



**Special Needs Tip:** Things to try at home based on strategies we use in school to help support your child's learning. We hope that these ideas might be helpful, but there is no obligation or expectation for you to use them.

### **Talking about learning**

It is important to encourage your child to talk about what they are doing and learning and for you to discuss it with them. This will help them to understand and process their learning. In school, we encourage children to talk about their learning with adults, other children and in groups.

By listening to others talk about their learning children can get and share ideas and so develop models to follow. We sometimes call the 'borrowing' and using of ideas from other people 'magpie-ing'.

There are different ways you support your child to talk about learning at home.

#### **1. Verbalisation- when children speak about and share their learning and thinking aloud**

This can include when children to talk to others about their learning and self-talk. Often 'self-talk' takes place silently within our heads, particularly as we get older. Yet, it is vital for learning. Self-talk is the conversations you have with yourself about not forgetting the things on the shopping list and where did you put your keys. It is very important for children to support their learning and we need to encourage children to engage in self-talk as well as 'verbalising' which is talking about their learning to an audience.

For children talking about what they are doing and sharing their learning is key to developing their understanding. It enables children to plan their actions and consider possibilities. In this way they are able to develop a greater understanding of how they learn and what helps them to learn better.

You can support your child with this by modelling and verbalising your thinking as you do things. In school, we do this when we model how to do maths sums or write sentences, so they hear our thinking and can use this to support theirs. At home you can do this with learning tasks or with everyday things like building a Lego tower, writing a shopping list and deciding what you need to buy or cooking.

For example: When cutting up a carrot you could say things like:



**a) Planning the task:** To cut this carrot, I must hold it still while making sure that my fingers are clear of the knife, so that I don't cut myself. I need to use a chopping board, so I don't damage the table.

**b) Monitoring the task:** You can ask yourself and answer questions like. How am I doing? Are the pieces of carrot the right size for what I need? Am I keeping my fingers clear of the knife? Am I following the recipe/ instructions accurately? How could I do this better? Do I need someone to show me how to do this again?

c) Evaluating the task: You can ask yourself and answer questions like. Have I completed the task? How do I know that I have finished? Are the pieces the right size? What have I done well with this task? What could I do to make this easier next time?

It is helpful to talk to your child and ask them questions to prompt them to talk about what they are doing, why and how.

## **2. Discussion- talking about learning with an adult or another child**

We are more familiar with discussion. It is the two or more way process of sharing ideas about something. For many children, they need supporting and prompting to talk about their learning and discussion supports this. They need adults to ask them questions for example:

- What are you doing?
- Why are you doing it like that?
- What do you think will happen, if you ...?
- What are you planning to do next?
- How can you improve ...?
- Have you tried ...?
- How do you feel about what you have done?
- What did you like about your learning?

When you are encouraging your child to discuss their learning, it is important to give them 'thinking time'. Often it will take children time to process what you are asking and then they will need time to work out their answer. It is very easy to assume that they are not answering or don't know how to answer so we jump in with another question or answer our own question. At school, we have to work hard to wait and allow children time to respond. Sometimes, it helps to prompt them by repeating the question or nodding.

Remember with discussions about learning, it is important that you share your ideas and thinking too. This acts a model for children, for thinking, and how to explain things. It allows you to extend your child's thinking as well as giving them a chance to take the role of teacher and explain things to you.