

Lever 5 – space

My special space



Writer Seyi Adelekun

Aims

- I can understand and talk about what's important to me
- I can understand how different spaces make me feel and why
- I can talk about my experience and opinions with confidence
- I can listen to others and find common values
- I can use my creative skills to express my ideas

Cross Curricular Links Art and Design, PSHE, Geography, Design Technology

This activity encourages pupils to explore the spaces that are important to them, how they make them feel and how they can adapt their environment to boost their emotional well-being.

The activity focuses on Barry Carpenter's Recovery Curriculum Lever 5 – Space: *“to be, to rediscover self-image, concept, esteem and confidence to find their voice in learning that they may have lost.”* Students deserve to experience joy and to be engaged if they are to feel secure and positive about being in school again. Being back in school may be a welcome relief for some, but it could be challenging for others. To feel secure and positive about returning to the school environment, children need to feel ownership over their spaces. ‘Space’ refers not just to the physical space they inhabit, but also an atmosphere where it is safe to share their opinions and feelings.

Focusing on spaces in the home, school and in the rest of the world, this activity will allow pupils to find common interests and values amongst their peers by reflecting on the spaces which influence their lives and bring them joy. It hopes to engage and inspire pupils to be creative in thinking about how they influence their environments and how it can influence them.

Time Required

60-70 mins

Preparation Time

20-30 minutes to source materials and set-up

Resources

- Blank A5/A4 paper
- Pencils/Pens
- Masking tape, string/ yarn (or another way to create three big concentric circles on the floor)
- Post-it notes or paper to label the circles
- Scissors
- Glue sticks and sticky tape
- Colouring pens, coloured paper/card
- Other drawing and modelling materials e.g old magazines, newspaper, clay, play-doh, cardboard, Lego

**Before the lesson:**

- Create large concentric circles on the floor of the classroom and label them: School in the first one, Home in the middle circle, and Outside School & Home in the last circle.
- If you do not have space to make the concentric circles on the floor in the classroom, you could do this activity in an outdoor area or draw the circles on the whiteboard.

Part 1:**Thinking about our special places**

1. Explain to the students that they will be exploring their special space, how it makes them feel and how it can make them respond in different ways.
2. In pairs give the pupils an A5/A4 piece of paper. Ask the children where their special space is at home. Ask them to write down their answer using the following sentence structure:

**At home, _____ is a special space for me because _____.
It makes me feel _____ .**

Make sure to give an example such as: *At home, my bath is a special space for me because I get time to myself to relax in warm water and I like the noise I can hear when I put my head under the water. It makes me feel peaceful.*

3. Continuing in pairs, ask the children to discuss each other's space.
Why do you enjoy being in this space? What is in the space? What activities do you do there? What does it look like? (colours, sounds, smell) How does it make you feel? Who else is in this space?
4. On the other side of the paper, ask them to draw themselves in their special space at home. Tell them to share their answers with their partner.
5. Ask everyone to place (or stick) their work within the first concentric circle labelled *Home*.
6. Repeat the activity, this time for school, asking where their special space is at school using the following sentence structure:

**At school, _____ is a special space for me because _____.
It makes me feel _____ .**

For example: *At school, the jungle gym is a special space for me because it's fun and I like climbing and playing with my friends on it. It makes me feel excited and happy.*

Tip: If there are spaces in the school that no longer exist, off limits or have changed, ask the pupils what they think about the new space or what new space they will do their activity in now that the old space is no longer available.

7. After discussing the drawings from this stage, again have them place their work in the circles — this time in the circle marked *School*.
8. As a group, explore the children's drawings. What similar interests does the class have? What do the answers tell us about each other's personality?

Tip: When asking the pupils about home, be mindful of the difficult living situation the pupils have experienced during lockdown and acknowledge that finding a special space at home can be challenging.

9. End by briefly asking for ideas about special places outside of the school and home — it can be anywhere in the world. You may want to make suggestions such as: the park, a friends' house, the mosque, a dance class, a holiday destination etc. Note down these ideas on post-its and place in the last circle.



Make it more student-led

- For older pupils, you might want to spend longer on their special space outside their home and school activity. Delve into further discussion: *Why do you enjoy being in this space, what is in the space? What activities do you do there? Who are you with? How does it make you feel? If you can no longer go to that space how can you adapt the activity to be done in a different space?*
- *What would make your school better? Is there something your local community would benefit from? In a dream world, what would you design your bedroom to look like?*



Make it more guided

- You could gather pictures of activities (collage or printed) of items that the students might like and help them to choose which ones to place in their circles, instead of writing and drawing.
- In pairs ask the students to act out what they do in their special space at home to the rest of the class and encourage the other students to guess what they are doing and where they might be.

Part 2:**Making special spaces**

1. Ask the students to create their own special imaginary space as a 3D model by reflecting on the answers generated in Part 1. This is their opportunity to fill the chosen space with the things that bring them joy. You could give them the option to make a 2D collage/painting/drawing if more appropriate.
2. Try to make the models using recycled materials and resources that are already available in the school e.g. old magazines, newspaper, clay, play-doh, cardboard, Lego.

Use the following prompt questions to support students/discuss their ideas as they create:

- *What is in the space? and why?*
 - *What activities are there?*
 - *What does it look like? colours, sounds, smells*
 - *How does it make you feel?*
 - *Who else is in this space?*
 - *Why do you enjoy being in this space?*
- Finish the activity with a show and tell of their models. Encourage the pupils to reflect on each other's work and ask questions about why they included different features in their spaces.
 - Ask them what went well and why? What would they do differently next time?

**Make it more student-led**

- For an older age group, ask them to explore their dream space in more detail and through other creative mediums that feel more comfortable to them e.g. poetry, photography, painting etc.
- You could go on to link this project with D&T and learn architectural skills to make stable structures, or use graphic design to create accurate drawings.

**Make it more guided**

- Give the students some options of spaces pre-drawn (or printed) and ask students to populate them with objects to improve it through drawing, collage or even painting. For example: a bouncy castle in the school playground or a puppy playroom in the classroom."
- You could make a joint 'dream classroom' and ask students to draw/cut-out/colour-in their ideas of what they would like in a classroom. Encourage students to be creative in where it could be – *Is it in the forest with no roof? Could it be on the clouds in the sky?* Ask children why they made their choices, or encourage them to choose between a range of ideas if needed.



**Want to go further? Try these:**

- Over the course of the next few weeks and academic year put the pupils into groups to work together to design, build and maintain their special space in school.

You could:

- Make a shelter, den or hideout for quiet reflection
- Create a planting bed, vegetable patch or even a greenhouse
- Create an insect habitat or bird bath
- Hang old mirrors on a tree or fence
- Design a mural or signs around the school with positive messages
- Create a meditation pathway using spiral pebble, gravel, stepping stones or recycled materials

There will be many more ideas, which the students will come up with and be able to execute with a little help from adults and each other. This is a great opportunity to bring the school and wider community together to work on the project.

Other resources from A New Direction that link with this lever:

A Day in Our Life →

I Am Excellent →

Keeping Creative at Home:
How to turn your kitchen into a castle →

Keeping Creative at Home:
How to reimagine a map of your local area →