

Growing and Changing



SPHE STRANDS:

**Myself – Growing and changing
– As I grow I change**

**Myself and the Wider World –
Developing citizenship**

Prove It!

- Divide the children into groups of three or four and invite them to come up with as many examples of evidence that they have grown in the past five years. Write as many suggestions as possible on the board – shoes don't fit, clothes too small, can reach higher shelves, can walk farther, can cycle a bigger bike, etc.
- Ask the children does anyone know when a person's rate of growth is at its fastest. (First year of life.) Tell the children that in the first year of life a baby triples in size. What would it be like if this happened every year? What size do you think you would be now?
- Chat with the children about how everyone grows at different rates. Is everyone in the class the same size? Someone might be taller than you this year, and you might be taller than

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them next year. What do you think growth depends on? (Height of parents, country of origin, nutrition, etc.)

- Most people stop growing somewhere between eighteen and twenty-one years old. Does every part of your body stop growing then? (Hair, nails, can get heavier or lighter.) Ears never stop growing!

Art Activity

- Ask the children to imagine themselves as a man or woman and to draw a full life portrait of themselves.
- Invite them to discuss the picture with the child beside them.
- Ask if any of the boys drew themselves with a moustache or beard. This is one of the ways boys change as they grow. Does anyone know at about what age boys start to grow facial hair? (Explain that this can be as young as twelve or as old as sixteen or seventeen).
- Ask if any of the girls drew themselves as women with breasts. (Expect some embarrassment around this discussion, but it is important to explain to the children that this is just another perfectly normal change that occurs to girls as they grow up.) Explain that this may happen any time from about nine or ten to thirteen or fourteen.
- Both boys and girls also start to grow hair under their arms. This can happen any time from about ten years old and is perfectly normal.

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Poetry

Write the word TEENAGER or PRE-TEEN on the whiteboard vertically and, with the class, compose an acrostic poem, trying to include some of the changes already discussed. It is ok to inject a little humour into this exercise, as it is important for children to understand that growing up is fun!

Sample:

Teenagers are
Energetic,
Eating lots and lots,
New hair everywhere,
Always cool,
Growing and changing,
Enthusiastic and
Rebellious.

Alternatively you might like to teach this poem about growing up;

Growing Up

My body keeps surprising me,
I don't know what to say.
There seems to be a different me
In the mirror every day.

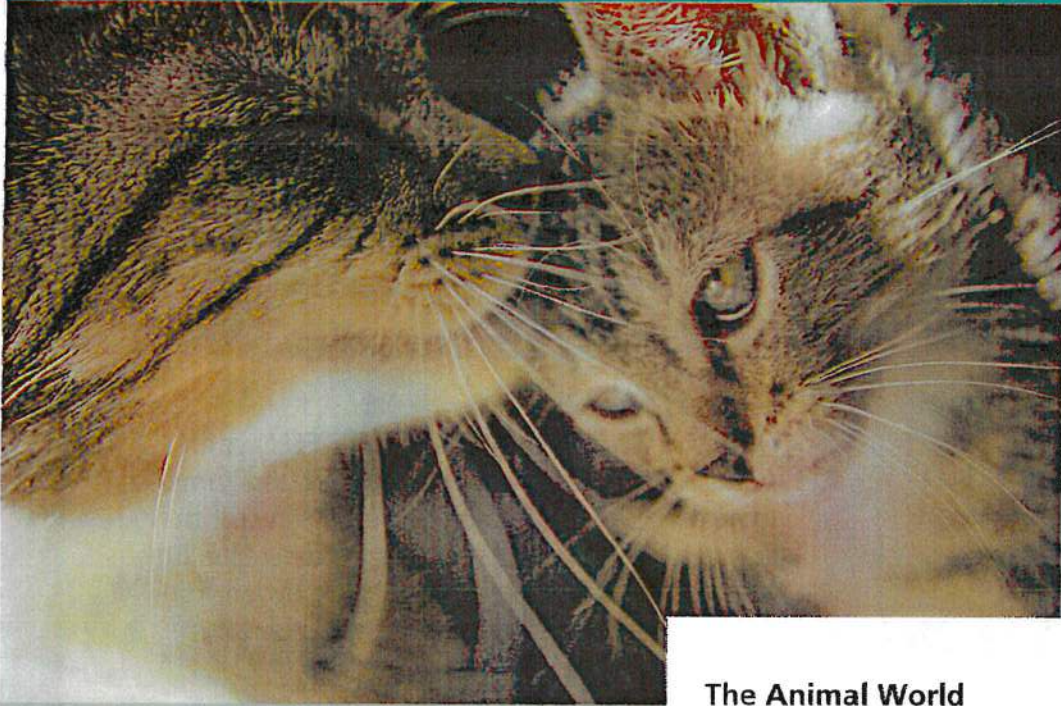
When I was small I couldn't reach
The handle on the door,
And I used to get around the house
By crawling on the floor.

I'm very skilled at football now,
My legs are really long,
I can throw a ball into the net,
My arms are very strong.

Soon I'll be a teenager
With spots and lots of hair.
My body keeps surprising me
With changes everywhere.

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The Animal World

Display pictures of animals with their young. (This website may be a useful resource: <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/14-beautiful-photos-of-animal-moms-with-their-babies/>)

Chat about all the differences the children can see between the adult animals and their young.

Invite the children to draw their favourite creature.

Reflection:

Invite the children to close their eyes and read the following reflection:

Think of a baby photo you have seen of yourself. What did you look like? What colour was your hair? What were your hands and feet like? What could you do for yourself? Did you need help to feed? To move around? To keep yourself clean? Now think of the 'you' that you see in the mirror at the moment. What differences are there? Is your face and head bigger? Are your arms and legs longer? Do you need as much help to look after yourself? Now imagine yourself in three more years. You will be as big as the children in sixth class.

Growing is part of living. We all grow and change as we get older. God made us all to grow at our own pace. Our bodies were created to develop exactly as God planned. Thank God for the wonderful body you have been given. Help us to appreciate how lucky we are to be strong and healthy, growing and changing. Amen.

Making the Right Choices

SPHE STRANDS:

**Myself – Safety and protection –
Personal safety – Safety issues**

**Myself and the Wider World –
Developing citizenship – Living
in the local community**

Everyday Choices

Chat with the children about everyday choices they make, often without much thought, e.g. getting up in the morning, eating breakfast, who to chat to on the bus or in the car, where to do their homework, when to go to the toilet, whether to put on their coat or not, etc.

Now ask them to consider the following worksheet with choices they may have to make occasionally. This time they will have to think about why they make their choices as well as which choice they make. Ask the children to fill in the sheet individually and reassure them that there will be time to discuss it later.

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Faced with the choice I would:	Agree	Disagree	Why I would make this choice
Exercise regularly			
Smoke a cigarette			
Bully a child who is different to me			
Eat healthy food			
Arrange to meet a stranger			
Hurt an animal			
Be kind to a new child in school			
Wash myself every day			
Take money from my mother's bag			
Cross the road without looking			
Stand in front of an open fire			

Have a class discussion about the choices the children made and, in particular, the reasons for their choices.

Try to elicit that some choices are made on the basis of personal safety or personal choice, while some are made for moral reasons – simply because they are right or wrong.

Talk about how, as Christians, we are called to do the right thing, even when there is no one looking.

Art Activity

Divide the class into groups of three or four and invite them to design a poster with good safety advice for people in the following situations:

- People going on a sun holiday
- Children going on the internet
- Young children crossing the road
- Teenagers who are going out with friends
- Old people living alone
- People with pet dogs
- Householders
- Drivers

These posters should have no more than ten words on them, and some art work. Display the posters when the activity is over.

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Decisions in the Family

Chat with the children about decisions they make at home which could help or hinder in getting on with their siblings and family members. Ask questions such as:

- Is there anyone in your family you have to be patient with? An elderly relative? A young child? Someone with special needs? How do you speak to them? What difference does this make to how you get on? Etc.
- If you've having an argument with a sibling what good decisions could you make? Walk away? Listen to their point of view? Try not to shout? Use respectful language? Etc.
- If you want your parents or guardians to drive you somewhere or help how do you speak to them? Ask nicely? Don't sulk if the answer is no? Be understanding that they might be busy? Etc.

Use other examples of decisions we make which help us to get along together.

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Reflection:

Invite the children to close their eyes and read the following reflection:

Every day we are faced with many decisions: what to eat, what to wear, where to go, who to speak to, who to play with.

We also make many decisions to do with keeping ourselves safe: not talking to strangers, sharing any problems we might have, being careful crossing the street, wearing sunscreen when it's sunny, being careful around electricity.

We also make decisions because we know they are the right thing to do. We try to reach out to people who are lonely. We speak nicely to others. We decide to share our toys with others. We don't take things that are not ours, even if we could get away with it. We help elderly and sick people.

Sometimes it is easier to make a bad choice. We ask God's help to have the courage to make good choices as much as possible. We also ask God to help us to admit when we are wrong and to try to make up for any bad decisions we make. Amen.

Positive Role Models

SPHE STRANDS:

**Myself – Growing and changing
– Making decisions**

**Myself and Others – Myself and
my family – Myself and
other people**

**Myself and the Wider World –
Developing citizenship**

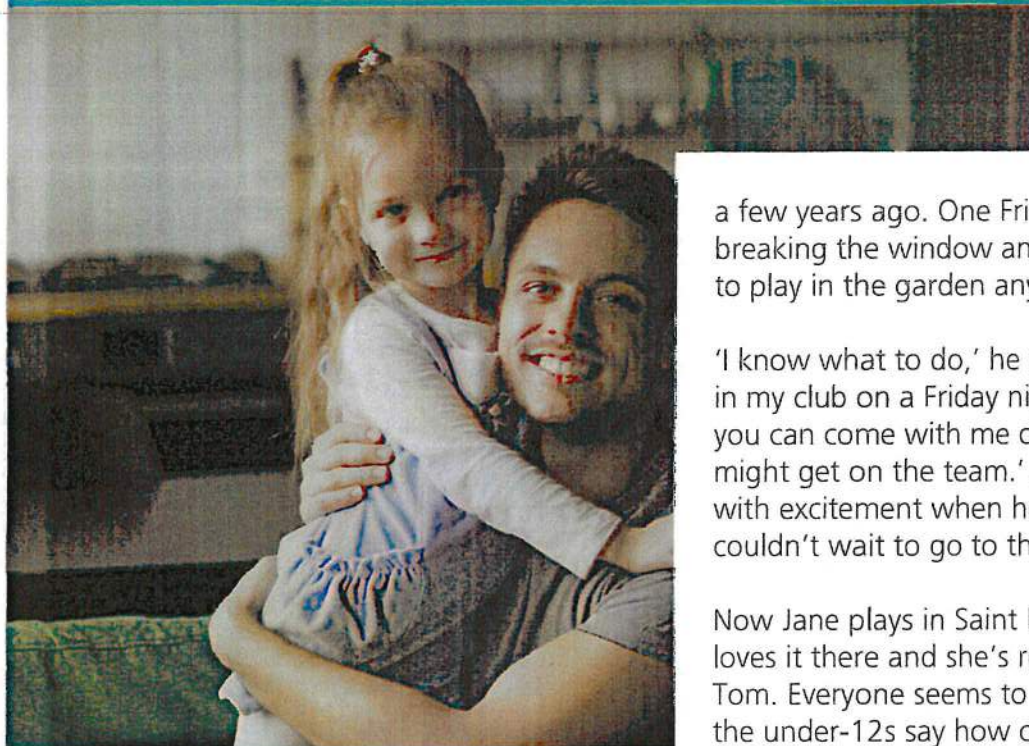
Uncle Tom

Jane lived with her mam and little brother in a big housing estate. She loved football, but the problem was that her garden was really small. Every time she tried to kick a ball with someone it went over the wall, and once she broke their kitchen window. Her mam was so cross that she banned Jane from playing football in the garden from that moment on.

Jane's uncle Tom called round to their house once a week on his way home from work. He usually brought some lovely cakes with him and he helped Jane with her maths when she couldn't work out the ones with long multiplication. Tom was a good footballer – he used to play with the county minors

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a few years ago. One Friday Jane told him about breaking the window and that she wasn't allowed to play in the garden any more.

'I know what to do,' he said, 'I train the under-12s in my club on a Friday night. We'll ask your mam if you can come with me on Friday evenings and you might get on the team.' Jane jumped up and down with excitement when her mam said 'yes' and she couldn't wait to go to the club with Tom.

Now Jane plays in Saint Enda's every Friday. She loves it there and she's really proud of her uncle Tom. Everyone seems to look up to him. All the under-12s say how cool he is and they do everything he says. They say he's the best coach they ever had. Jane keeps whispering to the other kids, 'He's my uncle,' and she can see that they're really impressed.

One night she asked Uncle Tom if he got paid much for training the team. He laughed and said 'Not a cent, but I love it and I wouldn't give it up for the world.' Jane was flabbergasted. 'You don't get paid?' she said, amazed that he would do it for nothing. 'No, but it's better than payment to know that I'm bringing happiness to all those girls and boys and giving something back to my club,' he said.

'Wow!' said Jane. Now Uncle Tom was even more of a hero in her eyes. 'I want to be like him when I grow up,' she said to her mam, 'He's so cool!'

When you have read the story chat to the children about it using questions such as:

Why was Jane not allowed to play football in her garden?

Do you think her mam was being fair?

How often did Uncle Tom call around?

Why was Jane so proud of Uncle Tom?

Do you know anyone like Uncle Tom?

Is there anyone in your family or community that you think is a good role-model? Tell the class about them.

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Role Models

Invite the children to draw a picture of a role model they know. This person doesn't have to be famous or have done anything huge. They should just be someone who the children feel is kind and generous with their time or someone who does good or brings happiness into the lives of other. Display the pictures on the wall.

Could I Be a Role Model?

Invite the children to think of the characteristics of a role-model. They can reflect on those they have drawn or on someone already discussed in class. List the characteristics, e.g. kind, generous, friendly, unselfish, forgiving, encouraging, enthusiastic, etc.

Chat with the children about how they might be role models in the school – being a good example to younger pupils, being kind and gentle in the yard, walking in the corridors; picking up rubbish if they see any, speaking politely to everyone, etc. Talk about how they can be role models in their homes or communities – looking out for elderly people, keeping their garden/footpath clean outside their house, being respectful, offering help when needed, going to bed at the agreed time, doing their homework, etc.

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Reflection:

Invite the children to close their eyes and read the following reflection:

Think of your family and those who live with you. Think of each member slowly and try to remember a time when they were good to you. Then think of a time you did something nice for them. How did that make you feel?

Now think of your neighbourhood. Is there anyone who does a lot of good for others? Think of them now. Is there anyone who needs help that you or your family might be able to reach out to? Could you be a little more friendly or helpful in your community?

Now think of someone famous you look up to. Are they kind? Are they generous? Can you think of something really good that they do for others?

We ask God to help us to appreciate those who are unselfish and who give their time and skills freely to others. Help us to do our best to be unselfish too. Think of one good thing you plan to do for someone today and ask God's help as you do it. Amen.

Why Have Rules?

SPHE STRANDS:

Myself and Others – Myself and my family – Myself and other people – Relating to others

Myself and the Wider World – Developing citizenship – Living in the local community

Rules, rules, rules!

Invite the children, in groups of three or four, to come up with three rules they think are most important in the playground each day. They might include areas for each class to play, what games are allowed, which classes are allowed to do what, whether it's ok to argue or fight or climb walls, etc. Then, lead a class discussion on which rules are agreed on by the majority. Children must listen respectfully to each other. Encourage them to ask questions such as 'What if...?' or 'What would happen if...?'

The end result, i.e. which rules are agreed upon, is not as important here as the process of discussing respectfully and discussing the pros and cons of the rules they feel are important.

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Consequences

In the light of the above discussion, invite the children to consider what would happen if there were no consequences for those who break rules? Would anyone bother keeping them? Why or why not? Would the school yard be a happy, safe place?

Simon Says

To illustrate this point have a short game of Simon Says with the class. Teacher acts as 'Simon' and gives the children instructions such as 'Put your hands on your head' or 'Sit on the floor', etc. However, if someone gets it wrong they are not out. After about five minutes, ask the children, 'What is wrong with this game?' There are no consequences, so the game can't progress or end. What would it be like if a soccer game had no rules? What would the roads be like if there were no rules of the road?

Acrostic Poem

Ask the children to write an acrostic poem about rules. Here's an example:

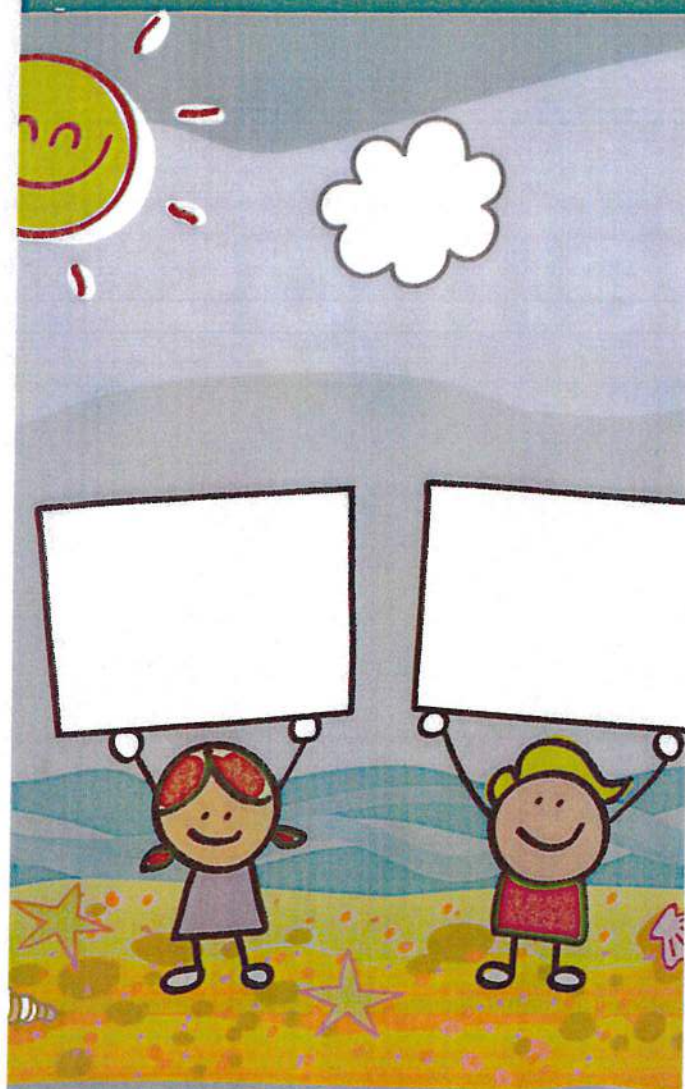
Rules are for keeping.
Understand that they are there for a reason.
Learn to obey them
Every single day
So everyone is safe and happy.

School Rules

This would be a good time to photocopy the school rules and to discuss not only what they are, but why we need each one to protect everyone's safety and rights.

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Reflection:

Invite the children to close their eyes and read the following reflection:

We all want to feel safe and happy in school. To do this we need to have rules and there must be consequences for those who break them. We want to know that we won't be hurt or bullied in school. We want to have a quiet classroom where we can learn. We need to know that it's not ok for someone to hurt or insult us.

We have a responsibility to keep the rules too. We need to respect other people's property and other people's feelings. We have to obey the instructions of the teachers so other children can learn.

Rules are everywhere: on the road, in car-parks, in playgrounds, at the cinema. There are laws in our country that make sure we are safe and protected.

We thank God for those who make the rules that keep us safe. We ask God's help to try to keep the rules. We also ask God's help to accept the consequences when we fail to keep the rules and to try harder next time.

We also make decisions because we know they are the right thing to do. We try to reach out to people who are lonely. We speak nicely to others. We decide to share our toys with others. We don't take things that are not ours, even if we could get away with it. We help elderly and sick people.

Sometimes it is easier to make a bad choice. We ask God's help to have the courage to make good choices as much as possible. We also ask God to help us to admit when we are wrong and to try to make up for any bad decisions we make. Amen.

Feelings

SPHE STRANDS:

**Myself – Self-identity –
Self-awareness**

**Myself and Others – Myself and
other people – Relating to others**

**Myself and the Wider World –
Developing citizenship –
My school community**

Feelings

- Display the following list of feelings on the board: Jealous, Angry, Upset, Sad, Lonely, Embarrassed, Disappointed, Confused.
- Chat about the first one – times when we might feel jealous – invite the children to give examples.
- Now ask the children to each think of one example where they might feel each of the feelings displayed on the board and to write them on a sheet of paper.
- Allow approximately five to ten minutes for this activity.
- When the children have finished look for volunteers to share a scenario they have come up with for each feeling. Each time, invite the class to think of a something a child who was feeling like that could do to feel better.
- Discuss how feelings are normal reactions.