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## Advice Sheet 7

### ***BREAK-TIME ACTIVITIES***

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Often the most challenging behaviours and the resulting longest queue outside the principal's office occurs during non-class time: after break-time and lunch-time. Disputes and arguments can be part and parcel of the playground culture, but we can take steps to prevent and minimise things from happening or getting out of control during break time. Two obvious strategies are:

- Adequate supervision – both in terms of numbers supervising and also in terms of the role of supervisors
- Relaxed vigilance – a preventative approach and a culture where each pupil feels that they can speak to / report to one supervisor if something is amiss are all effective ways of supervising pupils
- Social skills training – we may need to **teach** our pupils how to play. This may involve teaching both the rules of different games but also the social skills of turn-taking, co-operation, accepting defeat and celebrating victory appropriately, empathy, including others, communicating with others, etc.

A third strategy which combines both elements of supervision and social skills training is to set **up break-time activities** for pupils. Lots of things need to be considered here. These include:

- Do we need **different zones** in the yard for different ages? This may help to alleviate some difficulties.
- Can we structure a **choice of activities**? (hopscotch, basketball, soccer, running, board games etc.)
- Can we organise **co-operative games in a circuit**? Set up different stations where each member of the team has to complete a task before the team moves to the next station (e.g. basketball shots, football dribble, penalty shoot-out, tennis-ball throw, slalom run etc.) Each member of the team can score points for the team and teams can then compare their score against other teams or against their score from the previous event. This can be labour-intensive so it might be considered once a week or once a month, or perhaps for different class groups each day in a larger school. One way of limiting the labour-intensive nature is for one staff member to co-ordinate it and enlist the help of older pupils as referees / timekeepers / goalkeepers / scorekeepers etc.
- What **wet day activities** can we offer? Are there areas where pupils can engage in an indoor Games Circuit? Has the school a plentiful supply of: board games, cards, appropriate computer software, appropriate videos / DVDs, radios, to help alleviate boredom & tension on the wet days? These may also be used on days when it is not wet as a reward for a particular group or class.
- Have we appointed **recycling teams / litter pickers**? Perhaps some pupils are not interested in the sporting activities but have a great interest in nature / the environment. Think of ways to include them / give them activities which they like doing during break time.
- Have we a **mentoring / buddy system** for pupils? This can be effective in two ways, it helps the younger pupils to feel safe and belong, while giving trust, responsibility and status to the older pupils. Again, it is something that will not run 100% successfully on its own, so it needs to be taught carefully and monitored carefully.