

# Supporting kids with additional needs

Lee liked going to school. He liked playing with his friends, doing science, and he especially liked sports on Friday afternoons.

Unfortunately, Lee got sick a lot and sometimes had to go to hospital. Lee had a genetic condition that meant his body didn't always work properly by itself. Lee didn't like having to take special medications and going to doctors all the time.

When Lee came back to school after being sick, he felt nervous and shy. His friends all seemed to have other friends and new games to play. But when the class needed a goalie for soccer, Lee was ready. He loved playing goalie and being part of the team.

Lee's teacher worried that he might get hurt playing soccer. She decided to talk to Lee's parents to find out more about his health and other needs. Together Lee's teacher and parents worked out some important things the school could do to include Lee safely and help meet his social and learning needs.



## We are all differently abled

This means that we may need different kinds of support to participate in the community and at school.

When children are affected by disability it restricts them from being able to do some of the things that other children can do.

A chronic or permanent illness or disability may affect children's physical health, as shown in the story above. Other kinds of disabilities may affect children's ability to learn.

*By working together families and schools can make sure that children with disabilities are included so that their learning, social and mental health needs are met.*

## Your attitude makes a difference

Sometimes people talk about disability in very negative ways. They may think that people with a disability are unintelligent or that they don't have feelings. They may assume that the child can't do certain things and stop them from joining in with others. These types of negative attitudes further restrict children with disabilities from opportunities to learn, grow and be part of the community.

Children with disabilities may have different or additional needs to those of other students. Providing all children with the support they require helps to meet their needs and enables them to grow and achieve with their classmates.



## Some ways schools can work to include students with disabilities:

- Work with parents and carers to meet children's physical, social and emotional needs
- Teach children that everyone has a right to be respected
- Provide opportunities for children with and without disabilities to play and learn together
- Promote cooperative, caring and helpful behaviours for all students.

## How parents and carers can help

Parents and carers of children with additional needs can talk to school staff about your children's needs and strengths and about ways to make sure they are included at school. All parents and carers can:

- Encourage your own children to include children of different abilities in their play
- Teach social skills that can help children manage friendships
- Be role models for inclusion by showing through your actions how to be caring and respectful towards others.

## What Lee's parents and teacher decided to do:

- Lee's parents and teacher communicated regularly about how Lee was going at school and at home so they could coordinate support.
- Together they decided that Lee's teacher would explain to the class why Lee kept getting sick and encourage his classmates to support him.
- Lee was given the role of classroom leader for science. This helped him and his classmates see what a valuable class member he is.
- Lee's teacher also arranged for one of Lee's health workers to come and talk to school staff about his condition and ways to support him and help him manage at school.

Further information about the mental health needs of children with disabilities is available in the KidsMatter resource pack at your school on *Children with additional needs*. For information about teaching children how to include and respect others see the KidsMatter Information sheet titled *Learning to value others*.

The following web pages may also be of interest:

[www.raisingchildren.net.au/children\\_with\\_disabilities/raising\\_children\\_with\\_disabilities.html](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/children_with_disabilities/raising_children_with_disabilities.html)

[www.parenting.sa.gov.au/pegs/peg60.pdf](http://www.parenting.sa.gov.au/pegs/peg60.pdf)

[www.learninglinks.org.au/pdf/infosheets/LLIS%2006\\_Inclusion.pdf](http://www.learninglinks.org.au/pdf/infosheets/LLIS%2006_Inclusion.pdf)

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. The team at KidsMatter welcomes your feedback at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au)



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