

13: Quiet or reluctant to talk

Just a quiet child or something more?

Some children are naturally quiet and present with a similar personality at home and in the nursery. They are able to talk and use age appropriate language.

They do not give a lot of information but can become quite animated with a familiar topic that captures their imagination.

Provided they are coping academically, have a good friend or two and are not being bullied, quiet children move easily between their home and educational environments without anxiety.

Their relaxed body language and facial expressions show that they are happy to listen without necessarily feeling the need to talk as much as their noisier peers.

General strategies to help:

- Use comments rather than questions
- Allow children to communicate in whatever way they feel comfortable
- Do not put pressure on them to speak
- Encourage them to make mistakes and share mistakes you have made with them
- Discover their strengths and interests and encourage them to develop these

Not all quiet children are comfortable with silence. Red flags which might indicate it is something more than just being quiet or shy:

- ☐ The ability to talk freely to certain people and not others (often described as 'two personalities')
- ☐ A consistent pattern of situations where speaking is possible and not possible
- ☐ Avoidance or reluctance to attend events where they will be expected to speak
- ☐ High levels of distress when their difficulty speaking freely is not understood
- ☐ Panic or freeze response when put in a situation with an expectation to speak

When to refer:

- Has attended a nursery setting for more than one month and there is a **consistent** pattern of speaking to only one adult or less in the setting
- Ticking any of the red flags listed above