

### **Developing social interaction skills**

Social use of language is essential for children in developing and maintaining relationships with their peers and adults and in managing daily classroom life. This includes:

- Being able to participate in a conversation by taking it in turns with the other speaker;
- Knowing that you have to answer when a question has been asked;
- The ability to notice and respond to the non-verbal aspects of language (reacting appropriately to the other person's body language and mood as well as their words);
- Awareness that you have to introduce a topic of conversation in order for the listener to understand fully;
- Knowing which words or what sort of sentence-type to use when initiating a conversation or responding to something someone has said;
- The ability to maintain a topic (or change topic appropriately or interrupt politely);
- The ability to maintain appropriate eye-contact (not too much staring and not too much looking away) during a conversation; and
- The ability to distinguish how to talk and behave towards different communicative partners (formal with some, informal with others).
- Knowing that you need to listen to the ideas of others, pool ideas / negotiate integration of ideas, modify ideas and try them out.

### **Activities & strategies to develop social interaction skills**

#### **Encourage turn taking skills**

Encourage the child to take turns in structured games and in conversation. Use visual aids in the classroom as prompts to use good turn-taking skills.

Activities to try....

- I went to the shops and I bought... each child has a turn to say 'I went to the shops and I bought....they then have to wait their turn whilst listening very carefully to what each child has said so they can remember each item.
- Building tower / rolling ball for very basic turn taking skills practise taking turns to roll a ball to each other or put bricks on a tower. After each turn ask, who's turn now and encourage the child to say 'my turn'

- Pass it on- take turns to pass an object round the circle and say something about it. Children must listen very carefully and wait their turn to ensure they don't repeat somebody's answer.

### **Encourage use of good listening skills**

Again, visual prompts could be used in the classroom

Explain and practice how to do good listening and that it also involves sitting still, looking at the person who's talking and thinking about what is being said.

Activities to try...

- Children get into partners and take it in turns to ask each other 3 questions, remembering to use good eye contact, turn taking and listening. Each child then has to feed back to the group 3 things about their partner.

### **Encourage use of social phrases and greetings**

Encourage children to use appropriate social skills such as saying good morning and using good eye contact, for example whilst answering the register.

### **Help the child to maintain topics of conversation appropriately**

If the child changes the subject or gets sidetracked, remind them of the subject and encourage them to talk about the other topic afterwards. Let the child know if the topic is not relevant to the listener by using phrases like 'I know that already. You told me yesterday' or 'you need to finish telling me about X before you tell me about Y'

### **Create opportunities for social interaction within a structured activity**

Some children find it difficult to initiate play or conversation with peers and may need some support to do this. Set up opportunities where children need to work together to get a message to another teacher / complete a task / try out a new game together etc.

