Secret or surprise?

Year: Y3

Subjects and Issues

Feelings Friendship Safeguarding Secrets
Support networks Trust
Relationships education Confidence
Getting help Emotions

NB: this lesson plan works for either Y3 or Y4 (Eng/Wales) and P4 or P5 (Scotland). It has therefore been included in both year groups in the SCARF Lesson plan index.

Introduction

In the classroom or suitable space (such as the hall or drama room) put the three cards along one side of the wall with a space in between:

Secret **Surprise** **Not Sure**

Read out the following statements to the children and ask them to move the card that they think the statement represents. Explain that it is OK to stand by the 'Not Sure' card.

1. Your best friend has taken a pencil from school and tells you not to tell anyone.
2. Your family are planning to take you to the cinema but haven't told you yet.
3. Your best friend is scared of spiders and asks you not to tell anyone because they don't want to be teased.
4. An online friend asks you to keep their conversation with you private.

Ask children to explain why they have chosen to stand by the card where they are standing.

Follow up the introductory activity with some key questions:

- What is a surprise?
- What is a secret?
- Are all surprises secrets?
- Are all secrets surprises?

Activity - A day of secrets and surprises

Read the story *Harold's day of secrets and surprises*, pausing to discuss the prompt questions as indicated.

After the story, explain that secrets can either make us feel safe and happy or unsafe and uncomfortable. So we can call these 'safe secrets' and 'unsafe secrets'.

Ask the children to describe how they feel when they are safe. How do they feel when they are unsafe (for example, they may get butterflies in their stomach, feel hot or sick or sweaty, they may feel they need the toilet and so on). Explain that these are the body's way of telling us that things aren't right and alerting us that a situation is unsafe.

Give out the *Safe secret or unsafe secret?* Activity sheet. In pairs or threes the children can discuss each scenario and then record:

a) how that situation would make them feel inside and

b) what they think they should do in that situation.

Let the children work on the sheet for 5 – 10 minutes and then discuss their answers as a class. Ask:

If someone has been told something that they feel is an unsafe secret what should they do? Who could they talk to?

Together make a list of the sort of people at school and at home they could talk to if they felt they had been told an 'unsafe' secret.

Summing up

Set up your circle time in the usual way, reminding children of your usual circle time rules.

On the IWB, display the F*eelings Chart* or print this out to show and display if preferred (find both versions in the Resources needed area). The chart links each of the different feeling with each of the numbers from 1 – 6 as follows:

1. Angry

2. Upset

3. Jealous

4. Worried

5. Excited

6. Scared

Pass a dice (die) around the circle asking each child in turn to roll it. Using the feeling that corresponds to the number, they say the following sentence: *'Someone might feel……when they……'* For example, if a child rolls a 2, they might say, *'Someone might feel* ***upset*** *when they* ***are called a name in the playground****'.*

At appropriate points ask:

- How could someone deal with their feelings in the situations given?
- Who could someone talk to that could help them deal with things?

People could include:

- Parents or carers
- Teacher
- Headteacher
- Teaching assistants
- Midday supervisors
- Other school staff
- Friends
- Childline 0800 1111

Adapting lessons for learners with additional needs

Teachers will need to consider the individual needs of children in their class in order to ensure the activities are inclusive. Advice from specialist teachers or the school SENDco may be helpful. Examples might include:

- Children who have difficulties with language and communication, social anxiety or social interaction may benefit from a pre-teaching session to focus on just one or two scenarios for which they can plan possible answers, ready to contribute in their groups.
- Pupils who have difficulties with social communication and interaction, as well as those with global learning or developmental disabilities, may find the difference in the concepts of secrets and surprises difficult to process. Teachers may wish to plan additional opportunities for rehearsal and over-learn, using role play, social stories and/or comic strip conversations to understand the difference.
- Using this 'Easy on the i' resource Feelings Chart-Easy Read Sheet may be useful for some learners to access the story during the lesson, or as part of pre-teaching or overlearning opportunities

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

- Wording updated to include reference to online safety

Tue, 29 Jul 2025

- Additional ideas added to support learners with additional needs

Learning Outcomes

Children will be able to:

- Define the terms 'secret' and 'surprise' and know the difference between a safe and an unsafe secret;
- Recognise how different surprises and secrets might make them feel;
- Know who they could ask for help if a secret made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Key Vocabulary

secret
surprise
feelings
uncomfortable
angry
upset
jealous
worried
excited
scared
talk

Story sheet
Harold's day of secrets and surprises

Harold's day of secrets and surprises - Story sheet - one copy for teacher to read to the class

Activity sheet
Safe secret or unsafe secret?

Situation	How do think it would make you feel?	What do you think you should do?
A surprise party is being planned for someone in your family...		
Your friend has taken a knife from his dad's toolbox and told you not to tell anyone...		
The person you sit next to copies your answers in a test and they ask you not to tell the teacher...		
Your friend has forgotten their homework but you have yours. They ask you not to remind the teacher that the homework is due in...		

Safe secret or unsafe secret - Activity sheet - enough for working in pairs or threes

Secret, Surprise, Not sure - Teacher resource cards - to display in classroom (see lesson plan Introduction for details)

Feelings chart - Teacher resource to print or show on IWB

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements

- 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.

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 3. That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe contact, including physical contact.
- 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.
- 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.
- General wellbeing 3. The range and scale of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) that they might experience in different situations. Pupils should understand that worrying and feeling down are normal, affect everyone at different times, and are not in themselves a sign of a mental health condition.
- General wellbeing 4. How to recognise feelings and use varied vocabulary to talk about their own and others' feelings.
- 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.