

Managing superhero play sometimes presents difficulties, especially when children become aggressive and intimidate others. Use the poster to divert attention to the important role of a superhero in helping others

Using the poster

- Hang the poster alongside a selection of suitable dressing-up clothes and fabrics to stimulate ideas. Join in the children's play in role to encourage appropriate actions.
- Display the poster next to small-world and construction equipment. Supply small pieces of fabric and sticky

tape to enable the children to dress as their superheroes. Encourage the children to copy the poster scenarios as well as to invent stories of their own. Discourage the use of superhero figurines so that the children play more creatively with the props that are available.



Activities across the curriculum

Personal, social and emotional development

- Look at the poster of the superhero and invite the children to say how he uses his powers in different ways to help people. Ask appropriate questions to encourage discussion about how the other characters might be feeling, for example, 'Why is the old lady looking pleased?', 'What would it be like to be a cat stuck in a tree?' and so on.
- Discuss the actions of the superhero in the poster and emphasise the difference between real and pretend actions. Emphasise the real danger of climbing high trees, lifting very heavy bags or 'flying' off walls. Decide together how these actions can safely be represented through pretend play and movements.

Communication, language and literacy

- Use the poster to introduce a conversation about the superheroes that the children have read about or seen on television, such as Batman, Supergirl, Spiderman and Catwoman. How do these characters help others? What are their special powers? Be sensitive to those children who believe in the existence of these characters and help to allay any fears by pointing out the difference between real and pretend actions.
- Invite the children to think of a suitable name for the poster superhero using alliteration, for example, 'Fearless Freddy' or 'Henry the Hero'. Extend the discussion to include names for superheroines as well as superheroes.

Mathematical development

- Explore the picture of the superhero playing basketball. How is he able to reach the high basket? Set up baskets at different heights and invite the children to throw balls into them to decide which is the most suitable height to score easily. Encourage the children to take turns to throw balls into the basket for one minute using a timer and keep score using a tally system.
- Discuss the picture of the superhero flying up to rescue the cat. Set up a role-play scenario for the children to climb up a slide or on a climbing frame to rescue a toy cat. Encourage them to wear a large bum-bag to transport the toy to safety. Ask the rest of the group to call out 'lower', 'higher', 'lower' or 'down', 'up', 'down' to describe the position of individuals as they make their rescues.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- Explore the everyday clothes that the boy is wearing on the poster together and name each garment. How do his clothes change when he becomes a superhero? How might a cloak and a streamlined suit help a superhero? Supply the children with mark-making materials and invite them to design a superhero outfit. Display their drawings around the poster.
- Look at how the superhero moves leaves into a pile for the gardener by blowing them. Could the children do this? Why not? Explore what they are actually able to move by blowing using straws to direct the air, for example,

rolling ping-pong balls into a goal or sailing home-made boats on a water tray.

Physical development

- Supply appropriate resources for superhero games based on the poster, such as a basketball stand and ball, shopping bags and a pullalong trolley, a toy cat or a pile of leaves and some buckets.
- Talk about how the superhero used his powers to score during a game of basketball with taller boys. Show the children a selection of pictures and resources relating to difficult action sports, such as skiing and skating. Encourage them to talk about which sport they would try if they had special powers. Let the children take turns to mime the chosen sport while the rest of the group guess the actions.

Creative development

- Discuss the actions of the superhero in the poster, then ask the children to paint or draw pictures of something that they would like to do if they had special powers.
- Explore the superhero's costume together, then provide the children with plenty of attractive lengths of fabric and clothing such as leotards and all-in-one suits to create their own role-play outfits. Join in with their play and discourage aggressive actions, emphasising instead the helpful, supportive role of a superhero.

Jean Evans is an early years consultant and author.