

THE 4 KEY ASPECTS OF

HIGH-QUALITY QUESTIONING

This 'Quick Guide' will support practitioners to reflect upon the 4 key aspects of high-quality effective questioning and ways to include these within practice.

ASPECT 1: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

These questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no". They encourage discussion rather than single-word answers.

'Open-Ended Questions' support:

- Problem-Solving.
- Greater use of language and vocabulary.
- Practitioner learning about individual children.
- 'Sustained Shared Thinking.'
- Building of children's self-confidence.

"Did you have fun at nursery?" becomes "What did you like doing at nursery today?"

"Do you want to use the green paint?" becomes "What colours would you like to paint with?"

"Do you like playing with the blocks?" becomes "Why do you like playing in the block area?"

"Are you going to build a tall tower?" becomes "How can we build a tower that's really tall?"

ASPECT 2: COMMENTING

Commenting can be used as a 'softer' approach to support development of children's thinking skills. When 'commenting', there is no pressure for children to respond verbally, only positive opportunities to listen and learn.

Different types of 'commenting' that can be during interactions:

Labelling – Using nouns, verbs, and adjectives relating to what they are doing or looking at. *"There's the helicopter."*

Exclamatory Words – These generate a strong emotional response. *"Wow!"* expresses amazement and surprise. *"Phew"* conveys relief.

Self-Talk – When you talk out loud about what you're doing. *"I'm tidying the blocks away."*

Wondering Out Loud – A way of asking questions without adding pressure to answer. *"I wonder..."*

'Commenting' enables children to:

- Hear good speech and language.
- Learn about the world around them.
- Join-in and communicate with practitioners.

ASPECT 3: HIGHER-ORDER QUESTIONS

These invite answers that go beyond simple information, encouraging learners to use abstract language functions: speculating, hypothesising, giving and justifying opinions.

'Higher Order Questioning' supports:

Creating – Generating new ideas, products, or points of view.

Evaluating – Considering and justifying decisions and actions.

Analysing – Exploring understanding and relationships.

Applying – Using information in other situations.

Understanding – Ability to explain ideas and concepts.

Remembering – Recalling information. (Bloom's Taxonomy)

"What would happen if?" can support creating, design, construction, planning and invention skills.

"What would you do next time?" supports evaluating, hypothesising, critiquing, and experimenting.

"How can you fix it?" supports analysis, comparison, deconstructing, and solution finding.

"Why did that work better?" supports understanding, explanation, applying, and implementing.

"What have you learned about?" supports remembering, recognising, describing, retrieving, naming, and finding.

ASPECT 4: 'WOW' WORDS

These words enrich and expand children's listening and speaking vocabulary through the introduction of new sophisticated words.

There are three tiers of WOW words:

Tier 1: Everyday Basic Words – *"Friend", "Happy", or "Baby."*

Tier 2: WOW Words – High frequency words for more mature language users. These can be used regularly to support language development. *"Freezing", "Discover", "Marvellous."*

Tier 3: Advanced Words – Low frequency words limited to specific contexts and interests. *"Xylophone", "Astronaut", "Quadruple."*

Using 'WOW Words' in conversations:

Rather than using the word "dinosaur" generically, introduce each species using their proper name: *"Triceratops."*

Call them by their name or type: *"oak", "sycamore", "deciduous."*

Introduce more advanced words such as *"enormous"* or *"minuscule"* instead of only basic words such as *"big"* or *"small."*