

# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

## Using praise and encouragement effectively

AIM: To foster self-esteem and encourage preferred behaviours

- Encouragement and praise are important to everyone
- Lack of praise and encouragement will tend to increase poor behaviours
- Children who receive lots of praise and encouragement are more likely to use these skills when dealing with other children and are more popular within their peer group.
- Children who receive lots of praise have increased self-esteem.
- Children love it and never get tired of it!

### Strategies

- Catch children being good and praise them
- Eye contact makes it more effective
- Praise small steps and progress towards the behaviour you are aiming for
- Offer the praise or reward immediately and be specific about the behaviour you are praising.  
E.g., *'You did well there. I noticed that J knocked into you deliberately, but you came over to ask an adult for help rather than get into an argument with him'*.
- It's ok to praise small everyday things; you don't have to save praise for outstanding performances.
- Praising a good behaviour will increase the chances of it happening again. On average you have to carry out a new behaviour 21 times before it becomes a new habit, so keep on encouraging and praising.
- For older children (over 8yrs) or children who don't seem to take praise well, noticing what they are doing with a positive comment is just as effective.
- Point out the good effect of what the child has done.  
E.g., *'You took your time over this and it's a more organised piece of work'*
- Comments such as *'Take time to plan your story at the start'* are more helpful than *'your stories are fine but they tend to ramble on at the end'*.
- Notice specific improvements and effort. Help child monitor his own progress.
- Use positive comments 'walk along the corridor' rather than 'don't run'. Aim to use 5 positive comments for every negative one.
- Research shows that praise promotes improved performance and positive mental health. Remember to praise yourself and colleagues!