



**FIG 14-4** School-age children enjoy engaging in activities with a “best friend.”

### Clubs and Peer Groups

One of the outstanding characteristics of middle childhood is the formation of formalized groups, or clubs. A prominent feature of these groups is the code of rigid rules imposed on the members. There is exclusiveness in the selection of persons who have the privilege of joining. Acceptance in the group is often determined on a pass–fail basis according to social or behavioral criteria. Conformity is the core of the group structure. There are often secret codes, shared interests, special styles of dress, and special words that signify membership in the group. Each child must abide by a standard of behavior established by the members. Conforming to the rules provides children with feelings of security and relieves them of the responsibility of making decisions. By merging their identities with those of their peers, children are able to move from the family group to an outside group as a step toward seeking