

## Downs Way School Policy for Listening and Concentrating

"Children need to learn to listen before they can listen to learn." - Sue Palmer (educational consultant)

Listening is integral to learning, as is concentration on hearing what is being said and done in the learning environment. Quiet thinking time is an important precursor to giving an explanation or opinion.

Children who haven't learned to listen naturally need help to understand what listening actually involves. Many children are not able to concentrate on what a speaker is saying because they are too easily distracted by other things that may be going on around them. They are not aware that listening means cutting off from these distractions and need to be taught this important life skill.

### Listening to Talk for Learning

There are three dimensions to talking and listening

- Social :- people and relationships
- Communicative :- communicating meaning to an audience
- Cognitive :- interaction of ideas and development of new ideas

Listening is an integral part of this process. In most social and cognitive uses of talk we continually switch roles of talker and listener so that shared understanding is achieved.

The ability to listen in order to learn is evident from research; we systematically teach listening skills to our children.

We teach rules for listening by referring to the list of listening rules displayed in our classrooms. We refer to these rules when asking the children to listen.

### Rules for listening

A GOOD LISTENER - Looks at the listener

Sits still

Is quiet

Tries to remember what the speaker has said

We teach one rule at a time and discuss what it means and why it is important. We make opportunities to put the rules into practice by giving a paired task, by asking children to explain to another and asking some children what another has just explained, by encouraging quiet listening in Assembly and during Circle Time.

We model how to be a good listener by listening carefully and attentively ourselves in class and group discussions. We demonstrate how a good listener behaves.

We create an environment for speaking and listening by:-

- creating a classroom that motivates children to talk and interact
- providing a balance between quiet and noisy areas inside and outside

- involving children with interactive
- sharing responsibility for use and storage of materials and equipment, providing what the children need for role play
- having spontaneous role play
- providing access to open ended materials to stimulate imagination
- using puppets

We encourage the language of social interaction by:-

- providing frequent opportunities for conversation and discussion
- modelling and discussing appropriate social courtesies with TAs
- modelling conversations in role-play situations
- modelling conversations with puppets
- creating collaborative working situations
- discussing the importance of planning, talking and helping each other
- commenting on appreciative listening and courteous participation
- encouraging the children to learn acceptable group behaviour by taking turns to speak and listening politely to each other
- discussing recent classroom experiences and activities
- sharing samples of work
- modelling introduction of an item and giving a simple description and then encouraging the children to comment or ask questions
- making opportunities for partner-sharing activities, modelling appropriate language and listening behaviour

We encourage all of the above in order for the children to become independent thinkers. We need to teach the children to take risks with their learning, but also know that they cannot learn in isolation. They need to find out from and with others how to learn what they do not yet know. Listening and concentrating are pre-requisite skills for this learning.