

Policy:	THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE
Reviewed:	January 2016
Next Review:	3 years, or as legislation may require
Responsibility:	Nursery School Teacher
Category:	Curriculum Policies

“Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.”

(EYFS Statutory Guidance 2012, pg. 5)

Communication and Language is a Prime Area of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Skills developed in this area are fundamental to learning across the whole curriculum. Talking and listening are the earliest skills children acquire through exploration of, and interaction with their environment, in the home, in the wider community and in the early years setting. The provision of a language-rich environment linked with meaningful and relevant experiences is important to develop and increase children's learning and understanding.

■ Centre Aim

The Centre aim is to give all children the best opportunities for effective development and learning in communication and language. This is achieved through:

- Effective planning based on children's needs and interests, which takes into account each individual's learning style.
- The opportunity to develop communication and language skills through a wide variety of developmentally appropriate activities.
- Providing opportunities for children to communicate thoughts, ideas and feelings and build up relationships with adults and each other.
- Use of a variety of teaching methods and resources.
- Ensuring that communication and language development is planned across the curriculum.
- Ensuring that children are given opportunities to share and enjoy a wide range of rhymes, music, songs, poetry and stories. This is to include children linking language with physical movement in action songs and rhymes, role play and practical experiences such as cookery and gardening.
- Creating environments that reflect the importance of all languages through signs, notices, and books – including bi-lingual displays, books and posters.
- Providing time and opportunities to develop spoken language through conversations between children and adults, both one-to-one and in small groups, with particular awareness of, and sensitivity to, the needs of children

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for whom English is an additional language, using their home language when appropriate.

- Planning opportunities for children to become aware of languages other than English, and communication systems such as signing and Braille.
- Early identification of and response to any particular difficulties in children's communication and language development.
- Close teamwork between, where appropriate, bilingual workers, speech therapists and practitioners.

■ Effective learning

- Being given opportunities to speak and listen one-to-one, in small and larger groups.
- Allowing children to use their experiences to develop language through various play situations. Allowing them to imagine and recreate experiences, improve their language through social interaction and re-tell their experiences to peers and adults.
- Using communication and language in every part of the curriculum.
- Being immersed in an environment rich in print and possibilities for communication. This should include a variety of media from labels, lists, posters, PECs, picture cues, books, signs and notices and electronic communication e.g. telephones, i-pads, tablets, CD players, microphones etc. It is also important to make links with children's everyday experiences.
- Providing opportunities for children to develop their listening skills using 'Letters and Sounds' Phase One throughout the Centre. From a young age children can begin to develop the skills needed to link letters and sounds, this needs to be encouraged throughout daily sessions with short listening and sound activities, e.g., going on a listening walk outside, making appropriate sounds when playing with the small world playground.
- Providing a wide range of resources linked to stories through which children can re-tell stories, e.g., puppets, magnetic pictures for sequencing, story sacks. This will give children the opportunity to develop their sequencing skills and develop the language of stories.

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■ Effective teaching

- Practitioners teach children communication and language in many ways and in a number of different styles. Each aspect – Listening and attention, Understanding and Speaking – needs to be planned for, so that practitioners know how to respond to children both in activities led or initiated by children and those directed by adults.
- Practitioners valuing talk and alternative forms of communication. Children will become confident speakers if talk is valued in the setting and they are encouraged to want to communicate. For some children this will involve learning to communicate through signing. Confidence and competence go hand in hand. With support, children will move from simple statements to asking questions, commenting on differences and making comparisons. They will use their developing vocabulary to name and classify, make elaborate statements and retell experiences.
- Practitioners observing children and planning for the contexts (this includes children's interests and experiences) in which they best develop their listening and attention, understanding and speaking.
- Practitioners helping children to develop language for communication through interaction and expression. Children will learn to understand and be aware of other points of view if practitioners demonstrate strategies such as listening, turn taking and initiating and sustaining a conversation gently and respectfully. Children will increase attention, understanding and interest when listening if practitioners do the same and show that they appreciate their efforts. They will increase their knowledge and use of conversations, such as for asking, initiating, refusing and greeting, if practitioners expect children to try and if they support children with reassuring reactions.
- Practitioners modelling the use of language as a tool for thinking. Children learn to use language in its immediate context first. For example, they seek information by asking 'why' type questions and then refine or follow up the answers. They will explain things, use language so that it makes sense, and draw conclusions if they hear and see practitioners who do so. They will learn to develop language from mainly using the present tense to talking about the past and possibly future experiences if practitioners model this and encourage children to get involved.
- Planning that is flexible and informed. Plans need to focus on all aspects of communication and language. Planning needs to outline learning activities in the whole learning environment, indoors and outdoors, for individuals and for small and larger groups.

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- The effective use of 'Letters and Sounds.' Practitioners need to use the document through their planning to develop children's listening and sound making skills at their own level. It is important that children are involved in short listening activities throughout each session, for example singing nursery rhymes, and that practitioners observe and assess children's skills and move them on to phase two at an appropriate time.

■ Monitoring and Evaluation

The methods of monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning in the area of Communication and language include:

- Monitoring of the planning, assessment and coverage of 'Letters and Sounds' in all services. Including moving children through the phases appropriately.
- Assessments completed by Key Persons on a termly basis and these inform the summative assessments.
- Assessment data analysed each term by the Headteacher and teachers and passed on to the Key Persons.
- Observations (on i-connect) and Learning Journeys reviewed termly by Team Leaders/teachers.
- Photographs and examples of children's communication and language skills displayed in each service, for example scribing children's stories, writing down children's views and comments.

Planning

Communication and Language comprises of three areas:

- ⇒ Listening and attention
- ⇒ Understanding
- ⇒ Speaking

Communication and Language is prominent in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Children all communicate, if this is through language, signing or any other form of communication. It is important that opportunities for listening and attention, understanding and speaking are available throughout all areas, as this gives children the opportunity to pull on their own experience and real life situations.

Medium Term Planning (Continuous Provision)

Using the Early Years Foundation Stage, observation and assessment data, teachers and team leaders write a summary of next steps, which is used to review the continuous provision.

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Short Term Planning (Enhancements)

Learning experiences are planned for each week/daily, based on the observed needs and interests of the children. These are designed to build upon and extend children's knowledge, understanding and skills in this area and promote positive attitudes to learning.

Individualised Planning (In the Moment Planning)

Each child will be a 'focus' child for one week each term. Through this planning process the Key Person will plan for activities after speaking to the parents/carers and observing and talking to the child. Each day the child will be observed/supported by their Key Person and any interests or next steps will be planned for through the short term planning process.

Observation and Assessment

Observations may take different forms:

- A practitioner may note a child's interest in a specific activity or resource.
- Observations may be made during an adult-led or focused activity.
- Parents are encouraged to share their own observations and assessments of their child's progress.

Achievements and progress will be noted through i-connect, assessment grids and summative assessments (spreadsheet).

A child's achievements and interests will be noted through i-connect, In the Moment Planning and in their Learning Journeys. Parents will have the opportunity to meet with their child's Key Person once a term during the In the Moment Planning week.

For further details on observation and assessment, see the 'Observation and Assessment' Policy.

■ Roles and Responsibilities of the Senior Teacher (Nursery School/Children's Centre/Day Care)

The Coordinator will carry out the following responsibilities:

- Monitor planning of appropriate activities to promote communication and language.
- Monitor planning across the EYFS curriculum to ensure that communication and language is being developed throughout the curriculum.

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- Monitor planning to ensure that all aspects of Phase One of 'Letters and Sounds' is being planned. Also, monitoring the assessment taking place to ensure that children are being moved on at the appropriate time.
- Monitor the environment in all services and throughout the Centre to ensure an appropriate print rich environment.
- Audit staff training needs in communication and language.
- Discuss with staff their views on the use of communication and language and the available resources to promote communication and language across the Centre.
- Observe practitioners in their teaching of communication and language and agree any training and development needs.
- Review the Communication and Language Policy.

■ Roles and Responsibilities of all Practitioners

- Ensure that all children have equal opportunities to access communication and language.
- Refer to the planning before each session in order to understand the learning intentions of all activities.
- Carry out ongoing observations and assessments of children in order to inform future planning.
- Ensure that resources are adequately cared for and safe to use.
- Inform the Communication and Language Coordinator of any training needs they have.

■ Roles and Responsibilities of all Parents

- Attend the termly parents meetings to discuss their child's achievements and targets.
- Share their observations and assessments with their child's Key Person.
- Input into their child's Parentzone (i-connect) profile and share achievements with nursery and their child's Key Person.
- Support the Centre by taking opportunities at home to promote the development of communication and language skills and knowledge.

■ Supporting Parents with developing Communication and Language Skills:

Practitioners can support parents in developing their child's early language and communication skills through the following strategies and tips:

Babies:

- The best thing is to talk about the things that you are doing during the day – daily routines e.g. nappy changing, dinner time
- Try to find a time each day that is quiet – turn off the T.V. or radio
- Get right down to your baby's level so that you are talking face to face

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- Speak in a sing-song style, this helps babies to listen to the different sounds you are making
- Use baby words like 'oopsidaisy'
- Say your baby's sounds back to him/her and have a baby conversation

2-5 years:

- **Keep it face to face** – When talking to your child position yourself so that s/he can look directly into your eyes – even if it means getting down onto the floor to be at their level.
- **Wait** – Give your child the chance to talk. Count to 10 before you give an answer or repeat the question again.
- **Imitate** – Let your child know that you are listening by copying their sounds and actions.
- **Interpret** – Put what you think your child is trying to say into words – but be careful not to sound as if you are correcting them.
- **Repeat** – Repetition is crucial. Find as many different ways as possible of using the same words. Children may need to hear a word more than 100 times before they attempt to say it themselves.
- **Exaggerate** – Emphasise key words and over-do sounds and facial expressions to get your child interested. Talk slowly and simply so as not to bombard them with too much information.
- **Rabbit on!** – Keep up a running commentary on what you are doing – even if it's just the ironing or cleaning – to build up your child's vocabulary. Gradually use slightly longer phrases your child can understand, even if they cannot say them.
- **Play together** – This creates ample opportunities for talking together. Take turns, for example, in building a tower. Turn taking is the basis of conversation. But follow your child's lead to maintain their interest in any game you're playing. If your child wants to push bricks along like a train rather than build a tower then so be it.
- **Sing to them** – Make up some simple words to go with familiar tunes. Personalise other songs to include your child's name and describe any activities you're doing together. However, make sure you always sing songs and nursery rhymes slowly. Your child will learn many words and actions if you keep things at their speed.
- **Get reading** – Look at books together, but make sure it's at your child's level. Let your child turn the pages and choose the pictures they want to talk about, rather than feel obliged to read every word from cover to cover.
- **Special time to talk** - Have a special time to talk together about the day. This will help your child to develop their memory skills and to talk about things that are not there or that happened in the past.
- **Use gesture** – use gesture to support your language, especially if you are giving your child an instruction. Lots of children are visual learners therefore gesture lets them see what you mean as well as hear it.

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- **Value and respond** – to all your child's communication attempts and focus on what they are telling you not how. Encourage all types of different communication not just speech. Avoid correcting your child, instead model the right way and then move on so they are left with a good language model.
- **Let's Pretend!** – Join your child in pretend play. Let your child take the lead – it will encourage the development of both their language and creativity. Talk about what they are doing and give lots of commentary rather than asking too many questions – try to keep it to one question to four comments.

■ Special Educational Needs

We aim to cater for the individual learning needs of every child, recognising the need for specialised provision to ensure access to all aspects of literacy. See 'Policy for meeting Special Educational Needs' for more information.

The Centre/Nursery School has a named Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). The SENCO links with external agencies such as the Educational Psychologist, the special needs team, the Early Years Behavioural Team, speech therapists and health visitors. The SENCO, Practitioners and outside agencies work together with parents to form Targeted Learning Plans (TLPs) for children.

Parents and carers work with practitioners, the SENCO and outside agencies in supporting the child's progress at the Centre. Information about the child's development may be shared with other settings attended by the child, with parental consent.

■ Gifted and Talented

We aim to provide for the needs and interest of all our children through the observation, assessment and planning process. This process enables us to identify those children who are high achievers in any or all areas of learning and development. Practitioners, supported by the Teachers where appropriate, ensure that activities are suitably challenging to enable children to reach their full potential.

■ Equal Opportunities

All children and families are encouraged to take part in all activities at the Centre. We actively celebrate cultural differences, and recognise the importance of treating children equally and with respect. Boys and girls are treated equally and encouraged to take part in all aspects of communication and language.

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■ Managing Resources

- The Practitioners and Communication and Language Coordinator will, through planning, observation and assessment, identify new resources which will support teaching and learning.
- Any loss or damages must be reported to the Communication and Language Coordinator, who will then identify resources that need replacing or repairing.
- The asset management file contains a complete list of resources that we have within the Centre and this should be updated when new resources are purchased.

■ Dissemination

This policy is available for all parents, Governors, staff and prospective parents.

■ Review Procedure

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Literacy Coordinator, the Headteacher/Head of Centre and the Governors.