

MENTAL MAPS

Mental maps involve children drawing their perceptions, particularly of places.

Learning objectives

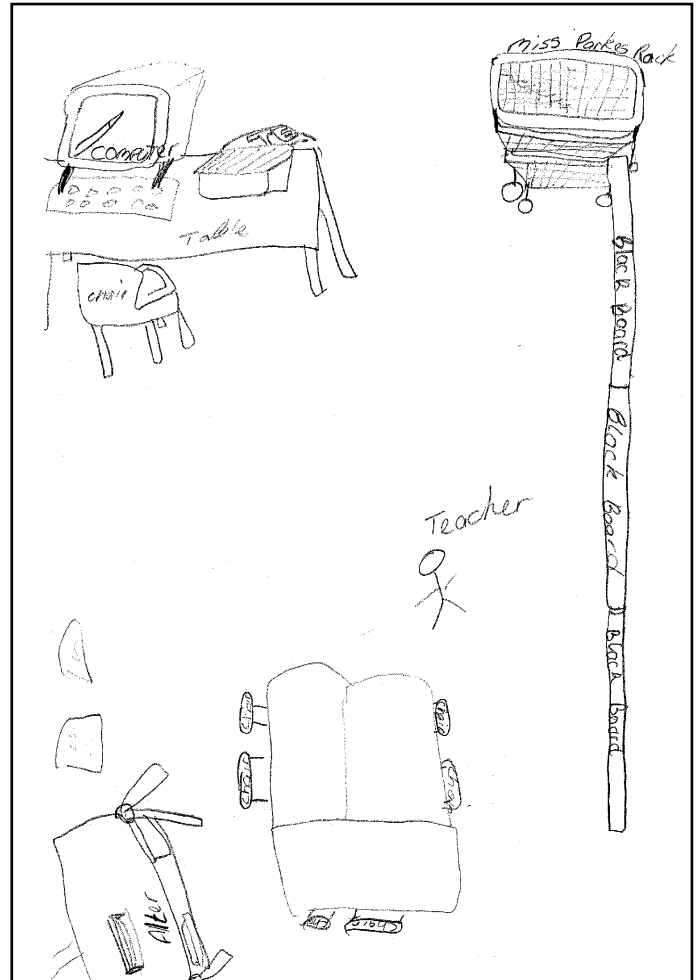
- ❑ to explore feelings, images and attitudes about a place;
- ❑ to enable children to clarify what they're thinking or feeling in picture form.

How?

Mental maps reflect how each child sees something and therefore should be done alone. Because we're asking the children to draw their perceptions of a place, there can't be right or wrong answers.

- ◆ It is often best to start with a mental map of a place that's familiar, such as the classroom. If you can, get the children to draw their perceptions in another part of the school - so they're drawing from memory.
- ◆ Ask them to draw what the classroom is like.
- ◆ Pair them up and ask them to talk and write about what is different about the drawings. One Year 4 child drew a large radiator in her classroom because she sits next to it; several drew the teacher at her desk, even though she doesn't have one! They wanted her in the picture - and to have a 'house'.

The child has drawn in detail Miss Parkes' rack, the altar, computer and blackboard but not given much attention to desks or children.



Some more ideas

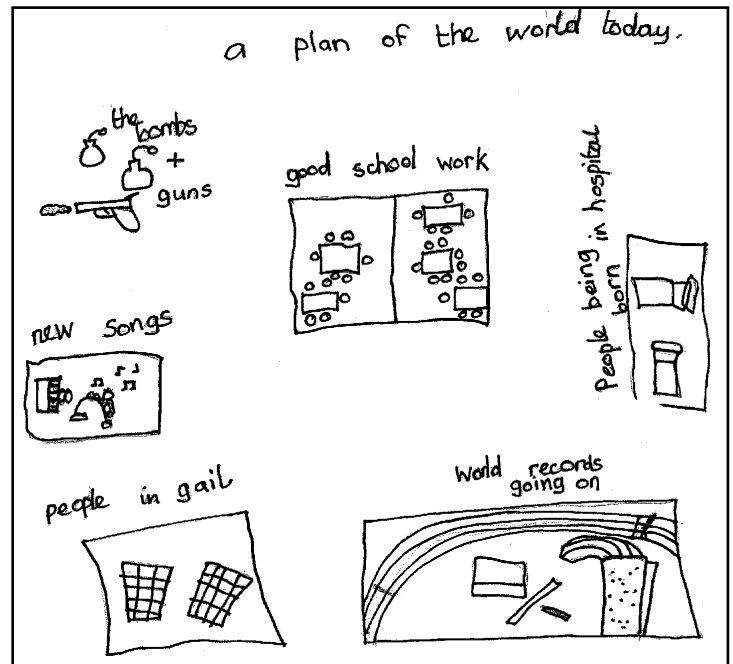
- ◆ Ask the children to draw how they see a place. When you're teaching about a locality somewhere in Africa - draw their mental picture of the continent. Use their perceptions to identify where you need to plan work to challenge stereotypes
- ◆ Draw mental maps at the beginning and end of a unit of work, What have the children learnt? How have their ideas changed?

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Example:

The world as I see it

In this Year 4 class, the activity was further developed and the children were asked to draw their perceptions of the world today. This provided opportunities for children to discuss further what was important to them. Many of the children highlighted items on the news eg the general election and Eurovision Song Contest. This raises issues of how children learn about the world, where they get their information from, and why it's often distorted.



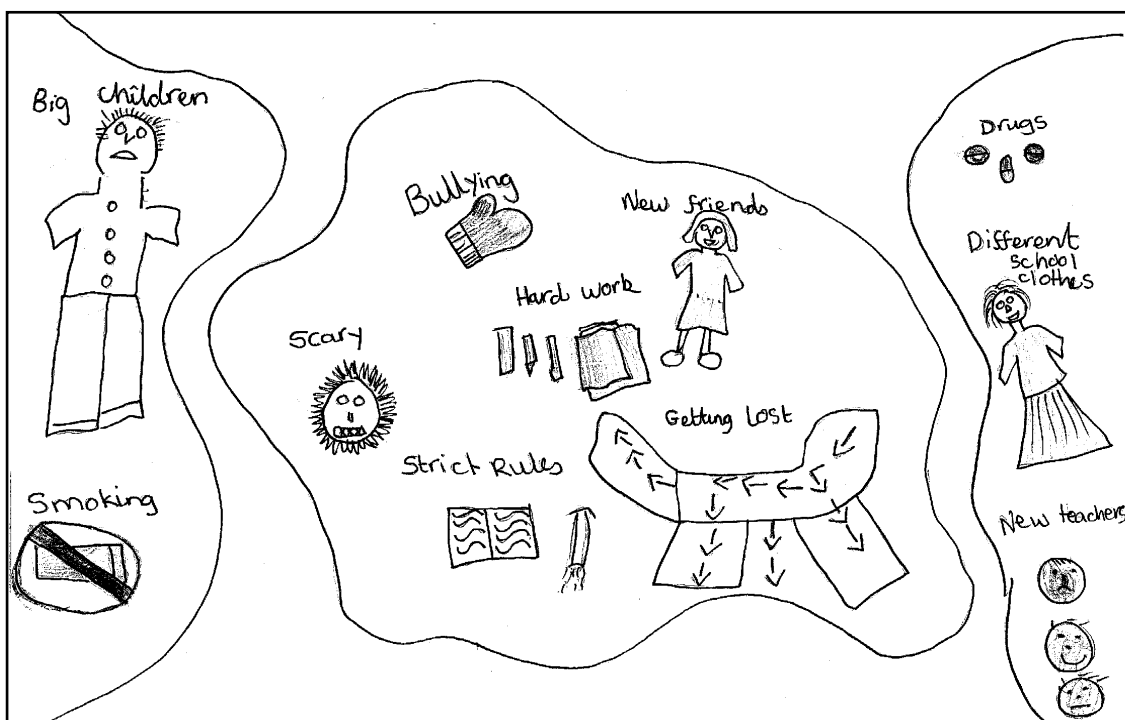
The world as I see it

Example:

What is it like at secondary school?

I wanted the Year 6 children to think about secondary school and to express their thoughts on paper. I asked them to draw a mental map using pictures and a few words that expressed their perceptions. After drawing individually, they were asked to share their maps with a partner and then to feedback to the rest of the class their partner's main ideas.

The responses were mainly of worries and anxieties of the journey, getting lost and being bullied. Some children were more positive and expect to meet new people, enjoy the challenge of harder work and are excited at the prospect.



Children enjoyed sharing their expectations and concerns about going to secondary school.