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Effective rewards and motivators

Points to note

- Children with autism usually do not have an 'in-built' desire to please others.
- Rewarding positive behaviour helps children with autism understand what is acceptable behaviour.
- The child with autism might become anxious when asked to do something that is unfamiliar, preferring the activities he knows. This makes him feel safe and secure. This is why it's important to identify and use appropriate rewards and motivators.
- The rewards that motivate normally developing children often do not appeal to a child with autism.

What you can do

- Assess the child's interests to establish what will be the most effective rewards and motivators. Conduct regular reviews as the child's interests can change over a period of time.
- Creative teaching staff can try working the child's preferred interest into lessons.
- Very young children will need to learn there is a connection between rewards, praise and good work. Give praise immediately, remembering to look and sound happy so that the child understands your meaning even if he doesn't understand your words.
- Allow the child free time at his preferred interest if he completes his work before the other children.
- Give the child 'Behaviour Bucks' as a reward for good behaviour. Photocopy dollar 'notes' that can then be used to 'buy' a larger reward. A great method for teaching money maths.
- Another tangible reward system is a sticker card with a grid of squares. The child earns one sticker for good behaviour. When the grid is full it can be traded in for a reward. Use stickers that relate to the child's interest.
- Use a communication book between home and school to report on progress, skills learnt, behaviour etc. This will give parents the opportunity to learn about and praise their child for good behaviour.
- Initially offer the child frequent rewards to improve motivation - you can be more selective later.