



## Section 2

# What is My Role?

### What is a Student Leader?

As a Student Leader you will support and care for a small group of junior students. You are not expected to solve their problems or counsel the group, but you can help the students by leading discussion groups and activities where they can learn to understand people around them a little better, develop the skills to get along with each other and make sound decisions about their lives.

The support that you give the members of your group is important – do not underestimate it. Knowing enough to support each student means that you will need to learn about them, help the group to become aware of the needs and feelings of others, and help them to develop a sense of responsibility for one another.

Through the skills and learning they gain as you work with them, the students will develop friendships and relationships, together with the confidence to look after themselves at school and develop their own individuality.

### What makes a good Student Leader?

As a Student Leader, you will:

- Be an older friend – there to keep the discussion going without controlling or dominating it. The students learn from their discussion and their interaction with each other,
- Ask the students what they think and feel, encouraging them to speak about their ideas, experiences, and problems. If you feel they need expert help or advice, just listen, then talk it over with your Teacher Leader.
- Listen to both sides of a debate, encouraging the students to listen to one another as well as to talk.
- Respect the people in the group. The students are sensitive to the way they are treated, you must be careful not to criticise or judge people.
- Learn as much as possible about your students as soon as you can – learn their names and how to pronounce them correctly. Use their names because it will make the students feel special.
- Prepare for each session by working collaboratively so that the material is there whether you need it or not. Being prepared will give you confidence.
- Encourage but don't force people to contribute – look for opportunities to involve a shy, hesitant person, or set up activities where they work with a partner/group and don't have to speak out by themselves.
- Manage the behaviour of the group, making sure everyone knows and respects the ground-rules so that everyone has a fair chance and the group can get on with the activities.
- Contact the Teacher Leader when you have concerns about the group, your role or what to do in the sessions.
- Participate in the activities with students and share a little of your experiences.
- Make time so that you are available to the students outside group meeting time – perhaps lunch together occasionally.
- Make it fun.
- Enjoy the role – being a friend, giving your help and support is demanding, but it makes a real difference and it's rewarding.