



This week let's talk about 'Friendships'

Why is this important and how is this linked to safeguarding?

Schools and families alike have a role and responsibility to promote development of healthy relationships for children and to protect children from abuse. To safeguard children from harm we have policies in place, (which you can view at our website by clicking [here](#)) to help us mitigate and respond to what is currently referred to as 'peer on peer abuse' (this policy should be read in conjunction with the anti-bullying policy).

The definitions of bullying and abuse have somewhat evolved over the years as our understanding about the signs, symptoms and effects has developed for the better. For many parents/carers you may find that raising a child today and teaching them about healthy relationships feels quite different to any teaching you may have received as a child. Our children today have the opportunity to engage in friendships in a vastly different manner, across different mediums and in many cases (online) without the direct guidance of adults to help them navigate this successfully.

Developmentally it is expected that children will encounter a variety of experiences as their friendships grow. A child's experiences can be shaped by their influences, their resilience and their previous life experiences amongst other things. Being a good friend is an important life skill – one that doesn't come naturally. We can't just expect our children to know 'how to be a good friend' by getting them together with other kids and leaving them to figure it out. As the adults around them, we need to help them.

Top tips to help our children

- Focus on supporting positive **self-esteem** – a child with a strong sense of self is less likely to be drawn into unhealthy relationships
- Role-play the **social skills** that they need – children need to be shown how to be polite, how to be respectful and how to apologise
- **Set a good example** – remember that children learn from watching how we interact with others
- View mistakes as a **learning opportunity** – children will 'get it wrong' at times, we can help them move forwards by encouraging discussion about what we could do differently next time
- **Create opportunities** for a variety of friendships to develop across different settings – playdates, joining clubs/activities, extended families, introducing yourselves to new people
- From an early age encourage **sharing, flexibility and compromise** – valuable skills that will help a child engage more successfully with others as they grow
- Teach children how to have **boundaries** with their friends – enable children to know how to use their words to communicate when a game needs to stop or that they do not like something
- Promote an appreciation for **diversity** and individuality – learning to be respectful of other people's choices/decisions and developing empathy for others are key skills required
- Talk about **feelings** often – help children by validating their feelings, provide space to truly hear how they feel and equip them with the tools they need to communicate this in a healthy way
- Help children know who can **support** them if they are having difficulties and role model ways to overcome challenges
- As children develop towards becoming a pre-teen, friendships become trickier at times [Young Minds](#) has some helpful guidance for when children are not getting along or feeling uncomfortable amongst their peers
- [Childline](#) also has some great advice for children who are falling out with their peers

What we need children to remember...

It's okay to not get on with some people – we can't always be friends with everyone we meet.

However, whether it is face to face or online, all of us have to be accountable for how we behave and interact. Increasingly schools are supporting children due to their activities and interactions with their peers which occur outside of the school day, in many cases over social media apps and gaming platforms.

What we need parents/carers to remember ...

Please routinely check and monitor the interactions that your child has across social networking platforms.

Please do report any concerns that you identify to enable us to best support those involved.



How to contact me: It's never too soon to make contact if you have any concerns. You can reach me via text on the PSA mobile **07903 613074** or via email, terri-anne.old@celticcross.education Normal working days are Tuesday and Wednesday 8.00-16.00 and Thursday 8.00-13:00

