

Curriculum Newsletter Spring 2010

"We can work it out!"

This term (terms 3 and 4) we are extending last term's focus on speaking and listening into encouraging the children to problem solve and explain their thinking about what they are doing and learning. However, this is very challenging for young children so we need to help them to learn and understand the language for thinking. The key to finding out what your child is thinking and to help them talk about it, is the type of questions you ask and comments you make. The following examples illustrate some of the ways in which we will be encouraging every child at Lydalls to solve problems and talk about the "what, why and how"! These are all conversations you can have at home too. They do not fall under any one curriculum area, but can be applied to all areas of learning. We hope you will find them useful. If your child tells you anything interesting about what they have done or are doing as a result of conversations at home, please tell us via the 'Share With Us box'.

- ✎ Reminding (*help your child hold on to his thought*) "Don't forget Mack that you said that this stone will melt if I boil it"
- ✎ Offering your own experience (*child will offer theirs more readily if you offer yours first*) "I really like to listen to music when I cook, it makes me feel happy"
- ✎ Suggesting (*in the spirit of helplessness, not prescription*) "You might like to try doing it this way"
- ✎ Encouragement to further thinking (*more effective than praise, especially when specific*) "You have really thought hard about where to put this door in the palace, but where will you put the windows?"
- ✎ Offering alternative viewpoint (*as children become used to sharing their views, you can gently challenge thinking*) "Maybe Goldilocks wasn't naughty when she ate the porridge. After all, since the porridge was left on the table, perhaps she thought it had been left for her?"
- ✎ Speculating (*encourage children to open their minds to other possibilities*) "Do you think the three bears might have forgiven Goldilocks and asked her to come to live with them in their house?"
- ✎ Reciprocating (*two way, where child and adult are on the same wavelength - sustained shared thinking*) Child "I want to do some gardening" Adult "What a great idea. I would like to do some as well but what sort of gardening shall we do?"
- ✎ Asking open questions (*to have good conversations with children, questions both closed (when you need to know a fact eg "Where does he live?") or open, should be used sparingly to avoid a child feeling under pressure. One or two are good if asked in the spirit of inquiry. Open questions are best (you don't know the child's answer!)*) "How did you manage to make this balance so well?" "How did you move all the sand?" "What could happen next?" "Why does this shaker make a different noise?" "Can you think of a way to make the ball go faster down the slope?" "Where do you think the wind comes from?"
- ✎ Modelling thinking (*young children need to understand how adults use their thinking*) "After work I need to take my dog to the vet's, take my books back to the library and buy some food for supper. So, I wonder what I should do first?"

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!