



February 2016

Caningeraba State School is a **KIDSMATTER** school. We are focussed on **growing happy, healthy, confident children together** with the local community.

At the beginning of the year sometimes it can be difficult for children to settle back into school after the long summer break. Sometimes they come home from school with upset that they have “no one to play with”. Here are some tips to help you if your child is feeling this way.

## **Six ways to help your child develop friendship skills**

Relationship skills are one of the [social and emotional learning skills](#) that are important for children to develop.

Through friendships, children learn how to develop relationship skills by relating to others and teaching each other how to be good friends.

Learning positive friendship skills can help children socially so they feel happier and more confident, thereby promoting mental health and wellbeing.

Most children want to have friends. Children who have friends are more likely to be self-confident than those without friends and they perform better academically in school.

### **Take the role of a coach!**

Parents and carers are children’s first and most important teachers when it comes to developing positive friendship skills.

Taking the role of a coach can help your child learn the skills they need for themselves.

Coaching is critical for helping children use new skills in real-life situations. Coaching involves prompting, reminding and encouraging (but not nagging!) children to use the skills they have learned.

### **Here are six tips to help your child develop positive friendship skills:**

#### **1. Make time to play too**

Parents and carers can improve their children’s social skills by playing with them regularly. Letting children choose and lead the play allows you to be playful with them and encourages them to practise skills for cooperation and negotiation. Avoid criticising and make it fun!

#### **2. Allow your child to try all sorts of different activities**

Children who have a wide range of interests are more likely to have something in common with others and so find it easier to make friends and get along.

### **3. Invite children for play dates**

Having friends over to visit helps children to establish friendships and practise their social skills. It also provides an opportunity for you to provide on-the-spot coaching for children as they develop their friendship skills. Providing positive guidance and helping to structure activities (without taking over!) can be very important when establishing new friendships.

### **4. Talk with children about what is happening for them with their friends**

Find a relaxed time, like the drive home from school or after dinner, to talk about what is happening in your children's friendship group. By doing this, you let them know that you are interested in their wellbeing, and this can also be an opportunity to share some of your experiences and to help them solve any problems they might have.

### **5. Encourage positive, relevant strategies**

Parents and carers can talk about, and encourage, friendly and cooperative strategies that can help their child to develop friendships. For example, encouraging children to negotiate or compromise when trying to solve conflicts with peers is a strategy that is more positively received by their friends than aggression or verbal threats.

### **6. Take a problem-solving approach**

Parents and carers don't need to have the answers to all of their children's problems. You can support your children to think through a problem for themselves by talking with them and asking some useful questions.