

# Let's Discuss - *Interaction between staff and children*

Written & developed by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy

One of the most important aspects of working in Outside School Hours care is the interaction that takes place between staff and children. If the interaction takes place in a positive environment this will encourage children to use positive interaction when talking to others. It is important that OSHC staff role model positive interactions at all times.

Interaction between staff and children takes place anywhere anytime. For example:

- ◆ The moment you pick the children up from school
- ◆ During serving and eating afternoon tea
- ◆ Greeting the children as they arrive at the centre
- ◆ Discussing what to do for the afternoon
- ◆ Viewing the program
- ◆ Viewing the afternoon tea menu
- ◆ Playing sport
- ◆ Playing a game

The way you interact and communicate with the children can build or destroy a child's confidence and self esteem

- ◆ Take time to get to know each child at the service. Find out their likes, dislikes and interests.
- ◆ Take the time to really listen to the children. Never judge them or over do it with the giving of advice.
- ◆ Communicate with the children at an appropriate level for the child's development.
- ◆ Display appropriate levels and tone of your voice so that children will eventually learn that shouting is neither acceptable or necessary to get their message across.
- ◆ Role model the act of taking turns and allowing everyone to have their say. This involves encouraging the quieter children to join in or say what they think, and making time for the slower thinkers to have input and fully participate in the discussion. In this way children learn there is a process to all group discussion. It is not he who shouts the loudest gets heard, and meetings are not a free for all. (Refer to the Learning Guide—Building Trust and Confidence Through Leadership.)

## Greeting the children

*Greet children by name every afternoon as they arrive. This will have a positive effect on the children as they feel personally welcomed.*

*If there are large numbers of children involved ensure sufficient staff are on hand to welcome each child individually.*

*Greeting the children in this way is not the same as taking the roll. This is your acknowledgement of your "one on one" interest and appreciation of each child.*

# Use your leadership skills in your interactions with children

## Bus rides

Asking the children to sit quietly and fold their arms is such a waste of time and creates stress for both yourself and the children.

Yes we have to have safety and all the children need to be seated, but if they have been taught how to have a conversation in low voice tones, this creates a much more interesting and less stressful environment for the child who has been in school all day.

If you are the playleader (not the driver) on the bus run, ask the children in a moderate tone how their day has been. Have they enjoyed an aspect of the day? You could start to play a game that would not distract the driver, such as word association.

I can assure you this will be much less stressful than shouting, "Sit down, be quiet, don't do that, etc."

It is time spent more constructively.

If you are walking back to the centre, ask the children about their day and maybe play a game of making a word out of the letters on the number plates of cars, or ask them to spot a certain car or colour. You will remain in control of the group and create a far more pleasant journey for all concerned.

## Afternoon tea

Afternoon tea and what is being served is important to most children in OSHC, so why not take part in this social event rather than being a spectator or food server.

This is a time to role model good behaviour and manners, so don't miss the opportunity.

- ◆ Display good eating habits.
- ◆ Sit down while eating.
- ◆ Show enjoyment of sitting with the children and encourage lively conversations in a moderate tone of voice.
- ◆ Encourage everyone in the group to take a turn.

This experience will be a good life skill for the children and provides an excellent opportunity to chat and get to know your children.

*"In my role of training staff in OSHC I have been on buses where staff are transporting children from school or on excursion. In the worst of these experiences the ride has been chaos with children shouting, screaming, standing up, and walking about on the bus. If this kind of behaviour takes place this also sets the tone for the children's behaviour when they arrive at the centre or the excursion venue.*

*The most successful bus runs are the ones where children are involved in some small activity and interacting in a positive way with each other."*

*Christine Cross*