

# Social development: Suggestions for school staff

School teaches children about society and helps them learn to find their place in it. All the experiences children have at school help them to learn about social rules and relationships. Having clear and positive rules and policies, providing an integrated social and emotional learning curriculum, and supporting children's social needs and relationships are some of the important ways that schools can support children's social development.

## How school staff can help

### Teach by example

Children learn a great deal about the most appropriate ways to behave by observing the actions of those around them. When teaching social values it is especially important not to just talk about them, but to show through your actions the kinds of caring, respectful and responsible behaviours you expect of students.

### 'Do' rather than 'don't'

Classroom and school rules are most effective when they are stated in clear and positive ways that children can understand. They are best kept simple and few. Discuss rules and expectations with students and show them the kinds of behaviours you regard as appropriate. Involving children in discussing your rules and encouraging them to suggest rules themselves are important ways for teaching staff to support children's social and moral development.

### Be firm, fair and flexible

Being firm and consistent in applying rules that are framed positively and have been well-taught helps school staff establish and maintain respectful relationships which enables the classroom to function well and can also be transferred to other areas of the school. It also helps students to know where they stand. Being fair in applying the rules rather than singling out students for more severe punishment or favouring others is very important. School staff who are seen to be fair are more readily respected and are more effective at supporting all students' social development and wellbeing. Being consistent and fair does not mean being rigid. It is also important to be flexible and take into account individual circumstances that may impact on a child's ability to meet expectations, for example by checking if there is a reason why a child is late before deciding whether there should be a consequence.

### Set the scene for classroom cooperation

Cooperative classrooms support both social development and academic success. School staff encourage cooperation in the classroom when they structure cooperative learning activities where children work together on a specific task or project and teach children the skills to work together effectively. Providing opportunities for all students to take on particular roles and responsibilities also helps to build a cooperative classroom environment and encourages children to take pride in their contribution to school life.

### Appreciate social and cultural diversity

Find out about the social and cultural backgrounds and values of your students and their families and look for ways you may be able to accommodate their needs and perspectives. Be open to adjusting your style of teaching and communication and ensure that common classroom practices are clear and appropriate for all students. Create opportunities to include different perspectives and encourage children to explore and appreciate the differences.

### Deal promptly with discrimination and harassment

Teach children about stereotyping and discrimination and make it clear that these are unacceptable behaviours. When discrimination, harassment or bullying occur ensure that you take action based on your school's policies.

This resource is part of a range of KidsMatter Primary information sheets for families and school staff. View them all online at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au)



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