

Dear Parent,

I'm thrilled to have ... in my class. I look forward to teaching them and doing my part to build a community of learners. I do, however, want to be real with you about life in classrooms.

Any teacher will tell you that classrooms are a community, and in any community, as well as the good times, there are also moments of frustration, tension and jealousy, which lead to occasional unkindness and even anger between students. As you'd understand (from being alive for a while), that's how communities work. Classrooms are not magical oases of beauty and peace – they are **real** communities.

Although not everybody will be friends all of the time, we know that more learning happens in classrooms where students feel connected to each other. Relationships are important, but when left to form without any intervention, we see the formation of *in groups* and *out groups*. When classrooms get too *cliquey*, problems become more likely.

So, I will be doing some confidential social metric work to see how connected students feel to one another, what the friendship groups look like, and to identify *relationship hot spots* that may need some work. I will also be:

- Teaching social skills – formally and incidentally through regular class conversations and circles
- Giving all students private, direct, honest but kind feedback about their social skills (which they won't always like)
- Encouraging all students to try to find ways to deal with their own problems, and, when needed, scaffolding this with restorative approaches
- Discouraging parents from becoming overly involved in their child's quarrels and issues
- Discouraging parents from interrogating their children about their social life at school, particularly when their child is in the middle of sorting something out for themselves.

Note to parents: sometimes *stepping back* promotes resilience and lowers anxiety as kids develop a sense that they can handle more of their own problems.

I will also be:

- Insisting that students work with all other students in the class when I ask them to – not just their friends
- Changing the seating plan from time to time
- From time to time, asking your child to go out of their way to show kindness and acceptance to a student who may be struggling to achieve a social footing in our class. This is known as *required helpfulness* and is a powerful resilience builder in young people.

There will be bumps along the way. I am certainly not a perfect teacher, nobody's children are perfect and nor will anybody be expected to be perfect in our classroom. I will however, lean on your child to do their best and be their best. Although feedback isn't always positive, it's essential to learning. I will always endeavour to give feedback with kindness and respect.

Thanks in advance for understanding that your child's time in my class won't always be an oasis of beauty and peace! I look forward to expanding on this in conversations with you and working to build the emotional resilience of your child and this class.

Regards,

The Teacher