

The Children's Parliament is interested in thinking....

The Children's Parliament is interested in connecting our work explicitly to Curriculum for Excellence. We have identified how Children's Parliament activity connects to experiences and outcomes in a number of curriculum areas. Curriculum for Excellence is also interested in thinking and skills for thinking. It is interested in **deep learning** which involves knowledge, understanding and the skills needed to apply knowledge in useful ways.

Curriculum for Excellence draws on Blooms taxonomy of thinking skills to help adults who facilitate learning think about their approaches and the questions they ask; these are identified in the following 6 levels. To encourage each level of thinking (4, 5 and 6 are considered higher order skills) Children's Parliament facilitators ask these kinds of questions, with an increasing focus on higher order skills:

1. Knowledge: *What happened...?*
2. Comprehension: *Can you tell me in your own words...?*
3. Application: *Do you another instance where...?*
4. Analysis: *Why does....?*
5. Synthesis: *What do you think would happen if...?*
6. Evaluation: *Is there a better solution to...? Why?*

At the Children's Parliament we recognise that thinking skills are developed by practice. When we work with children:

- We make them curious; we ask and encourage questions and we create a dialogue.
- We create and manage groups where children can work collaboratively and safely whilst feeling able to take risks.
- We create opportunities for experiential learning, making meaning from direct experience and learning by doing and reflecting. Traditionally this might be encouraged by posing a *problem*, at the Children's Parliament we prefer to construct projects or investigations more positively and so we might think more about an *issue* or a *challenge* children face.
- We design programmes that are challenging and where all contributions are valued.
- We are creative in the sense of using imaginative and inspiring approaches that both motivate the child to learn but see the child develop their own intrinsic motivation to participate and engage.
- We encourage children to learn from each other (peer learning).

- We support them to become better thinkers by developing ability to reflect upon, understand and control their learning (this is called *metacognition*).

Metacognition is not related to intellectual ability; skills can be developed and are concerned with knowing about things, knowing about how to do things, knowing why and when to do things and being able to control learning by planning, monitoring and evaluating. When children use metacognitive skills they do better at paying attention, they use learning strategies more effectively and they are aware when they don't understand something. The Children's Parliament is keen to engage with colleagues in others services and with children themselves (through self assessment) to explore how we can measure our impact in this area.