Neena's school uniform

Divya Jindal-Snape

with contributions from

Anjini Snape and Nik Snape

Illustrator Johanne Cameron
Information for parents/teachers

Objectives:
- To explore children’s views about school uniform
- To rehearse in a safe environment the possible actions in response to others’ behaviour
- To discuss possible consequences of their actions
- To explore positive ways of discussing concerns

What’s this story about?
This story is based on research with children moving to primary school. Children’s worries revolve around making friends, knowing the difference in rules of the primary school compared to the pre-school setting, adults expecting them to be independent and dealing with different behaviours according to the context they find themselves in. This one focusses on the introduction of a uniform to other changes when moving to school. Some children are unsure of the reasons for wearing school uniform and can sometimes feel it is something that has been imposed upon them without a clear reason. Others can worry about standing out as different or due to the financial circumstances of their family.

Talk together
Use the story to discuss the different responses that the child/ren might have to a scenario. Involve them in the story by asking what they might do in a similar situation. Provide opportunities of talking through their reaction to the situation and potential consequences.

Read the story
You can read the story with one child or a group of children. Children could also use role play to understand different perspectives.

Play a game
You can play a game with them using the story. For example, you can ask them to spot things in the pictures, such as children wearing uniform, playground, etc. You can go to a primary school and compare. The play could be around emotions and how the expressions might reflect the emotions.

Other ideas
You could do research on what schools are around your area, colours of uniform, how old the children are when they start school in other countries, pictures of children going to school, etc.
Sophie: “It’s not fair that Neena is allowed to come in a black jumper and I have to wear a blue one!”

Chris: “She might get into trouble as we are meant to wear blue jumpers.”

Sophie: “I used to like wearing what I wanted at nursery. I could wear my favourite colours then.”

Angela: “I like the school uniform. It makes me feel all grown up and a proper school girl.”
Chris: “It also shows that I study at Goodwin School and I really like that.”

Sophie: “We should tell on Neena! It is not fair that she is not getting into trouble for this.”

Angela: “Or we could talk with her?”

Chris: “I don’t know. Should we really say anything to her? We don’t really know her.”

Sophie runs over to Neena with others following her.

Sophie: “Why don’t you wear the school jumper?”

Neena: “Because I don’t want to.”

Sophie: “That’s not fair! Why not? I don’t want to either but I am wearing it. That’s wrong.”

Neena: “I don’t care!”
Why do you think Neena might be wearing a black jumper to school?

1. Her mum can’t afford the school jumper- go to page 4
2. She doesn’t know what the uniform is- go to page 6
3. The uniform has not been washed and that is all she had- go to page 7

4. Create your own: Imagine you are Neena. What might be the reason for not wearing the uniform? What would you have done if Sophie had asked you that question?
Neena walks away, looking very upset. Chris follows her.

Chris: “Neena why are you crying? What’s the matter?”

Neena: “Nothing…”

Chris: “Come on Neena, let’s be friends. You can tell me.”

Neena: “Sophie…she…she was being nasty asking why I wasn’t wearing the school jumper.”

Chris: “Why is that nasty? You know we are all meant to wear the uniform.”

Neena: “Yes but my mum doesn’t have enough money to buy a school jumper. It costs a lot of money because we’ll have to go to the school shop”

Chris: “Why didn’t you tell Sophie?”

Neena: “I thought she will laugh at me.”

Chris: “Don’t be silly. Why would anybody laugh about that?”

Neena: “I don’t know! She might tell everybody that we can’t afford a jumper.”
Angela has heard the conversation and comes to speak with Neena and Chris.

Angela: “How come you can afford a black jumper then?”

Neena (looks embarrassed): “Well...my mum got it from a charity shop.”

Chris: “I see. You shouldn’t feel bad about that Neena. My mum gets some nice dresses from the charity shop.”
2. She doesn’t know what the uniform is

Angela: “Neena why are you saying you don’t care?”

Neena: “Because I don’t!”

Angela: “Are you sure that is the only reason Neena?”

Neena bursts into tears: “No. It’s because...well...I am new here and I didn’t know what the uniform is.”

Angela: “Why didn’t you say so?”

Neena: “I was scared to say that. I thought others will laugh at me for not knowing anything.”

Angela: “We wouldn’t do that. We’ve just started school and everything is new for all of us Neena.”

Neena: “I know but I don’t like not knowing everything. I used to know everything in the nursery.”

Angela: “That’s okay. We all have to learn new things. It’s good fun.”

Go to page 9.
3. The uniform has not been washed and that is all she had

Sophie goes and complains to Mrs Hodge. Mrs Hodge calls Neena to her desk.

Mrs Hodge: “Neena, can I ask why you are not wearing the school jumper?”

Neena: “I am sorry Mrs Hodge but my mum came late from work and...and...”

Mrs Hodge: “What’s the matter Neena?”

Neena: “...she...she didn’t have time to wash my school jumper. I didn’t want to wear any other jumper but she said I had to. She made me wear my sister’s black jumper...I told her I will get into trouble!”

Mrs Hodge: “No Neena you are not in trouble...but there is something you could have done.”

Neena: “I know. I should have taken the black jumper off before coming to school.”

Mrs Hodge: “No Neena. You could have come to me and told me that your school jumper was dirty and that’s why you were wearing a black one.”
Neena: “I am sorry Mrs Hodge. I don’t know you and I didn’t know that it was okay to come and speak with you.”

Mrs Hodge: “Don’t worry. We’ll get to know each other soon. Maybe next time you can ask your mum to send me a note. In the meantime shall we start with our work?”
Activities for parents/teachers to discuss with child/ren:

After the main scenario:

- Why do you think schools have uniforms?
- How do you feel about wearing a school uniform? Why is that?

Option 1:

- What do you think is happening?
- Why is Neena upset?
- How would you feel in a similar situation?
- How did Chris help?
- How would you help somebody in a similar situation?
- Why was Neena embarrassed?
- What does 'embarrassed' mean to you? Have you been embarrassed before?
- What do you think might happen next? (Help them look for positive resolution)

Option 2:

- Why did Neena start crying?
- How would you feel if you were Neena?
- Why was Neena scared to tell others that she did not know about the uniform?
- What would you do if you were Neena?
- What could Angela have done to help Neena?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right? Why is that?
- How do you feel when you don't know something that others might know about?
  - What would you do if that happened?
- What do you think might happen next? (Help them look for positive resolution)

Option 3:

- How was Neena feeling?
- Why did Sophie tell on her? What should Sophie have done?
- What would you do if you were Sophie?
- What would you do if you were Neena?
• What do you think about what Mrs Hodge said? Do you think that was a good idea?
• What could Neena’s mum have done to help her?
• What could
• What do you think might happen next? *(Help them look for positive resolution)*

Please read different options with the child/ren and revisit the story as many times as appropriate.
This book is part of a series of educational resources designed to facilitate transition to primary school. This book can be used with children either about to move to primary school or when they have started school. Parents and teachers can use this book with children to explore positive friendships and relationships as well as the potential consequences of their actions.

Divya Jindal-Snape is Professor at the University of Dundee. This story book is based on research conducted by her in the area of educational transitions. The concept and main scenario emerged from this research. The subsequent options emerged from discussions with Nik, when he was 10 years, and Anjini, when she was 8 years, regarding how children aged 5 to 8 years might respond to particular scenarios. Their perspective grounded this story book into children’s real and perceived world. The educational information and activities are again informed by Divya’s research.

Johanne Cameron, Freelance Illustrator, graduated from the BA (Hons) Illustration Course, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee.

Please contact Divya with any feedback and examples of how you have used this story book with children on d.jindalsnape@dundee.ac.uk

© Divya Jindal-Snape 2011