

## **The Rainbow Approach**

Stimulating and Restoring the  
Social-emotional Development  
of Children



## Knowing Each Other

Every child is part of several communities: the family, the school, the class, the sports club. Each community has its own rules and dynamics. At school, children learn from and with one another. The teacher supports them in forming a socially resilient structure, as they will remain together for several years. During this time, children as well as teachers go through a process of development. Everyone practises taking (up) space as well as giving space. Children learn to feel at home within themselves and in the classroom.

BVS-schooladvies, the educational guidance organisation for Waldorf schools in The Netherlands, has developed the Rainbow Approach to help classes practise social skills. With this approach, based on the anthroposophical view of the human being, we can support teachers and educators with tools for hands, heart and head. Games for children, the training sessions, and the lesson series focus on the interaction between teacher and child as well as parents/carers and among the children themselves.

In addition to practising social skills, teachers can also use The Rainbow Approach in class, where children can display behaviour that is difficult to interpret.

## Professional Uncertainty

All who work with children experience moments of professional uncertainty. The developed knowledge and experience suddenly seem to vanish. Reality is unpredictable and does not necessarily fit within theoretical frameworks. This is what makes being a teacher so challenging. A teacher may suddenly face a situation in class—or in part of the class—that is unstable or not responsive to reason. Various group processes can be at play, that can be challenging for both parents/carers and teachers to manage.

## The Social-emotional Development of Children

### Building Resilience to Teasing and Bullying

Young children learn to become resilient, to articulate a question and to learn to share. These behaviours are aimed at their own development rather than the other person's. A child snatching a block out of another child's hands because it wants to play with it is not targeting the other child deliberately. The other child is instrumental only in having the desired block and just happens to become the victim.

As children enter primary school age, they start to test their strength and challenge each other through mischief. Teasing is incidental. There is a balance of power, they are allowed to stand up for themselves and there are no negative consequences.

### Teasing and bullying

Teasing is allowed and even required. It is good for your development. But sometimes teasing escalates into bullying or exclusion. Bullying is structural. The situation is one of inequality and there is a power imbalance. The same child is affected every time. Bullying can have major negative consequences and has a damaging effect on a person's biography.

Literature on bullying often distinguishes between direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying includes hitting, kicking, name-calling, and/or taking belongings. Indirect bullying involves gossiping, exclusion, or damaging someone's reputation—both offline and online.

### Challenging and unexpected Behaviour

Children who do badly at school from a behavioural point of view may be experiencing an internal conflict between what their parents/carers tell them to do and what the school expects of them. Or there is a conflict between what the group tells them to do, such as to be cheeky, versus what their parents/carers tell them to do, for example 'be good and pay attention'.

This is the reason a school can't do anything about social education without involving parents/carers and taking them seriously. When parents/carers and teachers work together in their approach to a behavioural problem, the child's behaviour usually improves very quickly. Parents of both the child doing the bullying and the child being bullied can work together with the teacher to break the behavioural pattern.

We believe that every child has a desire to be and do good. They only need to be reminded that behaviour is a choice, like a coat you put on or take off, and that a small change can make a big difference.

# Rainbow Approach

The Rainbow Approach consists of several tools:

- **Rainbow Training programme**
  - How to create a series of lessons
  - How to use the game fan
- **Our Book: The Rainbow Approach**

## Rainbow Training programme

Through the Rainbow Training programme, teachers learn to apply the Rainbow Approach in their own classrooms. When an entire team is trained to use the Rainbow Approach, this ensures that the school's whole staff supports the social-emotional development of the children. Teachers support one another and, in doing so, model an implicit example of living and working together.

The training is suitable for teachers and educators from kindergarten to Grade 8. We also offer tailored programmes to meet the specific needs of each team.

### Exercises for teachers

The teacher's function as a role model plays a crucial part in the overall development of social skills. How can we expect children to demonstrate social behaviour if we do not practise it ourselves, or do so insufficiently? The Rainbow Training Programme for teachers includes exercises through which teachers gain experiences that expand their repertoire of unconscious knowledge. Their ability to know what to do in unexpected situations increases. Practising, reflecting on one's own actions, and exchanging ideas with fellow teachers are indispensable in this process.

### How to create a series of lessons

The course includes the Preventative Approach, a series of ten lessons. Research shows that teaching social skills is already important in the earliest year groups. Studies on bullying indicate that this leads to fewer bullies and victims in later years. It makes sense to start using the Rainbow Approach with the younger age groups from a preventative perspective. The Rainbow Approach is developed for all children, from the Early Years to Grade 8.

### How to use the Game fan

The Game Fan consists of a collection of creative exercises and card games to guide social processes. Active, pleasant and enjoyable situations in which children can practise their social skills are created. The games are arranged in a structured way. When the children are a little agitated as they enter the

classroom after a break, a fight has taken place, or the class gets caught up in an argument, the teacher can resort to choosing a game or exercise from the Game Fan to change the atmosphere in a creative and positive way.

The Rainbow Approach is suitable for all teachers, from Kindergarten to Grade 8. We also offer a programme that is specifically tailored to the needs of the team.

You can order the game fan here:



## Book The Rainbow Approach

If you are interested in the underlying principles of the Rainbow Approach, you will find information regarding our credentials and professional background in our book. It contains resources for students and parents/carers as well as educators. The book describes the structure and the background of The Rainbow Approach, teacher skills and observational frameworks suitable for the stimulation and restoration of the social-emotional development of children.

Order the book here:



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