

The Two People Who Can Change Your Child's School Life

When we think about what helps our children thrive at school, we often focus on academics, extracurricular activities, or even which school they attend. But research suggests something far simpler—and far more powerful—can shape your child's school experience, for better or for worse:

Two people.

That's it. Just two.

If your child has:

1. **One adult at school they're excited to see (and who is excited to see them), and**
2. **One peer who welcomes them, includes them, or simply says, "Come sit with me,"**

...then your child is far more likely to enjoy school, participate, cope with challenges, and grow in confidence.

Why These Two People Matter

A trusted adult gives your child a sense of stability, support, and significance. It could be a teacher, a librarian, a coach, or even a school office staff member. When a child knows there's at least one adult who notices them, smiles at them, and enjoys their presence, they feel *seen*—and that's powerful.

It's even better if that adult can ask them about their life. Sometimes it will be personal. "How did you go at the Eisteddfod on the weekend?" Other times it will be school-focused. "How are you feeling about the athletics carnival?" or "What did you think about the book you told me you were reading?"

What matters most is that an adult knows them by name and takes an appropriate interest.

The peer is possibly even more critical. One friend, one classmate, one buddy who says, "Hey, I saved you a seat," or "Want to hang out at lunch?"—this kind of welcome creates a sense of *belonging* that no school initiative can manufacture.

Together, these two people form a simple, meaningful support network that builds resilience, boosts wellbeing, and makes school a place your child *wants* to be.

What Can I Do?

Every parent wants this magic for their child. But the challenge we face is that we can't force friendships or assign a teacher to love your child. What we can do is create opportunities and open doors. Here's how:

1. Help Your Child Build Connection with an Adult at School

- Encourage positive teacher-student relationships. Support your child to show interest in class, ask questions, or share something they enjoy with a teacher.

- Share positive feedback with your child's teacher. "Ella LOVED yesterday's lesson and couldn't stop talking about it" or "James speaks really highly of you and we've seen such an attitude change since you've been teaching him" can attune a teacher to your child's interests and presence.
- Reinforce respect and gratitude. Model how to say "thank you" and "hello" to staff—and encourage your child to do the same.

2. Create Space for Peer Friendships

- Ask gentle, open questions: "Who did you hang out with today?" or "Who do you enjoy talking to at recess?"
- Arrange occasional playdates, walks home, or weekend hangouts—especially in the early years of school or after a transition.
- Celebrate kindness, not popularity. Encourage inclusive behaviour: "I saw how you invited Jordan to play. How did that make him feel?"

3. If It's Not Happening, Take Action

If your child *doesn't* have these two people, don't panic—but don't ignore it either.

- Talk with your child about how they feel and what they wish was different.
- Partner with the school. Teachers and support staff can be intentional about pairing kids up, offering leadership roles, or facilitating small group activities.
- Consider extracurricular opportunities where your child can connect with like-minded peers or a new mentor figure.

School doesn't have to be perfect. For most children, it won't be. But if your child walks through the gates and feels a little spark of joy at seeing one trusted adult and one friendly peer, everything changes.

Two people. That's all it takes for a better school experience.



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