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Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale

Education Committee

**6.9 Understanding ‘why’ questions**

**Why is this important?  
‘Why’ questions help to develop causal relations, that is, something  
happened because of something else (e.g. the boy’s feet are cold because  
he has no socks). The development of verbal reasoning in this way is very  
important and is a key stage in language development. It helps children  
move from the concrete to the more abstract use of language and also to  
reflect on the world around them.**

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What to do  
• Look at picture books and/or read simple stories together.  
• When you have finished, look through the book again and see if the child can tell you something about the pictures or what happened.  
• Ask simple why questions, e.g.  
★ ‘Why was the little boy crying?’  
■ ‘He fell in the mud.’  
★ ‘Why did they have to go home?’  
■ ‘It was raining.’  
★ ‘Why was the dog barking?’  
■ ‘The cat was stuck in the tree.’  
• The child doesn’t need to respond with ‘because …’ as long as he/she  
understands that the question is looking for a reason. However, for some, eliciting  
‘because’ helps to unlock the rest of the sentence.  
N.B. Try not to ask too many questions but allow the child to lead some of the  
discussion about the story.**