

# What makes a positive school community?

"Mum, Miss Collins told me to be sure you go to the school for the meeting tonight. She says it's very important."

"You're not in trouble, are you Omar? Teachers only ask parents to come to school when there is a problem, don't they?"

"No Mum. She says she is looking forward to meeting you."



When Rasheeda got to the meeting it wasn't like she had expected. Lots of other parents were there and they were talking with each other and with the teacher. It seemed quite friendly. The teacher explained what the children would be learning in school this term and then asked the parents to talk to two different people they didn't know.

Rasheeda felt a bit shy about this. Luckily, the other parents at her table started talking to her. They asked her what school was like in her home country. "Oh, very different!" she told them. "Over there the teacher talks and the children listen. They don't learn in groups. They start early and they go home at lunchtime." The other parents seemed interested.

Miss Collins also spoke with her: "Rasheeda, I wonder if there's anything more you would like to know about how Omar is going or what we are doing at school? We want to be sure you feel welcome, so if there is anything the school can do to help you or Omar settle in, please let us know."

## What feeling included is all about

Positive school communities create opportunities for children, families and staff to feel included. They make help and support accessible and find lots of ways to invite people to take up the offer. They build bridges to help everyone benefit from understanding experiences and cultures that may be different to their own.

When children feel included, when they are part of a community that promotes inclusion and respect for everybody, they show more caring and compassion towards others and they feel safer and more secure. They also learn better and have better mental health. In a positive school community *every face has a place*, every voice is valued and everyone has something to contribute.

School communities from around Australia chose care, compassion, respect, understanding and inclusion as important values for children to understand. These are things that children can learn about. The best learning happens when children see the adults around them putting values like these into practice.

## Some ways of showing people they are welcomed and included at school

- Display information, posters, and artwork that reflect the diversity in the school community
- Provide information in appropriate languages, verbally where possible as well as in written form
- Cater to specific needs where possible, e.g. dietary needs, access needs
- Publicly celebrate diverse cultures and diverse families.

## What parents and carers can do

- Get to know other families, take an interest in others' different backgrounds as well as what you have in common
- Set up a "buddy system" where families who have been at the school for a while buddy up with new families to provide welcome and support
- Encourage children to include and appreciate others' cultural and individual differences.

**Being included and learning to include others are very important for children's social development.**

**Being included promotes belonging and connectedness, which are also key factors for supporting children's mental health.**

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)



Australian Government  
Department of Health and Ageing

