



Hunsbury Park Primary School

A Parent's Guide
To
Making New Friends

Helping your child to make new friendships can help them feel happier and more balanced. As a parent, we all want our child to feel content and have friends they can rely on. Helping your child build relationships is essentially a life skill that they will continue to use throughout adulthood.

Making new friends and building relationships can be very daunting for children. With the various dynamics and personalities to navigate, there may be a lot for them to learn. It is important to remember that every child is different and has their own friendship needs. Some may prefer the company of large groups whereas others may like one or two friends. Whatever they choose, it is important as a parent to support their choices.

Starting a new school

If your child is starting school for the first time or has just changed schools, they may feel anxious about making new friends. Children are usually very flexible in making new friends and some schools will actively help new pupils to get to know one another through peer mentoring or buddying schemes. You may want to give your child some tips such as opening lines to help them make new friends and get the conversation started. Maybe practice with your child through role-plays. Ask the teacher how they help encourage new friendships and what strategies they put in place if they feel a child is struggling.

Conflicts

Children sometimes make friends and then fall out again for a short time. Many different groupings and regroupings can occur in the early days. If your child comes home because they have had a difficult time with a friend or something has happened, try to stay calm, as your child probably needs to express how they are feeling. Try not to get cross or talk badly about the other child as young friendships can often hit a few bumpy roads and they could be friends again within a day. Talk to your child about your experiences when you were younger so they understand that the art of making friends is not very often a smooth ride and learn how to resolve conflict. If you are worried that this is more than just a falling out, you can speak to the class teacher for more support.

Our top tips on helping your child make new friends

Discourage your child from being over-reliant on a small group of friends. If your child feels excluded by a group encourage her or him to make friends with other pupils. Involvement in after school clubs may help. If they are struggling to make friends, speak to the school and see if they are able to support your child and offer suggestions too. You can help your child by encouraging them to:

- get to know as many classmates as possible
- talk to you about them if he or she wants to
- encourage them to build a social life with friends outside of school
- invite and visit friends after school or at weekends, if circumstances permit
- ask them to join clubs that they are interested in, as there may be like minded friends attending to

Try to do role-play or talk about scenarios that help your child understand empathy, trust and loyalty. Encouraging them to be a good friend but also talk to them about red flags if someone is not being a good friend back. When you see them being caring and showing empathy, give them plenty of praise so they understand that this is very positive behaviour.

Spend regular one to one time with them so they feel able to talk about their day. This is a great opportunity to talk about their friendships too. This helps to encourage openness between you and this in turn helps them to talk about their worries too.

Teach your child to understand body language and facial expressions so they can notice situations with their instinct. Again, they will need these important life skills. Discuss tricky situations with them so that you can teach them strategies to manage this so they do not feel too overwhelmed.

Friendships can change throughout school time and therefore it is essential to give your child lots of emotional support if things do go wrong and they do feel hurt over a friendship situation. Teaching your child, the necessary skills on handling situations and others will help them enormously in the long run.

Further support:

Speak to the nursery or school

www.gosh.org

www.parentingscience.com

www.childmind.org