

Guidance for Parents

Communication and Language support

Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, you can build your child's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive.

Nursery:

- Give clear prompts. Suggestion: say the child's name and then: "Please stop and listen".
- Extend children's vocabulary, explaining unfamiliar words and concepts and making sure children have understood what they mean through stories and other activities.
- High-quality picture books are a rich source for learning new vocabulary.
- Shared book-reading is a powerful way of having extended conversations with children.
- Offer children lots of interesting things to investigate, like different living things.
- Plan activities around core books.
- Small world play based on stories. Eg 'Dear Zoo' - learn the names of the different animals. Or 'Handa's Surprise' - fruit names. Link to senses.
- Outdoor play themed around 'We're Going a Bear Hunt' - children create their own 'hunts' and rhymes.
- Instead of correcting grammatical errors, correctly recast what your child says.
- Pronounce words correctly so your child hears the correct model.
- Expand your child's phrases and add language and new ideas.
- Model language that promotes thinking. Eg, "I can see that's empty – I wonder what happened to the snail that used to be in that shell?"
- Open-ended questions like "I wonder what would happen if....?" encourage more thinking and longer responses.
- Help children to elaborate on how they are feeling: "You look sad. Are you upset because Jasmin doesn't want to do the same thing as you?"

Reception:

- Promote and model active listening skills.
- Signal when you want your child to listen.
- Use objects, pictures and photographs to talk about.
- Discuss which category the word is in. Eg cabbage- vegetable...
- Have fun saying words in an exaggerated manner.
- Show genuine interest in knowing more. "This looks amazing, I need to know more about this."
- Think out loud, ask questions to check your understanding; make sure children can answer who, where and when questions before you move on to why and 'how do you know' questions.
- Use complete sentences in your everyday talk.

- Help children build sentences using new vocabulary by rephrasing what they say and structuring their responses using sentence starters.
- Narrate your own and children's actions.
- Build upon their incidental talk.
- Ask open questions.
- Instead of correcting, model accurate irregular grammar such as past tense, plurals, complex sentences.
- Narrate events and actions.
- Remind children of previous events.
- Extend their thinking.
- Make deliberate mistakes highlighting to children that sometimes you might get it wrong.
- Use sequencing words with emphasis in your own stories.
- Think out loud how to work things out.
- Encourage children to talk about a problem together and come up with ideas for how to solve it.
- Give children problem solving words and phrases to use in their explanations.
- Model talk routines through the day.
- Read a story daily.
- Show enjoyment of the story using your voice and manner to make the meaning clear.
- Use different voices for the narrator and each character.
- Make asides, commenting on what is happening in a story.
- Link events in a story to your own experiences. Talk about the plot and the main problem in the story. Identify the main characters in the story, and talk about their feelings, actions and motives.
- Make time for children to tell each other stories they have heard, or to visitors.
- Have fun with phrases from the story through the day.
- Explain new vocabulary in the context of story.
- Show your enjoyment of poems using your voice and manner to give emphasis to carefully chosen words and phrases.
- In poems and rhymes with very regular rhythm patterns, pause before the rhyming word to allow children to join in or predict the word coming next.
- Encourage children to have fun with rhyme, even if their suggestions don't make complete sense. Choose a few interesting longer words from the poem, rhyme or song and clap out their beat structure, helping children to join in with the correct number of 'claps'.
- Help children to join in with refrains and learn some verses by heart using call and response. When singing songs by heart, talk about words in repeated phrases from within a refrain or verse so that word boundaries are noticed and not blurred.
- Read aloud books to children that will extend their knowledge of the world and illustrate a current topic. Select books containing photographs and pictures, for example, places in different weather conditions and seasons.
- Re-read some books so children learn the language necessary to talk about what is happening in each illustration and relate it to their own lives.

