Early social skills
Social skills - getting along with the people around

As young children develop social skills they begin to feel confident about themselves and their ability to get along with other people. These skills include knowing how to behave in different situations and following the rules and routines that apply in their culture and in wider society.

Children learn these skills in infancy. They learn the ways that they should behave with family and in community. They watch others and learn the rules and routines of their people.

Families can help children with the social skills they will need in schooling and in life.

Social skills do not automatically develop well for all children. In some cases, special opportunities need to be provided to practise and encourage these ways of behaving.

Here are some of the places children will use social skills in their community:

- at family gatherings
- at festivals and special events
- in church
- in getting themselves ready for events
- in talking to older people
- in playing with other children
- in joining in dances, songs and chants

- in asking for what they need and listening to the needs of others
- in learning games and jokes
- in learning their responsibilities
- in learning about their country
Here are some of the social skills children may need when they commence schooling:

- keeping track of their own belongings
- being able to go to the toilet and wash their hands
- following rules and routines
- being able to keep going to finish a task
- expressing their feelings and opinions
- asking questions when they don't understand something
- trying things they're not sure about yet
- accepting feedback from the teacher/adult carer on their learning or behaviour
- knowing when and how to give answers and opinions
- organising their belongings and their time
- being able to cooperate with other children
- taking turns and joining in
Here are some of the ways families can help children with social skills:

talk about the important things children should learn
talk about the ways they should act in different home and community situations
talk about what is expected and how to ask for help

encourage them to look forward to learning
ask them what they enjoyed from the ‘school day’
help them to solve problems and arguments without fighting
praise them when they share and take turns and solve problems

tell them the things they’re good at and when you’re proud of them
remind children how we operate in different situations
give children support in learning new things
give them increasing responsibility for things they should do independently

Children learn social skills through:

- talking, laughing and playing
- mixing with different people
- trying out new things
- being allowed to make mistakes and learn
- discussing ideas and opinions
- learning to do things for themselves

with other children, family, community and teachers