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25

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TIME OF
HER LIFE:
Rose
Willcocks
on the
beach in
Florida (S)

NEW HOPE FOR 'MISS DOLITTLE'

Little Rose 'closer to first words'

A LITTLE girl dubbed Miss Dolittle — because she speaks only to animals — is closer to saying her first words thanks to therapy in the USA.

It's almost a year since Rose Willcocks appeared on the Observer's front page — and her parents say she is now a different child.

With the help of family and supporters, the Willcocks raised £21,000

By Eleanor Scotchbrook

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in seven months to send Rose — the only known person in the world with a rare genetic condition that has left her with severe learning difficulties — swimming with dolphins.

Now back from her trip, the five-year-old has come on leaps and bounds according to parents Esme and Dave, who are hopeful their little girl is nearer to talking for the first time.

"The trip has really given us hope,"

Esme said. "Before it was only the animals that brought out the best in her, but her babbling is coming naturally now and she is much more animated."

"To see how animated she was with the dolphins was fantastic and her confidence has really soared. She is more enthused about things and her signing and eye contact is better than it's ever been."

Rose first appeared in the Observer last July after we spent a day with her at Mole Hall Wildlife Park in

Continued page 3

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FAMILY TIME: Above from left, Rose, mum Esme, sister Ruby and dad Dave; left, Rose is transfixed by a dolphin in Florida (s)

BEAT IT: Rose came to life in a drumming session; below, she is pictured watching dolphins from a boat and swimming



'We can't stop now Rose has come this far'

Continued from front

Widdington. Last month the family, of The Ridings, Thorley Park, finally jetted off to the States, spending six days at the Water Planet Centre in Panama City, where Rose underwent an intensive course of therapy.

Sadly she did not get the chance to swim with dolphins because of a hurricane warning, but the family, including younger daughter Ruby, 2, went out on a boat every afternoon to watch them frolic in the surf.

Esme said: "We saw hundreds of dolphins every day and Rose loved being on the boat. The pure joy on her face when she spotted them was fantastic.

"It really didn't matter that she didn't get to swim with them in the end because the whole experience was amazing and to spend time as a family was such a positive experience for all of us.

"We've come back rejuvenated and raring to go to help Rose move on to the next stage."

The difference in Rose was remarkable, Esme explained. "We took part in a drumming session and normally Rose would be at the door, clinging onto the handle and screaming to get out.

"But she was laughing, dancing and playing the instruments the whole time. There were so many magical moments and if I could take her back tomorrow I would."

The Willcocks are now looking into other ways to help their daughter, from using communication aids to changing her diet. They are also researching horse therapy in Texas, which has achieved amazing results with other children.

Esme said: "Because Rose's condition is unique we don't know what will work for her so we've got to explore other therapies.

"With a passion we want her to be able to speak, and now we've seen how motivated she is and that she really wants to communicate we know we have to help her in every possible way. We can't stop now she has come this far."

Hairdresser in close shave with chef Ramsay p5

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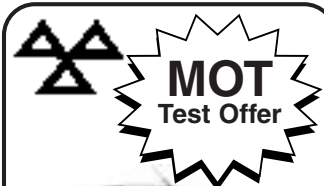
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Man accused of stealing valuables

A BUSINESSMAN who ran a lost property office for Stansted Airport travellers pocketed many of the items left with him, a court heard this week.

Simon Hepper, 50, of Riverside, Dunmow, stole £4,000 worth of valuables, including 14 wallets, 11 mobile phones and two iPods, it was alleged at Chelmsford Crown Court.

Hepper, who dealt only with property lost on EasyJet and Ryanair flights, denies 33 counts of theft between November 2005 and June 2006.

Prosecutor Gerrard Pounder said police launched an investigation after becoming suspicious because lost property was not being found. They planted a wallet on a plane, reported it lost and then found it at Hepper's home. The trial continues.