

Having fun both indoors and outdoors whilst engaged in physically active games and activities is a major consideration when educators are planning or presenting learning experiences to children attending Short Street Occasional Care Centre.

The Captain's Coming game is a particular favourite for both children and educators as it allows children the opportunity of practice and reinforced locomotive fundamental movement skills.

An activity without too many rules or the need for lots of equipment or space, the Captain's Coming game is set aboard a boat or a ship, in this case a pirate ship as this is a children's favourite.

Educators previously mark a specific area for the children to remain in under the pretence of this being the boat or the ship they're sailing upon.

Roles are then assigned to various children, for instance the captain, the captain's girlfriend and the crew, in this case buccaneers.

Educators then explain the various movements required for the children to enact whilst playing the game, for instance saluting when the captain appears, shaking the hips and saying woohoo for the captain's girlfriend, outlining positions to run to on the boat or the ship, running to the front for the bow, back for the stern, to the right for starboard and to the left for port, crouching on all fours to scrub the deck, pretending to haul on the ropes or to hoist the sails or Jolly Roger, and to balance along the pre-drawn outline when they are instructed to walk the rim.

Lots of movement, all while the children are engaged in enacting this activity. Educators need to continue with a sense of drama by reminding children not to fall off the boat or the ship or they'll be eaten by the sharks.

Not only does this ensure participants remain within the perimeters of the game, but they can be easily supervised in the system when and if necessary.

When presenting this activity to children I always try to remember that we don't necessarily need additional props and/or equipment to enhance the activity. However it's important to remain flexible to children's needs and the children asked for these props to be included today.

In fact all that's really needed is energetic, enthusiastic educators who have a sense of fun and genuinely enjoy engaging and interacting with children in a physically active game that is dramatic, imaginative, full of exploration and discovery, and engages the children in lots of movement, including the fundamental movement skills.

This year we've had a number of three year old children transition into the preschool room. This is an addition to including children with additional needs and has meant that we've had to break down the children's physical skills into easier tasks, focusing mainly on skills such as running, balancing on pre-draw lines on the floor or grass, large hand and arm movements, and side sliding, etc.

With ongoing opportunities to practice and participate in this game, educators can then later scaffold upon existing skills and interests to perhaps include additional movements, such as the children crouching down lower whilst working on the jousting board and then reaching up high with their arms extended or extending their arms in an outward position before jumping off the board.

So to we can begin to introduce new physical skills and concepts, again based upon the children's interests, such as hopping from port to starboard as the seas begin to get rougher, or scuttle like crabs over the rocks, etc.

We're only really limited by our own time constraints and imagination.

As stated previously this is a fantastic game that allows for both small and fairly large numbers of children. It can be as short or as long and involved as you like, dependent upon children's interests and attention spans. It allows children to scaffold upon the existing physical skills, including their locomotor skills, whilst becoming involved in decision making, as they can offer suggestion for possible movements they'd like included in the game.

Children who may lack confidence and self-esteem can participate equally, as they are not required to lead or previously know the rules and can easily follow others' movements, thus allowing them to participate equally.

Educators at Short Street have found that with continued practice children will gradually gain control over their whole bodies and become aware of how to negotiate spaces and objects around them.

Last but not least, Captain's Coming is a fantastic, fun game to promote, scaffold and practice fundamental movement skills.