Supporting Quiet Children

Some children are quiet by nature, they can talk well but may prefer to be by themselves, or just talk to one other child, rather than in a group. There is nothing wrong with this, however some children are quiet because they are anxious about talking. In some extreme cases children may have a phobia of hearing their voice in public and therefore avoid talking, these children are described as having ‘Selective Mutism’.

Below are some ideas to help quiet children feel more comfortable about joining in.

- **Build confidence**; Confidence comes from the positive feeling of enjoyment, success and pride in our achievements. Becoming a confident talker is like learning to climb a ladder; children need motivation, praise and practise.

- **Avoid applying pressure**- everyone involved needs to agree to avoid applying pressure to make the child talk, instead we need to praise and encourage other forms of communication such as facial expression, gesture and drawing.

- **Create a positive and supportive atmosphere**- talk positively about the children and talk positively to the children. For example praise the child for the good things they can do, and use positive phrases around them.

- **Give reassurance**.- quiet children often need a lot of reassurance and will look for adult approval . We need to build up the child’s positive self image . How adults respond to children’s efforts and progress is really important. All the adults on the setting need to agree about how to give verbal praise and offer rewards such as stickers.

- **Encourage play**; another way of building a child’s confidence is to encourage cooperation with another child. Allow the child to choose a friend to play with, encourage games that involve taking turns but have little focus on talking such as, building a tower.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local speech and language therapy admin team, who can direct you to a therapist who can give you some further advice. Their number is 0113 3055309.

Based on Supporting Quiet Children Maggie Johnson & Michael Jones.