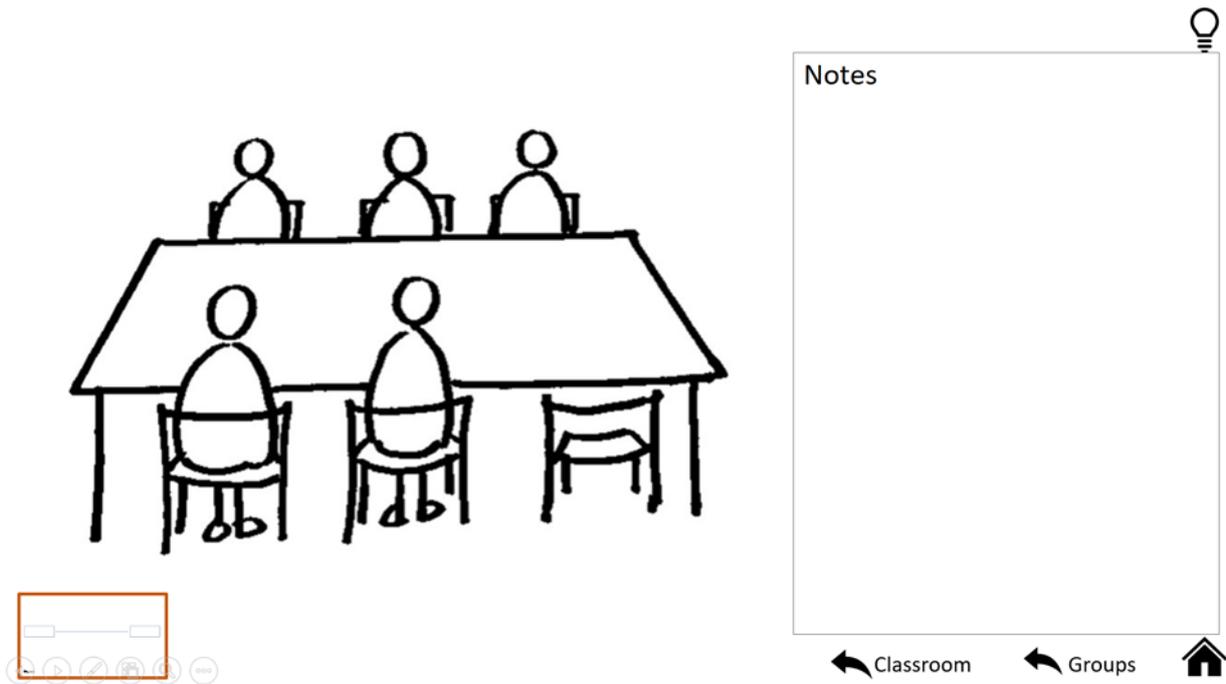


- The bottom left of each slide has a small rectangle, clicking this will take you to a salmon line which can be completed for a key word. You can also employ other PCP techniques by using the pen function, such as Pyramid & Laddering (Beaver, 2011). Clicking the back button in the bottom left corner will allow you to return to your chosen images. The left arrow on your keyboard can also be used to move back a slide.

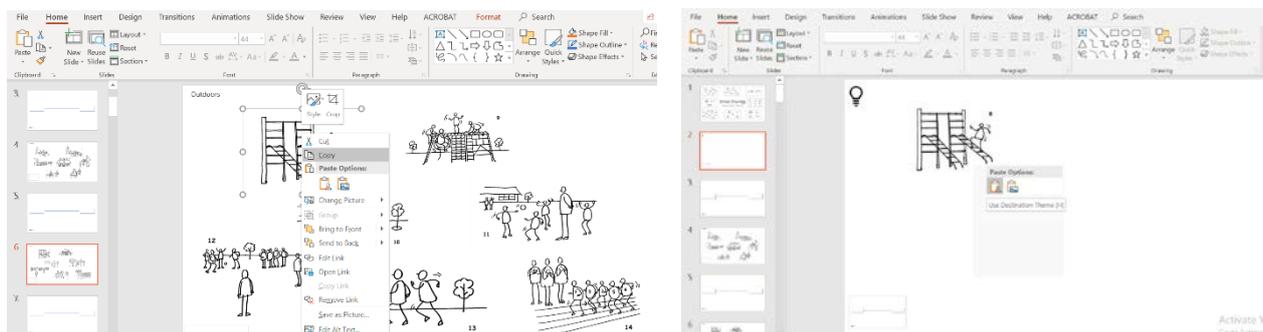


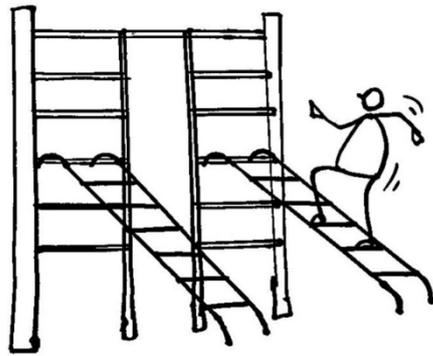
- Selecting an image from your main page will take you to a separate slide and allow for more in depth discussion of that particular image. You can add text to make notes of key phrases or discussion, you can also use this area to write down stories for images. Text can only be typed in the available text boxes so where these are not available the pen will need to be used for notes.





- The back buttons will return you to sets of Children's Exploratory Drawings where you can then select another drawing if desired. The home button will return you to the main page (slide 1), from here you can navigate to other sets.
- To exit the PowerPoint, you can press Esc on your keyboard or use ... → end show. If you have used the pen function you should be prompted to keep/discard your drawings. Discarded drawings cannot be recovered. Text within text boxes should remain visible but can only be edited by re-entering slide show mode.
- If none of the sets are suitable you can create your own by right clicking, copying and pasting images onto the blank page on slide 2. Images copied from within other sets within the PowerPoint will retain links to individual image slides. From individual slides you can return to your created set by clicking the light bulb icon in the top right corner.





A digital interface element. At the top right is a lightbulb icon inside a red circle. Below it is a large rectangular area labeled 'Notes'. At the bottom left is a back arrow icon with the text 'Outdoors'. At the bottom right is a home icon. In the bottom center, there is a small text prompt: 'Activate Windows Go to Settings to activate Windows'.



Case Example 1 - *Please note all names have been pseudonymised and identifying information has been removed*

Finley's Stories



This is a story about a teacher and a child. The child is trying to focus and the teacher wants him to read more.

The child is having trouble spelling the word, "space", so, the teacher is pointing to the words and correcting them and helping them to spell it.

The boy was feeling kind of ok but is starting to feel great because he is learning new things and learning all about space. He is feeling smart.

The boy at the back is distracting the boy at the front.

The boy at the front wants to focus on the teacher and learn. The boy at the back is bored, doesn't like learning and wants some attention.

The boy at the front asks the boy at the back to stop talking to him. He is feeling annoyed.

The boy at the back got sent to another class to learn.



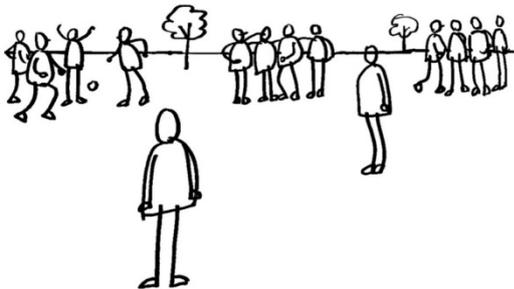
Case Example 2 - Please note all names have been pseudonymised and identifying information has been removed

Lance was sat at the table and he had 3 legs, he felt really sad because people are always bullying him about his 3 legs. He is reading Harry Potter which makes him feel happy!



Lance has stood up to the bullies, he thought he was always going to be bullied and he couldn't be bothered with it anymore so he went up to them and shouted at them – he was very brave! They sat there in shock.

Steve – an enemy/bully



Steve got left out because Lance told everyone that he was bullying him! Lance is in the middle with all his mates, his best friends! Steve is feeling sad and lonely (which he should be), everyone else is feeling happy!



Mrs Smith was teaching Steve and his classmates that it is not nice to bully. Jeff is at the back, she is telling the whole class "if there is any more bullying, you will get a detention!". Everyone, including Steve, was very shocked that their teacher knew about it!