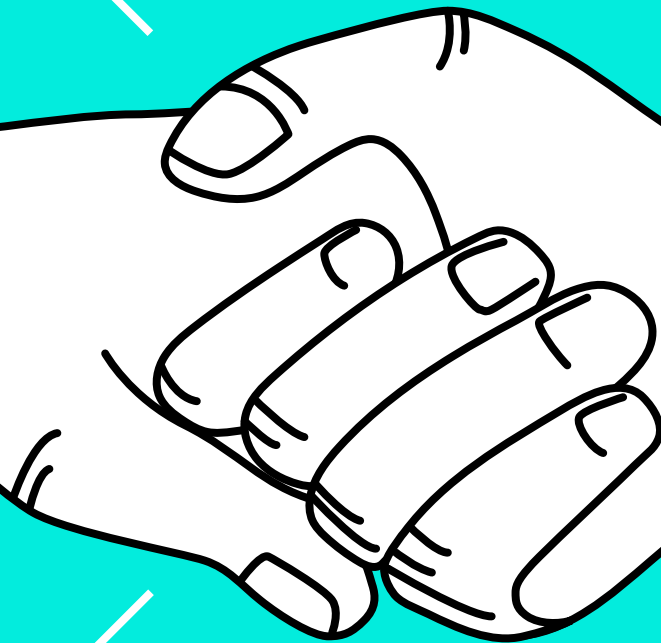


RSA

# LEARNING TO BELONG



**BRIEF**

**2**

## Brief 2:

# Learning to belong

## How might we ensure that schools become places of belonging for all pupils?

### Background

The past two years have demonstrated how crucial schools are in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of young people.

At the same time, the pandemic has exposed the many divisions and inequalities that exist within the education system, including concerns about the rapid increase in rates of exclusion, disconnection, and a sense of not belonging among young people in school, and the impact of this on their wellbeing, mental health and opportunities in later life.

'Belonging' is the sense of being somewhere you are confident that you will fit in. It means you feel valued because of who you are and feel an affinity to a place as a result.

For schools, this could be achieved through strong and meaningful pupil-adult relationships, strengthened relationships between parents and the school, support for pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school, through promoting diversity in schools, and through strengthening pupil voice.

As you can see from the statistics below, there are many reasons why certain children might experience exclusion and a lack of belonging at school. A reduced sense of belonging can lead to pupils feeling disconnected from school and investing less in it, affecting their academic outcomes, mental health, and wellbeing.

### What needs to change?

For a child to flourish in school and in later life, **all schools need to become places of belonging.** Schools should be environments where all pupils **feel safe and have a sense of attachment to the school community.** This means pupils are more likely to be motivated at school, experience positive health and wellbeing outcomes, and attain improved academic outcomes.

#### Key Statistics:

- 1 in 4 young people feel they do not belong in school (UCL & National Education Union, 2020).
- Children from disadvantaged communities, from

certain minority ethnic communities, and those with special education needs (SEND) are more likely to be excluded from school (RSA, 2019).

- Boys are more likely to receive formal fixed or permanent exclusions, but research shows girls are at disproportionate risk of being excluded by other 'invisible' means, such as school moves (Social Finance, 2020).
- Half (48%) of LGBT+ secondary school pupils say they have received little to zero positive messaging at school about being LGBT+ in the last 12 months (Just Like Us, 2021).
- 37% of pupils with SEND reported being bullied based on other pupils' attitudes or assumptions towards their SEND at least once in the past year (Department for Education, 2019).

### How to approach the brief

- **Think about your school** – are there times where you or other pupils have felt like you don't belong to the school community? What may have led to that? What could you do to ensure all your peers feel safe? What could teachers do? How could pupils and teachers co-design proposals together? How could pupils lead the way in creating a sense of belonging in schools?
- We also encourage you to create design proposals that **consider the wider system in which the problem you have identified is situated in.** Think about the reasons outside of school that might lead somebody to feel like they don't belong in school.
- Once you have identified a problem to focus on, **co-design through conversations with the potential audiences** of your proposal, making sure you understand their needs and motivations. Try to talk to both professionals and people with lived experience.
- **Test and prototype your ideas early.** Real world problems require real world ideas that need to be tried and tested to see if they stand up and where they might be improved further.
- Think about the **long-term impact** of your proposal. How might your proposal ensure that we're acting as 'good ancestors' in creating a better future for generations to come?

# Brief toolkits

**We have collated a range of resources to inform and inspire your thinking. Take a look below for brief specific toolkits:**

## Brief 1

**How might we rethink our current food system to design out waste?**

Some existing examples that might meet this brief include...

- **ChipsBoard**: a biomaterials company creating products from food waste, built on circular economy principles
- **FoodCycle**: a UK charity that combines surplus food, spare kitchen spaces and volunteers to create three-course meals for people at risk of food poverty and social isolation.
- **Apeel**: Apeel uses materials that exist in the peels, seeds, and pulp of fruits and vegetables to create a protective extra peel that seals moisture in and keeps oxygen out.

Further resources:

- [What is a circular economy?](#)
- [The circular economy in action](#) (see 'Food' section)
- [Youth consultation for the National Food Strategy](#) (see in particular 'closing youth statements' on p.31)

## Brief 2

**How might we ensure that schools become places of belonging for all pupils?.**

Some existing examples that might meet this brief include...

- **Peer Mentoring Toolkit (HeadStart Kent)**: Peer mentoring has been evidenced as having a positive impact on the emotional health and well-being of children and young people, and can be used to improve a sense of belonging in schools
- **Smart School Councils**: a whole-school approach to democracy, involving all children's voices in decision-making, enabling pupils to learn a broad range of key skills as a result.

- **Diversity Role Models**: an organisation that delivers interactive workshops to embed inclusion and empathy in schools, through education and storytelling from LGBT+ or ally role models.

Further resources:

- **Place and belonging in school: why it matters today. Case studies** (UCL & National Education Union)
- **Young people failed by approach to mental health in secondary schools across England (Mind)**
- **Mentally Healthy Schools: Relationships and belonging** (Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families)

## Brief 3

**How might we restore nature to urban spaces to ensure that people and the planet thrive together?**

Some existing examples that might meet this brief include...

- **Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust**: a proposal for reimagining the empty Broadmarsh shopping centre into an urban oasis of wetlands, woodlands, and wildflowers.
- **Parklets**: small parts of residential streets reclaimed by the community for people to stop, rest and enjoy
- **The Orchard Project**: a national charity dedicated to the creation, restoration, and celebration of community orchards

Further resources:

- [8 cities rewilding their urban spaces](#)
- [New research shows the need for urban green space](#)
- [Biophilic design: What is it?](#)

# Judging criteria

## Your proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:



### **Social and environmental impact:**

- How does the proposal make a positive difference for people and/or the natural world?
- How does the final proposal consider diverse needs and equitable ways to meet those needs?
- How does the proposal engage with the local community in its chosen context?
- How does the proposal consider using materials, processes, and resources in a sustainable way?



### **Rigorous research and compelling insights:**

- Has the pupil/team undertaken first-hand research by identifying the needs and motivations of people affected by the problem in your brief?
- Has the pupil/team conducted research into the wider context of the problem on the internet or through reading material?
- How does the proposal build on key insights grounded in people's needs and motivations, and gained through wider research?
- How does the proposal incorporate feedback and testing through prototyping and iteration?



### **Viability:**

- Has the pupil/team considered how the proposal will work in practice?
- Has the pupil/team considered the cost of the proposal and how it might be funded and sustained?
- Has the pupil/team identified any potential barriers that might prevent the proposal working in practice? How might these be overcome?
- Has the pupil/team considered how they would measure the success of their proposal if it became a reality?



### **Creativity and innovation:**

- How is the proposal different from existing solutions? How might it be better or more useful?
- What unexpected or surprising elements are included in the proposal? What value do these add to the idea?