Surprises and secrets

Year: Y1

Subjects and Issues

Assertiveness Feelings Safeguarding Safety Secrets Support networks Trust Relationships education Keeping safe Getting help Emotions

Introduction

Discussion:

Put up your hand if you like surprises.

What is a surprise? (When something you weren't expecting happens.)

Can you think of a surprise you had that you liked?

What was it?

Harold has a surprise for his Mum. He has bought her some flowers for her birthday tomorrow. He is hiding them under his bed. He can't wait to give them to her and see her face.

Hands up if you can tell us what a secret is. Take some ideas.

A secret can be like a surprise when someone asks us not to tell anyone about something, but unlike happy surprises, some secrets can be bad. Sometimes a person (including both children and adults) might say 'Keep it a secret' about something that our body tells us doesn't feel right.

Harold has a secret. He was playing football with his friend Alfie. Alfie kicked the ball and it broke the window in a neighbour's shed. Alfie told Harold to keep it a secret.

Harold’s Surprise and Secret story

Read the story in full, then ask these questions:

- Why did Harold feel a bit unwell at the end of the story?
- Should Harold keep this secret?
- Who should he talk to about it?
- Why do you think he might be worried about telling someone this secret?
- Do you think he will get into trouble if he talks about this secret?

Sometimes grown-ups ask children to keep something a secret. If it is a nice secret, like a surprise that everyone will know about soon then that is ok. If the grown-up asks a young person to keep a secret and never to tell anyone, then they should not keep the secret; they should definitely tell someone.

This is because it might be about something that the adult is doing which is harmful to a child and which the adult doesn't want other people to know about, because they know it's wrong. If other people found out, they would get into trouble.

Activity - Secrets and surprise game

Hand out sets of cards to small groups of children who have to put cards into 2 piles, one of secrets and one of surprises.

Go through them all after and discuss their answers. Check any misunderstandings and help them to understand the difference between the two.

Summing up

Ask the children:

- Who can they talk to in school if a grown-up has asked them to keep a secret? (Explore a range of staff, taking the children's lead on who they would want to talk to.)

- What if that person is busy, or doesn't seem to be listening to them? (Keep trying; tell a different adult; don't stop trying until they have been properly listened to.)
- Who can they talk to at home if they have a secret?
- What if that person is busy, or doesn't seem to be listening to them? (Keep trying; tell a different adult; don't stop trying until they have been properly listened to.)
- Is it ok to say NO when someone asks them to keep a secret?
- How can they say NO?

Next, ask what they think Harold should do about his secret.

Emphasise the final key points:

- Some things are not ok to keep to ourselves.
- We shouldn't keep something to ourselves if we don't feel ok about it.
- Remember that our body has ways of telling us that something isn't right.

Recap physical signs, e.g.

- Butterflies in the tummy
- Feeling hot
- Feeling sweaty
- Feeling sick
- Hands might shake
- Needing the toilet
- Going red in the face
- Other ideas...

We need to think about who it is ok to talk to about these things. Emphasise that it's important always to keep trying even if at first no one seems to be listening to them.

Adapting lessons for learners with additional needs

Our additional Signposting and Support page provides further guidance on adapting SCARF lessons to meet the

needs of learners with additional needs.

Version History

Mon, 11 Aug 2025

- Formatting updated

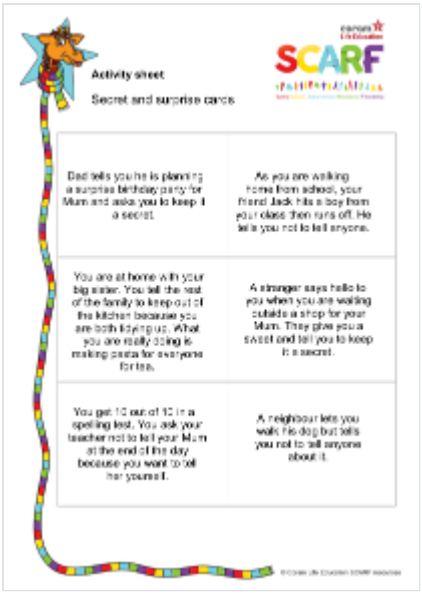
Learning Outcomes

Children will be able to:

- Explain the difference between a secret and a nice surprise;
- Identify situations as being secrets or surprises;
- Identify who they can talk to if they feel uncomfortable about any secret they are told, or told to keep.

Key Vocabulary

surprise
secret


Activity sheet

Secret and surprise cards

SCARF

Dad tells you he is planning a surprise birthday party for Mum and asks you to keep it a secret.

As you are walking home from school, your friend Jack hits a boy from your class then runs off. He tells you not to tell anyone.

You are at home with your big sister. You tell the rest of the family to keep out of the kitchen because you are both tidying up. What you are really doing is making cards for everyone for tea.

A stranger says hello to you when you are waiting outside a shop for your Mum. They give you a SWEET and tell you to keep it a secret.

You get 10 out of 10 in a spelling test. You ask your teacher not to tell your Mum at the end of the day because you want to tell her yourself.

A neighbour lets you walk his dog but tells you not to tell anyone about it.

Surprises and secrets - Activity sheet Cut into sets of cards - enough sets needed for children to work in small groups

Story sheet

Surprises and secrets

SCARF

Surprises and secrets - Story sheet 1 copy, to read to the class

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements

- Relationships Education Families and people who care for me 6. How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.

- Relationships Education Caring friendships 4. That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right.
- Relationships Education Respectful relationships 8. The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults.
- Relationships Education Being safe 1. What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context).
- Relationships Education Being safe 2. About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.
- Relationships Education Being safe 4. How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know.
- Relationships Education Being safe 5. How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult.
- Relationships Education Being safe 6. How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard.
- Relationships Education Being safe 7. How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.
- Relationships Education Being safe 8. Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements (2025)

- Being Safe 1. What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including online). This can include learning about boundaries in play and in negotiations about space, toys, books, resources etc.
- Being Safe 2. The concept of privacy and its implications for both children and adults; including that it is not always

right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.

- Being Safe 4. How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online), including those they do and do not know.
- Being Safe 5. How to recognise when a relationship is harmful or dangerous, including skills for recognising who to trust and who not to trust.
- Being Safe 6. How to report abuse, concerns about something seen online or experienced in real life, or feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.
- Being Safe 7. How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard. Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.
- Caring friendships 5. That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened.
- Caring friendships 7. How to recognise when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, and how to get support when needed.
- Developing bodies 2. The correct names of body parts, including the penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, scrotum, nipples. Pupils should understand that all of these parts of the body are private and have skills to understand and express their own boundaries around these body parts.
- Families and people who care for me 6. How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.
- Respectful, kind relationships 11. How to seek help when needed, including when they are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust.
- Respectful, kind relationships 8. The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness. Pupils should have opportunities to think about how they foster their own self-esteem and build a strong sense of their own identity, including through developing skills and interests.

PSHE Association Learning Opportunities

- R5 . That it is important to tell someone (such as their teacher) if something about their family makes them unhappy or worried.
- R15 . How to respond safely to adults they don’t know.
- R18 . About the importance of not keeping adults’ secrets (only happy surprises that others will find out about eventually).
- R19 . Basic techniques for resisting pressure to do something they don’t want to do and which may make them unsafe.
- R20 . What to do if they feel unsafe or worried for themselves or others; who to ask for help and vocabulary to use when asking for help; importance of keeping trying until they are heard.