

Appendix 4 – Our listening work – Information for parents

Listening is a special kind of attention – to listen we have to pay attention to sounds. Many children who have problems with listening are good with other kinds of attention. They may be able to sit and watch their favourite DVD for a long time or they may be able to concentrate for ages on their favourite toy. However, a child who has difficulties with listening may have problems with:

- listening to stories, especially in a group
- listening to you explaining something
- waiting for their turn in a conversation or a game.

Listening is a really important skill for learning language but it is also a very important skill at school. A good listener at school is more likely to take part in class discussions, remember what they have learned and understand what they have to do. In fact if you're a good listener, you are more likely to be a good learner.

As you've probably discovered, just telling children to 'Listen!' does not really help very much. This is because listening is quite a hard thing to do. It's not just one skill – it is several skills. In our work on listening, we aim to help the children learn the skills that make up good listening.

Our four rules of 'Good Listening' are: **Looking** at the person who's talking, **Keeping still**, **Keeping quiet**, **Listening** to all the words.

You can also help by reminding your child about these rules during the everyday things you do together that need them to listen. This will really help them to use their new skills in real life. You can try:

→ **Reminding them of the rule before you need them to listen:**

'I've got a surprise for you. When you're quiet, I'll tell you what it is.'

'Look at me – where are your shoes?'

'I'm going to read a story. You need to keep really still so you can do good listening.'

→ **Praising them when you can see them using the skills:**

'Well done, you kept really quiet and that helped you to do good listening.'

'Great, I can see your eyes so I know you're ready to listen to me.'

'Brilliant! You listened right to the end!'

→ **Being specific about what they're doing wrong when they're not listening:**

'You're talking at the same time as me – that makes it very hard for you to do good listening.'