

# Sustained Shared Thinking: Alternatives to Questions

Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford defines sustained shared thinking as an episode in which two or more individuals (children together, or adults and children) 'work together' in an intellectual way to extend a narrative, solve a problem, clarify a concept, or evaluate activities etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking, and it must develop and extend.

## How do we support children's sustained shared thinking?

**Tuning in:** listening carefully to what is being said, observing body language and what the child is doing.

**Showing genuine interest:** giving their whole attention to the child, maintaining eye contact, affirming, smiling, nodding.

**Respecting children's own decisions and choices by inviting children to elaborate:** saying things like 'I really want to know more about this' and listening and engaging in the response.

**Re-capping:** 'So you think that ...'

**Offering the adult's own experience:** 'I like to listen to music when I cook supper at home.'

**Clarifying ideas:** 'Right Darren, so you think that this stone will melt if I boil it in water?'

**Suggesting:** 'You might like to try doing it this way.'

**Reminding:** 'Don't forget that you said that this stone will melt if I boil it.'

**Using encouragement to further thinking:** 'You have really thought hard about where to put this door in the palace – where will you put the windows?'

**Offering an alternative viewpoint:** 'Maybe Goldilocks wasn't naughty when she ate the porridge?'

**Speculating:** 'Do you think the three bears would have liked Goldilocks to come to live with them as their friend?'

**Reciprocating:** 'Thank goodness that you were wearing wellington boots when you jumped in those puddles Kwame. Look at my feet, they are soaking wet!'

**Asking open questions:** 'How did you ...?' 'Why does this ...?' 'What happens next?' 'What do you think?' 'I wonder what would happen if ...?'

**Modeling thinking:** 'I have to think hard about what I do this evening. I need to take my dog to the vet because he has a sore foot, take my library books back to the library and buy some food for dinner tonight. But I just won't have time to do all of these things.'