

## The Ideal School

Equipment needed: paper, pencils, pens if drawing, Lego blocks or similar if building

1. Introduce the task: *"I would like to know more about your views about school. To do this, we are going to use an activity called The Ideal School. We are going to think about what a school that you **would not** want to attend would be like. We will then think about what an ideal school that you **would** want to attend would be like. We will use this information to think about what we can do to improve things at this school for you to make it a little more like your ideal school."*

### Non-ideal/worst school

2. Explain that you would like the young person to draw or build their non-ideal school: *"First I would like you to imagine a school that you **would not** want to attend. This might not be a real school but one that you make up in your mind. I would like you to draw or build what you imagine"*.
3. Ask the young person to tell you about their drawing/model. Try not to make assumptions about meaning, instead asking curious questions and wondering out loud about what you see (e.g. *"I wonder what that person is doing"* or *"I notice you have used the colour blue here, can you tell me more about that?"*)
4. Ask questions to further explore the non-ideal school: *"I am going to ask you some questions about what this school is like"*. Questions might include:
  - What does the school look like?
  - What are the most important things in this school?
  - What is the worst thing in this school?
  - If you were to walk into this school, how would you feel?
  - If this school has rules, what would they be?
  - What are the students doing?
  - Tell me three things about the students.
  - What are the adults doing?
  - Tell me three things about the adults.
  - What happens at break time for the students in this school?

Record their answers by annotating their drawing or writing them on a different sheet.

### Ideal/best/dream school

5. Repeat the above process, but this time for the ideal school. *"I would like you to imagine a school that you **would** want to attend. This might not be a real school but one that you make up in your mind. I would like you to draw or build what you imagine"*.
6. Ask the young person to tell you about their drawing/model. Try not to make assumptions about meaning, instead asking curious questions and wondering out loud about what you see.
7. Ask questions to further explore the ideal school: *"I am going to ask you some questions about what this school is like"*. Questions might include:

- What does the school look like?
- What are the most important things in this school?
- What is the best thing in this school?
- If you were to walk into this school, how would you feel?
- If this school has rules, what would they be?
- What are the students doing?
- Tell me three things about the students.
- What are the adults doing?
- Tell me three things about the adults.
- What happens at break time for the students in this school?
- How do you know that you are safe in this school?

Record their answers by annotating their drawing or writing them on a different sheet.

### Scaling

8. Use scaling to consider how the young person's current school compares to their non-ideal and ideal schools, and what could be done to make their current school more like their ideal school. Place their worst school picture/model on the left and their best/dream/ideal school on the right (with a space in the middle). Ask the young person the following questions:
  - On a scale of 0-10 where 0 is your non-ideal school and 10 is your ideal school, where is your current school?
  - What would help to move your current school up the scale by one point towards the best/dream/ideal school? What could the adults do, what could the young person do, what could their peers do, what could their family do?

The following questions can also be used:

- You've given the current school a rating of....what made you give it that rating and not one point less?
- Where on the scale would your current school have to be to be 'good enough'?
- Where is your current school on a good/bad day?
- Are there times when your current school feels/has felt better and is/has been further up the scale? What is/was different about these times?

### References:

Williams, J. & Hanke, D. (2007). Do you want to know what sort of school I want? Optimum features of school provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. *Gap Journal*. 124-137. [Investing in Insurance Risk \(aettraininghubs.org.uk\)](http://aettraininghubs.org.uk)

Williams, J. (2020). Drawing the Ideal Safe School. *Dudley Educational Psychology Service*. Retrieved from [DUDLEY EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES \(sthugh-of-lincoln.surrey.sch.uk\)](http://dudley-educational-psychology-services.sthugh-of-lincoln.surrey.sch.uk)